

**LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF KADAZANDUSUN PEOPLE TOWARD THEIR
MOTHER TONGUE**

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ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF KADAZANDUSUN PEOPLE TOWARD THEIR MOTHER TONGUE

Lydia Tumin

The study seeks to investigate language attitudes of Kadazandusun people toward their own language, which is the Kadazandusun language. It also sought to examine respondents' language proficiency in Kadazandusun, language used in interaction across generations in the 50 selected families and the language used in different domains. The study was undertaken in one Kadazandusun dominant community in Keningau, Sabah. Data were gathered through questionnaire. Participants were made up of 90 Kadazandusun, aged 14 years to 65 from the 50 selected families in this community. All data were calculated based on age variable wherever necessary. The study found that, majority of the respondents, possessed positive attitudes toward the Kadazandusun language regardless of age. The language proficiency has decreased among younger generation. Data on language use in the families demonstrated the differences in language used between older and younger generation, with Kadazandusun was preferable among older generation and Malay language was favored by the younger generation. Findings in domains analysis show that Kadazandusun language was used more in three domains namely workplace, neighborhood and friendship domains. Malay language on the other hand was used more in four domains, which were in religion, education, transaction, and family domains.

ABSTRAK

SIKAP BAHASA OLEH MASYARAKAT KADAZANDUSUN TERHADAP BAHASA IBUNDA MEREKA

Lydia Tumin

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik sikap bahasa orang-orang Kadazandusun terhadap bahasa ibunda mereka sendiri. Kajian ini juga merangkumi penyelidikan kefasihan berbahasa dalam bahasa kadazandusun, penggunaan bahasa Kadazandusun dalam pertuturan antara generasi dalam keluarga responden dan mengkaji kekerapan penggunaan bahasa Kadazandusun dalam tujuh situasi. Kajian ini dilakukan dalam satu komuniti Kadazandusun di Kampung Tohan Baru Keningau, Sabah. Sampel terdiri daripada 90 orang responden berumur 14 tahun keatas daripada 50 keluarga yang terpilih. Analisis dijalankan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan responden memiliki sikap positif terhadap bahasa Kadazandusun. Selain itu juga, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap kefasihan berbahasa dalam Kadazandusun semakin menurun di kalangan responden muda. Analisis juga menunjukkan penggunaan bahasa dalam keluarga responden di bezakan oleh kekerapan penggunaan bahasa kadazandusun di kalangan generasi dewasa dan bahasa Melayu pula lebih kerap digunakan oleh generasi muda. Analisis penggunaan bahasa dalam beberapa situasi yang berbeza mendapati penggunaan bahasa kadazandusun adalah lebih kerap pada situasi perbualan di tempat kerja, antara rakan dan juga antara jiran. Manakala, bahasa Melayu lebih kerap digunakan dalam perbualan antara keluarga, di sekolah, dalam upacara keagamaan dan ketika berada di kedai.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction to the study. The first section touches on background of the study, the second sections deals with the information on Kadazandusun ethnic group. These are followed by sections on the statement of problem, and objectives of study. It also includes significance of study and scope of the study as well definition of operational terms.

1.1 Background of Study

According to Sabah statistics 2003, from the 2.6 million population of Sabah, the Kadazandusun people are approximately 479 944 people, making them the largest indigenous group in the state (Lasimbang, 2004). Kadazandusun is an umbrella term that encompasses 40 ethnic groups, and is categorized under the Dusunic group (KDCA, 1995)

Language survey on Kadazandusun language has been the major contributor to the development of this language. Earlier surveys conducted on the Kadazan community revealed their desire for the language to be taught in school. In 1988, the Kadazan Cultural Association (KCA) proposed to government that the Kadazan language be taught in schools (Lasimbang et al., 1992; as cited in Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000). In the same year, the Minister of Education made a statement on the possibility of incorporating the study of indigenous languages such as Kadazan into the school syllabus. In 1994, a formal proposal was made to the federal government and was given considerable attention (Kadazandusun Language Foundation, 2005).

In 2000, the Kadazandusun language was offered for the first time as one of the optional subjects in school, and taught to 19 731 pioneer group of children by 881 trained teachers. It was offered in 440 primary schools in 21 districts throughout the State of Sabah. (Lasimbang, 2004). Beginning 2007, the Kadazandusun language was introduced in secondary education, and SMK Tenghilan in Tuaran was the first school to offer the language as an optional subject (Kadazandusun information portal, 2006).

1. 2 Kadazan or Dusun or Kadazandusun?

The issue of labeling between the ‘Kadazan’ and ‘Dusun’ has been long debated in the Sabah political arena. It became the major challenge in the planning of the Kadazandusun language in school since it was difficult to achieve consensus over this matter (Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000).

In a study by Banker & Banker (1997), they have classified Kadazan as a Dusunic language. Nevertheless, the most salient distinction between this two are the differences of their phonemic charts. The Kadazan consists of fricatives [v] and [z] and the implosive [ɓ] and [ɗ] but these are absent in the Dusun. On the other hand, /w/, / y/ and /r/ are present in Dusun but not in Kadazan. The label

‘Kadazan’ is believed to be an autonym to the exonym ‘Dusun’ (Tunggolou, 1999; as cited in Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2004).

In January 24, 1995 the Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association (KDCA) and the United Sabah Dusun Association (USDA) came to an agreement to use the term ‘Kadazandusun’ as an official name for the Dusunic group. Central Dusun dialects of Bunduliwan (Bundu and Liwan) which are the two largest groups were chosen as the basis of developing standard language. Central Dusun is a term created by the Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL) in their language survey in the 1980s to indicate a major Dusun speech area in the Tambunan, Keningau and Ranau districts located in the west and inland of Sabah. Speakers of this variety also represent the majority of the overall Dusun population. (Tunggolou, 1999; as cited in Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2004).

Throughout this study, the term Kadazandusun will be used, as it is the term, which is officially agreed to and documented by the government.

1.3 Statement of Problem

When the Malaya Federation gained its independence in 1957 from the British colony, there was a need for nation building, therefore Malay Language was chosen as the national language for the country (David, 2003). The Malaysian government took initiative to uphold the Malay Language through the implementation of National Language and National Educational Policies for the primary and secondary level of education. The language policy was also expanded to cover the education system in Sabah and Sarawak. By 1985, the entire education system in Sabah and Sarawak completely switched to using Malay language as the medium of instruction in schools (David, 2003).

However, the language policy has affected the use of Kadazandusun language. According to Lasimbang (1996), the emphasis on the acquisition of national language (Bahasa Malaysia) during the nationalism era in 1963, resulted in the decline of Kadazandusun use (Lasimbang, 1996; as cited in Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000). Due to the socio-economic interest as well as the intention of assimilating their children into the fast-growing Malaysian culture, Kadazandusun parents had begun to allow the use of the Malay language in the home, which led to code mixing between Malay and Kadazandusun language. Slowly this removed the need to converse in the mother tongue, as Malay language became the dominant language in Kadazandusun family. (Lasimbang, 1996; as cited in Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000). The effect of the language policy on the people of Kadazandusun and their language is further illustrated by Stephen (2000) who stated that, “With the national educational syllabus requiring national language fluency for the primary school and secondary school years of a student, it is not surprising that if one goes to a Kadazandusun household in a *kampung*, the young children speak and are spoken to in the Malay language”. The introduction of the language policy in education system has influenced the decision of parents to opt to use Malay language, which therefore gradually replaced the position of the Kadazandusun as the vehicle of communication within the family.

As seen in studies mentioned above, fewer and fewer speakers of the language speak Kadazandusun language to their children at home. Malay language has taken over and became the predominant language of communication within the Kadazandusun community. Åsgård (2002) in his study has found that the case of Malay language become the dominant language was not only evident in urban areas but as well in remote Kadazandusun villages which a mixture of Malay and Kadazandusun, or just Malay is more preferable.

In contrast, the inclusion of Kadazandusun subject in school thus allows those who do not know to speak this language to learn the language. This is especially relevant to the younger generation of Kadazandusun as they have the opportunity to learn this language. However, despite of the introduction of the

Kadazandusun language in school since year 2000, UNESCO (2005) has recently classified Kadazandusun as one of the endangered language spoken by a mere 300 000 people. It seemed that the implementation of Kadazandusun language in school appears to receive inadequate support from the Kadazandusun people, which contradict with earlier finding on their desire to see the language introduced into the school. The accessibility of the Kadazandusun language in the media, such as in the local newspapers and radio also help to promote the language not only to the Kadazandusun people but also to non-Kadazandusun especially throughout Sabah. Nevertheless, Åsgård (2002) stated that, Kadazandusun parents are in fact do not speak this language at home, but use Malay language to communicate with their children. Home and parents especially, often the last important agent in preservation of any language (Antonini, 2002). Parent is model for children language learning and influence the likelihood of what language will the children adopt and learn (Bartram, 2006; Galindo & Worthy, 2006).

Therefore, this study is carried out to examine what are the current attitudes toward the Kadazandusun language posses by the Kadazandusun people since the introduction of the language in school. Do they favor the language positively? Or they adopt negative attitudes toward the language. As Lewis (1981) stated “It is unlikely that anyone will deny the importance of attitudes in determining the extent of current usages of a language, the prospect of their extension, and the kinds of prestigious contexts in which it will be used or denied use”. Apart from the efforts taken so far in maintaining the language (in school), the information on the current attitudes by Kadazandusun people need to be investigated in order to know to what extent will the language survive? And how language policies and language maintenance program should be directed.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are to find out:

- 1) The attitudes the speakers possess towards Kadazandusun and Malay language
- 2) Respondents' language proficiency in oral communication in Kadazandusun Language
- 3) The language(s) used in interaction across generations
- 4) Respondents' frequency use of Kadazandusun Language in family, friendship, religion, employment and education domains

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study was carried out due to the seemingly rapid decline of Kadazandusun language use. Therefore, findings from this study is hoped to create awareness at the community level towards the decline in usage of the Kadazandusun Language, as an initial representation of community's' view towards Kadazandusun language. It could also be the information for language planning efforts by the government and especially related bodies to Kadazandusun people and their culture to promote the Kadazandusun language.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study examines the use of Kadazandusun and Malay Language and the attitudes to the languages within communities of Kadazandusun in Sabah. Since the sample consists of 50 families of Kadazandusun, generalizing on the state of Kadazandusun language maintenance in Sabah is not possible within the scope of this study. The study presents the situation of a small community of Kadazandusun in the *Kampung Tohan Baru* in Keningau area. This study does not aim to analyze the situation of Kadazandusun language in detail. The focus of this study is on the attitudes of Kadazandusun people possessed towards the Kadazandusun language. Apart from that, in the analysis of language proficiency of respondents, the focus is on their speaking ability and it does not seek to investigate their ability in other language skills such as in writing or reading.

1.7 Definition of Operational Terms

1.7.1 Language Attitudes

Language attitude is defined by Richards et al. (1985) as the “feeling that speakers of different languages or varieties of a language have towards each others’ languages or their own. Negative or positive attitude towards a language may reflect linguistic difficulty or simplicity of learning, degree of importance and social status” (as cited in Mugaddam, 2005)

1.7.2 Bilingual

Bilingual is defined as “ability to speak or understand (and sometimes read/write) two languages” (UNESCO, 2007)

1.7.3 Mother Tongue

Mother tongue (MT) is defined as “language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most” (UNESCO, 2007)

1.7.4 Intergenerational language transmission

Intergenerational language transmission is the on-going process whereby a language is transferred from generation to generation through the normal familial interactions of parents and children (and grandparents, grandchildren, etc). It is widely recognized as the cornerstone of successful language maintenance and revitalization (Fishman, 2000; as cited in Lammervo, 2007)

1.7.5 Domain

The domains refer to contextualized spheres of communication such as home, friendship, work, education and religion. And these domains are helpful in that they give insight into language choice in bilingual situations (Fishman, 1965; as cited in Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Othman, 2006)

1.8 Summary

In this chapter, it has discussed the background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study as well as the definition of operational terms. The following chapter will be discussing the literature review of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on attitudes to language, domain analysis, variables affecting language attitudes, related studies on language attitudes and summary of chapter two.

2.1 Attitudes to Language

The study of language attitudes has been long become the subject of interest among psychologists. Appel & Musyken (1987) stated that “language are not only objective, socially neutral instruments for conveying meaning, but are linked up with the identities of social or ethnic groups has consequences for the social evaluation of, and the attitudes towards languages” (as cited in Ihemere, 2006).

Attitudes to languages are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction. The status and importance of a language in society and within an individual obtains largely from adopted or learnt attitudes. An attitude is

individual, but it has origins in collective behavior and it is something an individual has which defines or promotes certain behaviors (Hohenthal, 1998).

Usually, for monolingual speakers, they have only one attitude towards their language because there are no other languages which can be made comparison. They usually value the language positively as they see their language as a central means for communication, socialization and ethnic identity. However, in bilingual or multilingual there is tendency to develop different attitudes to each of the languages used. These attitudes, whether positive or negative, will normally depend on the degree of symbolic or socio-economic value manifested by each language. Usually, L1, as the mother tongue, will have symbolic value as the language of cultural and ethnic identity, but will generally have little or no socio-economic prestige. On the other hand, L2, as the inter-ethnic language, will have considerable socio-economic prestige. Attitudes to language usually, although may not always, are resulted on the economic value attached to it. The language with important roles in the economic will enjoy higher status. In turn, the more prestigious a language, the more positive the speaker's attitude towards the language, and the less prestigious a language, the more negative the attitudes are (Batibo, 2005).

Attitude is what and on how people view their language, and what they feel about the language when using it. When speakers take pride in their language, enjoy listening to others using the language and use it themselves indicated a favorable for maintenance language maintenance (Crystal, 2000). The language maintenance is thus not merely depending on the type of attitudes, but also on the regular use of the language.

Besides, attitudes in language is crucial in determining the extent of current usages of a language, the prospect of their extension, and the kinds of prestigious contexts in which it will be used or denied used (Lewis, 1981). It implies that, the attitudes will influence people to use or not to use the language. Attitudes too have a decisive influence on process of linguistic variation and

change, language planning, and the maintenance or loss of a language in a community (Fishman, 1964; as cited in Choi, 2003; Cheshire 1991; as cited in Hohental, 1998)

The kinds of attitudes possess by particular individual or community towards certain language will influence whether or not they will use the language. And this is especially relevant in the contexts of maintaining particular language.

2.2 Domain analysis

Joshua Fishman has introduced domain analysis, which describes the use of languages in various institutional contexts in a multilingual society. Fishman suggests that one language is more likely to be appropriate in some specific contexts than another (Fasold 1942). It is "...defined in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences ...they attempt to designate the major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular settings "(Fishman 1972; as cited in Hohental, 1998). The study of language use in domains allows an understanding on how language is chosen based on topic of interaction related to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations.

Domains analysis are included in this study because, domains, language attitudes and language attitudes are interrelated. According to Hohental (1998), attitudes, which develop in a society during a course of time, can determine the domains in which a particular language is used in a society, and therefore determine the place a language holds in a society. When speakers use two languages they will not use both languages in all circumstances, but will choose one over the other according to participants, situation, content of discourse and function of interaction (Grosjean, 1982; as cited in Hohental, 1998).

Bayer (1990) also stated that domain contributes in deciding the development of different status and functions of languages in a community. Languages are allocated specific roles and they are used in different contexts.