LINGUISTIK TERAPAN

NIAS LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE
IN THE SOCIETY AND INDIVIDUAL

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this paper are to explain the basic concept of
Nias language in society and individual, and to offers some
effective tips for its maintenance. Nias language, society, and
individual are three interrelated elements; where without
individual (Nias people) there would not be a community (tribe of
Nias), and consequently there is no Nias language. Nias value-or
Nias identity- is reflected by its language, which consists of *sifa
ba da'ö* (Northern), *sifa ba gandrö* (Central) and *sifa bahöhö*
(Southern) dialects. The use of Nias language in society plays an
important role·as a means of communication in a formal and
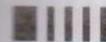informal ceremonies, meetings *(orahua)* and parties *(falöwa)*. On
the other hand, Nias language for individual of Nias people is
mostly viewed as the main means of communication for its
existence as first and sometimes the only language. Practicing
Nias language skills-listening, speaking, writing, and reading-
through the use of media-television, films, and radio-
and networking and making friends are the tips for individual in
maintaining Nias language. (1) Living near and frequently meet
Nias people; (2) frequently contact of homeland; (3) avoiding the
marriage to a majority group member for its bad influence to the
next generation; and (4) planning and employing the Nias
language role in Nias education, law and administration, religion,
and media: book, article, SMS, telephone, handphone, email,
answer machine, internet, facebook, twinter, etc. are tips for Nias
language maintenance in society.

Key words: Nias Language maintenance, society, and individual

INTRODUCTION

Morris (1946) describes that language as an arrangement of arbitrary symbols possessing an agreed-upon significance within a community. The language is built up by the mutual agreement of a community, which contains a number of individual. Language, society and individual are three interrelated domains in Nias people's lives. Therefore, without individual (Nias people) there would not be a community (tribe of Nias), and consequently there is no Nias language.

A wedding party of Nias people celebrated on March 2010 in Medan showed that all of the invitees felt happy when they were welcomed with the Nias traditional attractions-stone jumping, war dance, eagle dance, etc. They assumed that the whole ceremony will be traditionally conducted with the typical of Nias wedding party. Their hopes spontaneously disappeared when they noted that the ceremony held in Indonesian language. In this case, Nias language role is changed by Indonesian language.

The Nias society, which is viewed as a group of people (individual) gathered in a community, contains three fundamental aspects: culture, belief, and value. Value is concerned with the identity; one of the indicators of identity is language. Thus, the phenomenon occurred in the Nias party mentioned above not only influence the role change and shift of Nias language but also affect the change of Nias value-identity. Language maintenance as a cumpolsory responsibility of the language users, serves as the solution to that phenomenon. The objectives of this paper are to explain the basic concept of language in society and individual, and to offer some effective tips for maintaning Nias language nowadays.

1. Nias Language in Society and Individual

There so many vernaculars in Indonesia. One of them is Nias language. Nias people name their language as 'Li Niha', which means 'language of man' (Hämmerle, 2007). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nias_lan guage#Phonology) explains that Nias language is an Austronesian language spoken on Nias Island and the Batu Islands off the west coast of Sumatra in Indonesia. It belongs to the Northwest Sumatran subgroup which also includes Mentawai and the Batak languages. It had about 770,000 speakers in 2000. There are three main dialects - northern, central and southern, Brown (2001) and Zagötö (1975).

Language and society are the two different words which are closely related and mutually shaping each other (Rampton, 2004). Society is defined as people in general, living together in the communities, whereas Sapir (1921) argues that language is a

purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. Therefore, language in the society is viewed as the language used in an extended social group living together in communities (Edwards: 2009). Nias language in Nias society, as the general language roles, plays an important role as a means of communication to express ideas, feelings, thoughts, etc. to another member of community in a formal and informal ceremonies, meetings (orahua) and parties (falöwa)

Nias society, which practices the collectivistic ways of life, consists of a number of individuals. Every people have the personality. Personal identity–or personality– is essentially the summary statement of all our individual traits, characteristics and dispositions; it defines the uniqueness of each human being (Edwards, 2009). The language of individual, technically termed as idiolect, is the

language used by a particular person in his or her daily activities to interact with another (Cooper, 1989). Nias language for individual of Nias people is mostly viewed as the main means of communication for its existence as first and sometimes the only language.

2. Social and Individual Factors in Nias Language Change

Moyna (2009:131-132) argues that language change is the result of the combined effect of social and individual factors. Social factors include any changes in linguistic ecology between one period and the next which are fueled by two external social changes. They are (1) the contact between speakers of different varieties due to conquest, migration, or both and (2) the different culture, education, economic, and religion. On the other hand, invidual factors deal with the intergenerational change which resulted from an entire generation of children language acquisition (Moyna, 2009:132).

The people of Nias society have different backgrounds of education, culture, religion, economic, status or class, age, gender, etc. In the Sociolinguistics standpoint, a society has culture, belief, and value. The society value is concerned with its identity, whereas the identity is its language. In accordance with this explanation, therefore, it is concluded that the more Nias social and individual change, the more Nias language and its identity change.

3. Northern, Central and Southern Dialects as the Impacts of Nias Language Change

The multi-dimensional society is resulted in the variation in language such as the accent, dialects, and social status or class (Edwards: 2009). Social accent is the way of pronouncing the words of a language that shows which country, area or social class a person comes from (Cooper: 1989). On the other words, an accent is a certain form of a language spoken by a

subgroup of speakers which is defined by its phonological features.

Two Nias boys, from central Nias (CN) and Southern Nias (SN), were talking to each other. Their conversations are as follows:

CN: *Ba gandrőwő ilabu ia nono matua no mege* (The boy went there)

SN: *Haega moi ya'ő?* (Where did he go?)

CN: *Ba gandrő.* (Over there)

SN: *Lau, da gumői gaő daniạ khő nia.* (Ok, let me go there to meet him).

The conversation above indicates that the word *ilabu* (CN) and *moi* (SN) have the same meaning 'go' and the words *ba gandrő* (CN) and *gaő* (SN) mean 'there'. This phenomenon shows that Nias lexical dialects are distinguishable to different Nias regions.

Dialect is the typical language used by sub group of people which is distinguishable by its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (Homes:

2001). In relation to this, Zagőtő in her thesis (1975) classified Nias language into: *sifa ba da'ő* (Northern), *sifa ba gandrő* (Central) and *sifa bahőhő* (Southern) dialects. Southern dialect includes Teluk Dalam, Amandraya, Lahusa, Tello, Fanayama, Maenamőlő, and Toma sub districts. On the other hand, Gomo, Lőlőmatua, Aramő, Lőlőwa'u sub districts belong to the Central Nias dialect, and Northern Nias dialect consists of Gunungsitoli, Lahewa, Mandrehe, Gidő, Alasa, Tuhemberua sub districts.

4. Tips for Nias Language Maintenance in the Society and Individual

In this globalization era, all human's aspects of life include Nias language is influenced by the use of technology. This bad impact is realized in the Nias language change in society and individual. Holmes (2001) generally suggests some influential domains of a language change:

(a) If families from a minority group live near each other and see each other frequently, this also helps them maintain their language;

(b) For those who immigrate, the degree and frequency of contact with the homeland is a factor which may contribute to language maintenance;

(c) Marriage to a majority group member is the quickest of ensuring shift to the majority group language for the children;

(d) Obviously a group who manage to ensure their language is used in settings such as school or their place of worship will increase the chance of language maintenance;

(e) Education, law and administration, religion and the media are crucial domains in language maintenance.

Based on the opinion above, therefore, it can be said that the activities in maintaining Nias language in society are: (1) live near and frequently meet Nias people; (2) frequently contact of homeland; (3) avoid the marriage to a majority group member for its bad influence to the next generation; and (4) plan and employ the Nias language role in Nias education, law and administration, religion, and media: book, article, SMS, telephone, handphone, email, answer machine, internet, facebook, twinter, etc. In contrast, the tips for maintaining the individual's competence and performance of Nias language, according to (http://www.Marketingtranslationbloc om/2009/05/07/how-to-maintain-your-lan guage-skills-part-two/comment-page-1/), are: (1) Read and speak often and widely the Nias language textbooks; (2) Watch/listen to television, films, radio and podcasts which related to the Nias language; (3) Network and make friends with people who speak Nias language; and (4) Start a Nias language club.

CONCLUSION

Nias language, society, and individual are three interrelated elements in Nias

people's lives. Without individual (Nias people) there would not be a community (tribe of Nias), and consequently there is no Nias language. Nias language serves as the Nias value-Nias identity-even it is consists of *sifa ba da'õ* (Northern), *sifa ba gandrõ* (Central) and *sifa bahõhõ* (Southern) dialects.

The use of Nias language in society, as the general language roles, plays an important role as a means of communication to express ideas, feelings, thoughts, etc. to another member of community in a formal and informal ceremonies, ' meetings *(orahua)* and parties *(falõwa)*. On the other hand, Nias language for individual of Nias people is mostly viewed as the main means of communication for its existence as first and sometimes the only language.

Nias language planning for its change which is resulted from the use of technology should be considered. However, (1) living near and frequently meet Nias people; (2) frequently contacting of homeland; (3) avoiding the marriage to a majority group member for its bad influence to the next generation; and (4) planning and employing the Nias language role in Nias education, law and administration, religion, and media are tips from maintaining Nias language in society. In contrast, (1) practicing language skills-listening, speaking, writing, and reading-through the use of media-television, films, and radio-and (2) networking and making friends are the tips for individual in maintaining Nias language.

A good status of language is affected by the individual's language competence and performance. Therefore, the Nias language maintenance belongs to any Nias individual's responsibility.

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