



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Reluctance of Acehnese Youth to Use Acehnese

Teuku Muhammad Ridha Al-Auwal*

Samudra University, Langsa, INDONESIA

Abstract

This study was aimed at finding the main factors causing Acehnese youth to be reluctant to use their Acehnese language within their groups and in daily life and also at finding out their attitudes towards the Acehnese language. The study adopted a case study approach using semi-structured interviews to obtain data. Ten (10) participants, who were members of the Students Union of Syiah Kuala University, the so-called PEMA Unsyiah, who were considered representative of all the students, took part in this study. The findings revealed that negative attitudes to their Acehnese language have mushroomed amongst Acehnese youth today. Acehnese youth are now accustomed to using Indonesian instead of Acehnese language in their everyday life due to several reasons, namely: Indonesian seems more modern (showing the person to be upper- class), they feel spoken Acehnese sounds 'harsh' and 'weird', Indonesian is predominant on campus now, Indonesian seems more prestigious and 'cooler', Indonesian can be used to neutralize the differences between different Acehnese dialects and languages, Indonesian is more convenient whilst Acehnese is more difficult, Acehnese is mainly used for making jokes, humour and puns, Indonesian is more reasonable and convenient to communicate with the opposite sex, if communication is already running in Indonesian, it is difficult to switch it to Acehnese, and finally, Indonesian is easier and more convenient to use to greet new friends.

Keywords: Attitudes, Acehnese youth, Acehnese language, language shift.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is inseparable from human life because it is considered to be the most important aspect in terms of communication and interaction in social life. Not only it is used to communicate but also to establish and maintain social relationships. It is an

*Corresponding author, email: tm.ridha.al.auwal@gmail.com

essential symbol of ethnic, social and cultural identities as well as deemed to be a mirror of a society and a nation. According to [Verdoodt \(1997\)](#) and [Llamas, Mullany, and Stockwell \(2006\)](#), beyond its symbolic role as a communication tool, it is also considered as the most significant factor in maintaining and continuing ethnic identities across ethnic groups and generations. Language, in addition, is an essential symbol of ethnic, social and cultural identities; it is a key factor of intergenerational transmission in order to understand the values, history and philosophy of human life from generation to generation.

Acehnese is one of the local languages that lives, develops, and is mostly used by some Acehese groups of people as a tool of communication and interaction in Aceh. Aceh is located at the north-western tip of Sumatra Island, Indonesia, with the Strait of Malacca to the east, the Indian Ocean to the west and the sea of Bengal to the north. Besides Acehese, there are still several other local languages spoken in Aceh such as Alas, Gayo, Tamiang, Aneuk Jamèe, Kluet, Singkil, Simeulu and Haloban ([Yusuf, 2013](#)). In addition, [Asyik \(1987\)](#) and [Thurgood \(2007\)](#) illustrate that Acehese is an Austronesian language having strong relations to Chamic languages. Yet, [Durie \(1996\)](#) has argued that Acehese is a diglossia since it is used only in the villages, in family life and in the poetic traditions, whereas Indonesian is used dominantly as a lingua franca in public and high-class domains due to its higher prestige as a national and official language.

Aceh is a multilingual society where most Acehese people are able to speak more than two languages. Diglossia regularly occurs in bilingual and multilingual societies where there is an assumption that a minority language is frequently victimized by the dominant one ([Canagarajah, 2008](#)). In general, a child born in a bilingual or multilingual society will linguistically become a bilingual speaker but it is plausible for him or her to be not literate in the minority language; this is because the language mostly used in the neighbourhood will be the dominant one.

The abandonment of native languages has already achieved a remarkably high level. [Krauss \(1992\)](#) has claimed that almost half of the world's languages were no longer being heard during the 20th century. [Krauss \(1992\)](#), then, classified the languages in the world into three categories, via: moribund languages, endangered languages that generally developed in multilingual societies and safe languages. [Nicholas \(2008\)](#) has argued that thousands of local languages have disappeared and have been replaced by a few world languages. [García \(2003\)](#) also argues that it is always better to keep the world linguistically varied rather than being monolingual, because the world itself consists of many cultures and languages so that maintaining minority languages also means preserving cultural and ethnic identities. Owing to the fact that cultural, traditional, and intellectual diversity is definitely priceless, preserving dying languages and resisting language shift is strongly needed by every single community in the world. Many languages have already died out over history, and many more today are predicted to die out within a generation or two if no efforts are made to maintain and revitalize them.

Returning to the Acehese language, many Acehese youth are not Acehese-literate nowadays; this is simply because many young Acehese parents have abruptly stopped using Acehese as a mother tongue with their children causing many children to not acquire Acehese anymore though they are growing up with parents and grandparents who are native Acehese speakers. Many parents living in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh, feel more comfortable using Indonesian and assume it is easier

and more communicative compared to Acehnese. The findings of [Alamsyah, Taib, Azwardi, and Idham \(2011\)](#) on the language choices of Acehnese families shows an alarming trend for the Acehnese language whereby many Acehnese parents nowadays choose Indonesian as the first language in their family due to several reasons. That is further reducing the number of Acehnese youths who are speaking their native language nowadays. Hence, it is widely believed that the phenomena faced by the Acehnese language today have negatively affected the possibility of intergenerational transmission of Acehnese due to the negative attitudes sprouting up amongst Acehnese parents and younger generations.

It clearly seems that there is a tendency that Acehnese has begun to be abandoned by its speakers since not only many families are now reluctant to use Acehnese with their children but also many young people have stopped using Acehnese both in public and private domains. The contemporary life of today's young generation is different from their predecessors especially in terms of their attitudes towards their mother tongue. They are feeling less comfortable using Acehnese since they believe that Indonesian gives them greater opportunities and greater social prestige. Moreover, a strange behaviour, the so-called *meukeulido*, is now springing up amongst younger Acehnese; *meukeulido* means they speak Acehnese by using a heavy Indonesian accent in order to pretend they are not able enough to speak Acehnese so that they will look modern. Ironically, not only does this phenomenon happen among ordinary people, but it has also penetrated the Acehnese establishment. Thus, this study is expected to be able to reveal the Acehnese youth's attitudes towards the Acehnese language and the level of disruption of the Acehnese language in terms of intergenerational transmission in order to strengthen and protect the Acehnese language as a symbol of identity for the Acehnese language peoples and to keep transmitting cultural and historical values through it from generation to generation.

1.1 Research Questions

Based on the explanations above, the issue to be studied was formulated into the following research questions:

- (1) What are the main factors causing Acehnese youth to be reluctant to use their L1, Acehnese language, in their groups?
- (2) What are the attitudes of the Acehnese L1 youth towards their mother language?

1.2 Justification and Significance of the Topic

This sociolinguistic situation, as previously explained, raises the question about the vitality and continuity of the Acehnese language especially in terms of intergenerational transmission of the cultural values and identity, as well as maintaining its prestige since the Acehnese language itself, based on my preliminary research, is perceived to be less prestigious than Indonesian by most Acehnese speaking, L1, younger generations nowadays. So, the study of language shift amongst these Acehnese speaking young people as well as their attitudes towards their own mother tongue is essential; if the issue is no longer one of prime concerns, as it will exacerbate the possibility of the continuity of the Acehnese language and other traditional languages in Aceh in the future and even accelerate the possibilities of further language shift.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language Shift

Language shifts have become a macro level global issue and now deemed as one of the most catastrophic destructions in the linguistic world. [Ravindranath \(2009\)](#) defines language shift as the process by which bilingual speakers in a contact situation gradually stop using one of their two languages. [Bolonyai \(1998\)](#) and [Letsholo \(2009\)](#) have illustrated language shift as the partial replacement and abandonment of minority languages by dominant ones.

2.2 Speakers' Attitudes towards Their Languages

According to [Letsholo \(2009\)](#) and also [García \(2003\)](#), the attitude of the younger generation towards a language is the key factor in maintaining minority languages and cultures so that it is important for the young generation to show their positive attitude to their own mother tongue and keep using and transmitting it to the next generation. This is considered the best way for the minority languages and cultures to survive and resist language death. In addition, attitude is one of the most important points to ensure maintenance of bilingualism ([Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004](#)). Then [Ravindranath \(2009\)](#) agrees that speakers' attitudes are an extremely important factor in maintaining a language; meaning that if their attitude towards their own language and community is positive, they will be proud to keep maintaining their cultural values and using their mother tongue so that they will resist language shift. Having a positive attitude, thus, is absolutely essential in order to promote minority language maintenance in bilingual and multilingual environments.

[Nicholas \(2008\)](#) conducted a research study on the attitude of Hopi youth towards their Hopi language, also involving parents and grandparents in order to get full understanding about the role of the Hopi language in terms of cultural identity. The research revealed that most Hopi youth are no longer acquiring their mother tongue due to their modern life and is already changing their attitudes towards their heritage language. Then, a study by [Letsholo \(2009\)](#) on the attitudes of the younger generation towards the Ikalanga language in Botswana showed that the younger people today felt ashamed and embarrassed to use their heritage language both in the public domain and in private places. So, both these research studies have shown how modern life has changed attitudes and perceptions towards a heritage language, which then raises questions about the survival of the Hopi and the Ikalanga languages in the future.

2.3 The Roles of Family in Language Maintenance

Besides their attitudes, there is a long held assumption that a family does play a significant role in language maintenance. [Canagarajah \(2008\)](#) has suggested that families has a much stronger and more powerful role for protecting and promoting a heritage language compared to that of higher and larger institutions. This has also been stated by [Fishman \(1991\)](#) who has said that the use of an ethnic language or mother tongue at home is the most important aspect for language maintenance and inter-generational language transmission. [Yu \(2010\)](#), who investigated how the parental language influenced language maintenance amongst Chinese immigrant families in

New Zealand, has claimed that beliefs and attitudes are inseparable from maintenance of a traditional language and avoidance of language shift.

Furthermore, the findings by [Alamsyah et al. \(2011\)](#) on the language choice of Acehese language families showed an alarming trend where many Acehese language parents have chosen Indonesian as the first language in their family due to several reasons, causing an inability of their potentially Acehese language offspring to speak their native language. According to the researchers, this tendency, which not only occurred in the urban areas but also in village domains, was strongly motivated by several factors, namely speaking Indonesian will facilitate children to adjust themselves to the teaching-learning processes in schools, and to socialize and communicate with other people. Then, Indonesian, as the Indonesian lingua franca, is also deemed more prestigious, modern and trendy compared to Acehese. Furthermore, using Indonesian in the family is considered a symbol of an advanced and educated family. Thus, language shift will inevitably happen should parents fail to continue to maintain their native language with their next generation.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) by [Fishman \(1991\)](#) is applied in this study. As it is widely known, [Fishman \(1991\)](#) introduces the GIDS in order to meet the challenges of the language maintenance issue. GIDS is considered one of the best models for assessing the status of minority languages. The GIDS argues that every social domain affects the existence of a language. It can be seen from Table 1 that follows that the GIDS consists of eight levels focusing on the grade of disruption from the lowest level of disruption till the dying stage of a language.

[Fishman \(1991\)](#) uses X to refer to the minority community and Y to the dominant community. Xish/Xmen and Yish/Ymen are used to identify threatened languages/the speakers of those threatened languages and dominant languages/the speakers of those dominant languages, respectively. Overall, in GIDS, [Fishman \(1991\)](#) emphasizes the importance of intergenerational transmission in language maintenance which means that a family, particularly the parents, plays a very significant role in the transmission of their heritage language to their children since it is almost impossible to protect a minority language when the children do not acquire it from their parents.

Table 1. Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale ([Fishman, 1991](#)).

<i>Stage/Level</i>	<i>Description</i>
8	Most vestigial users of Xish are socially isolated old folks and Xish needs to be re-assembled from their mouths and memories, and taught to demographically un-concentrated adults.
7	Most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethno-linguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age.
6	The attainment of inter-generational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement.
5	Xish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy.
4	Xish in lower education (types a and b) that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws.
3	Use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of the Xish neighbourhood/community) involving interaction between Xmen and Ymen.

Table 1 continued...

2	Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either.
1	Some use of Xish in higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political Independence).

Lewis and Simons (2010) simplify the GIDS to be more comprehensible:

- (1) the language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level,
- (2) the language is used for local and regional mass media and governmental services,
- (3) the language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders,
- (4) literacy in the language is transmitted through education,
- (5) the language is used orally by all generations and is effectively used in written form throughout the community,
- (6) the language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language,
- (7) the child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it with their elders but is not transmitting it to their children,
- (8) the only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparents' generation.

3. METHOD

The study adopted a case study approach. A case study is mostly used to investigate a single person, yet it can also be applied to a group, organization, institution, or community (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were the members of the Student Union of Syiah Kuala University, the so-called PEMA Unsyiah, considered to be the student representatives. The participants were limited to those students who shared the same mother tongue, which was the Acehnese language. The informants who matched the requirements of the research were contacted through email. After a brief introduction to the research project, they were asked to join and take part in the project. Once they agreed, they were then invited to select a time for an interview. As a result, there were ten participants who took part in this study. They were from different faculties at Syiah Kuala University, namely four students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, two students from the Faculty of Economics, one from the Faculty of Agriculture, two from the Faculty of Law, and the last one from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Moreover, they also came from different districts of Aceh such as Pidie, Great Aceh, South Aceh, North Aceh and the city of Sabang.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used in this research. The interviews were conducted using Indonesian. The purpose of this was to avoid language barriers that could hinder the participants from freely expressing their ideas or opinions, and it was

also expected it would help get more detailed and rich information about the attitudes of the participants towards their mother tongue and their reasons for the language choices within their groups.

3.3 Technique of Data Analysis

First of all, the data were grouped based on the research problems. Then the data from the interviews with the participants was classified and described.

4. RESULTS

The results from the interviews revealed that these Acehnese youth were truly reluctant to use Acehnese within their groups and in their daily life due to several factors. Their negative attitudes towards their mother tongue are likely to lead to language shift away from the Acehnese language. There are several factors that caused these speakers to avoid using their own Acehnese language or L1.

4.1 Indonesian is More Modern (Shows the Person to be Upper-Class)

Indonesian is considered to be much more modern compared to Acehnese which is deemed to be more old-fashioned. That is why about eight out of the ten participants were reluctant to speak Acehnese in public and modern domains. According to five respondents, speaking Acehnese in such modern places would make them feel embarrassed. They, furthermore, do not want to look like a pleb by speaking an archaic language, that is Acehnese. In addition, three of the others claimed that Indonesian belongs to the people of the towns, the townsfolk, whereas Acehnese is a language for the villagers. Thus, it is not surprising if eight out of the ten respondents prefer to use Indonesian to Acehnese when gathering with their mates especially in the elite and high-class places within Banda Aceh such as malls, cafés, fancy hotels and restaurants since it is widely believed that Indonesian seems much more modern; and it will make them look more upper-class by using it in their daily activities.

4.2 Acehnese Sounds Rude and Weird

Three respondents preferred to communicate in Indonesian than Acehnese simply because they said that Acehnese sounds rude. They worry that speaking Acehnese within their group will cause misunderstandings and insult their friends. Hence, these three respondents said that they tried to avoid using Acehnese due to its rudeness, which can inevitably offend their friends and even lead to misunderstandings amongst them. They, moreover, argued that Indonesian sounds more polite than Acehnese. One of the participants even argued that:

“When I speak Acehnese, I speak as if I were angry”. (P3, which refers to participant number 3)

Then another one said:

“I think Indonesian sounds more polite compared to Acehese”. (P8)

After that, two out of the ten respondents claimed that Acehese just sounds really “weird” (i.e. strange) to be used in daily life. One of them even claimed:

“Acehese sounds like a language from another planet”. (P6)

4.3 Indonesian is Predominantly Used on Campus

In recent years, Indonesian has been predominantly used by students/youth on campus especially in Syiah Kuala University. Almost everybody uses Indonesian to communicate with lecturers and the academic community both in formal and informal situations within the campus. Indonesian is considered as a symbol of unity and diversity. Therefore, four out of the ten respondents are likely to only use Indonesian on campus. They argue that the main reason why they choose to use Indonesian on campus is because it is the lingua franca, which has mushroomed for ages in the academic environment. Indonesian, in addition, is deemed more communicative and simpler so that it will make it easier for them in their daily communications both in formal and non-formal situations. One of the participants said that:

“If I speak Acehese on campus, it would marginalize the others who are not able to speak Acehese”. (P7)

In general, all ten respondents tend to communicate in Indonesian when they are on campus. They prefer to speak Indonesian with lecturers, the academic community and their own friends. On the other hand, they still speak Acehese with lower educated people such as parking attendants, janitors, etc.

4.4 Indonesian Seems More Prestigious and Cooler

There is a long-held assumption that Indonesian has a higher prestige than Acehese nowadays. All participants believed that Indonesian belongs to a well-educated people. It is a language of modernization commonly used in high-class places such as fancy cafés, hotels and restaurants in Banda Aceh whereas Acehese is reserved for villagers. This can be seen from the language choice of all of the ten participants who are likely to use Indonesian while ordering food in elegant cafés and restaurants, going shopping in malls, boutiques, and distribution outlets, also known as *distro*. In their opinion, Indonesian is much more prestigious compared to Acehese so that it is not unusual to use it predominantly in such classy places.

Acehese, on the contrary, is frequently used within traditional coffee shops and markets, especially located on the outskirts of the town, since it has lower prestige. It is not surprising then that Indonesian and Acehese play completely different role in these youths' everyday communications, whereby the former is believed to be much more superior to the latter. After that, three of the ten participants argued that communicating in Indonesian will help them to look more trendy and “cooler” (i.e. more attractive or impressive). One respondent said that:

“It just sounds cool every time I speak Indonesian with my pals”. (P1)

Whilst the other explained that:

“I just want to adjust myself to living in Banda Aceh through speaking Indonesian as an indication of the cool generation”. (P6)

4.5 Indonesian is Used to Neutralize the Differences between Acehese Dialects

Acehnese has several dialects such as South-West Aceh dialect, Greater Aceh dialect, Pidie dialect, Pase dialect, etc. In fact, the differences between the different Acehese dialects have become one of the fundamental reasons for two participants to avoid their own mother tongue and to prefer to use Indonesian in order to neutralize the variety of Acehese dialects. One of the participants expressed it thus:

“I come from South Aceh. My friends are mostly from Pidie, Aceh Besar, Banda Aceh, Lhokseumawe, and other districts on the east coast of Aceh. I feel awkward and excluded from the group every time I speak my own dialect of Acehese. Some vocabularies are also quite different. They make fun of my Acehese over and over again. That is why speaking Indonesian is the best way in terms of interaction within the group”. (P4)

The differences in the Acehese dialects, moreover, can create inconvenience for those who come from the west coast of Aceh who are a minority group in Banda Aceh (Aziz, 2014). So, it then becomes an issue for them that could definitely hamper their willingness to communicate within the group. In this case, communicating in Indonesian is considered the best choice for both groups in order to cope with this issue.

4.6 Indonesian is More Convenient Whilst Acehese is More Difficult

All ten respondents stated that Indonesian is much more convenient than Acehese to be used in their group. The former is assumed to be acceptable for all social communities and also can be used in any condition, situation, environment, neighbourhood and group; while the latter is used only within a family environment. Nine of the ten participants have been speaking Indonesian since they arrived in Banda Aceh so they already feel comfortable using Indonesian in any occasion in their everyday life.

Moreover, four of the respondents are reluctant to communicate in Acehese since they believe that Acehese is more complicated and difficult to use. According to them, it is not easy to express an idea in Acehese either through speaking or writing. One of the participants said:

“Sometimes I got the difficulty in finding a good and appropriate word while expressing some topics in Acehese with my pals”. (P5)

Another even claimed:

“I am pretty sure that most of the Acehese youth today are not able to write grammatically correct Acehese”. (P8)

4.7 Acehese is Used for Making Jokes, Humour, and Puns

Four out of the ten respondents prefer to use Acehese for making jokes, humour, and puns. They suggested that using Acehese in such situations would make jokes funnier and more humorous. One participant said:

“I have a different sense when I hear a joke in Acehese and in Indonesian. I can easily laugh out loud every time the friends of mine tell a joke in the former while it hardly happens in the latter”. (P1)

Another participant (P2) explained that he is used to listening to preachers preaching in both Indonesian and in Acehese. In fact, according to him, it would be much funnier if the preacher lectures in Acehese than in Indonesian.

4.8 Indonesian is More Reasonable and Convenient to Communicate with the Opposite Sex

All respondents agree to speak Indonesian with the opposite sex. In their opinion, it is more convenient to communicate in Indonesian with the opposite sex since it will increase their self-confidence and their social status. In addition, seven respondents argued that Indonesian sounds more poetic and romantic and is more suitable to be used in mixed-gender interactions (excerpts from P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, and P9). Furthermore, five of the ten participants agreed that using Acehese in such mixed groups would make them embarrassed and look like a pleb. One respondent said:

“I will use Indonesian in that case because I feel less confident to speak Acehese with men”. (P6)

The other one claimed:

“Indonesian is much more subtle to communicate with women”. (P10)

However, three out of the ten participants suggested that they often communicate in Acehese with Acehese friends of the opposite sex particularly those who are very close to them. This is simply because they do not want to create a gap within their group, explained one of the participants (P6). This was followed by another respondent's opinion (P7), she said she will keep using Acehese with her friends both males and females coming from the same region with her because she has been communicating in Acehese with them for ages; so, switching into Indonesian will create a gap between them. The last comment in this case was given by a young man, coming from Sigli who said:

“When I am in Sigli, I always communicate in Acehese with my friends both men and women. Therefore, I still use Acehese to communicate with them even when we meet in Banda Aceh. I am quite sure that they will laugh at me if I speak Indonesian with them”. (P10)

4.9 If the Communication is Convenient in Indonesian, it will be Difficult to Switch it into Acehnese

It is not surprising to find many respondents still choose Indonesian to interact with their Acehnese friends though they absolutely know that they share the same mother tongue. This is because they have communicated in Indonesian since the first time they met in Banda Aceh. So, it is not an easy job to switch into Acehnese since they feel comfortable with their first language choice (i.e. Indonesian). I asked whether they would switch their language choice from Indonesian into Acehnese by the time they find out that their friends share the same mother tongue with them. About six of the ten respondents answered they will not change it because it will just sound strange and awkward. This has also happened with young couples, who start communicating in Indonesian and say they would have difficulty to switch to Acehnese.

4.10 Indonesian is Easier and More Convenient to Greet New Friends

All of the ten participants in this case agree to use Indonesian while meeting new friends in Banda Aceh, particularly on campus. This is because they are afraid that people whom they meet for the very first time cannot speak Acehnese; that is why using Indonesian is the best solution in this particular situation. Two participants (P3 and P7) said that the first impression is very important in maintaining social status. Hence, using Indonesian when meeting a new friend would likely show that their status is part of the modern generation and of the advanced society.

5. DISCUSSION

From the results discussed above, it can be seen that the negative attitudes mushrooming within the Acehnese youths' life towards the Acehnese language could inevitably lead to the abandonment of the Acehnese language itself sooner or later. Most of them are likely to stop using Acehnese both in public and private domains. It, hence, obviously implies that Acehnese has begun to be left behind by the Acehnese younger generation today due to their negative attitudes towards it. Furthermore, negative attitudes towards a mother tongue can also be found in many other communities around the world. For instance, [Clyne and Kipp \(1997\)](#) who examined the language of immigrants coming in contact with English such as Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, and Mandarin speakers in Australia. They found that the younger groups preferred to speak in English and to avoid their mother tongue in many domains, whereas the older people loved using their native languages in their daily interactions. This was followed by the study on Maltese speakers in Ontario that found most of the young generation speakers were reluctant to use their own vernacular in many circumstances ([Slavik, 2001](#)). After that, there was [Gafaranga \(2011\)](#), who observed the Rwandan community in Belgium where a language shift from the Rwandan language towards French monolingualism was on-going. The results revealed that these Rwandan children living in Belgium preferred to use French in almost all everyday circumstances. This was then also supported by [Wang and Chong \(2011\)](#) who found that immigrant communities were the most representative group facing the language

shift situation. Their research revealed that the younger the user, the less the native language was used.

Returning to the GIDS concept, the GIDS suggests that positive attitudes possessed by speakers particularly families are the key aspect in language maintenance (Lewis & Simons, 2010). Most of the subjects of this research study, furthermore, argued that they are likely to transfer Indonesian to their children in the future and make it their families' mother tongue. Canagarajah (2008) applied Fishman's GIDS to immigrant Tamil family members in three different countries, USA, UK and Canada in order to find out their language choices and attitudes towards their mother tongue due to the issue of rapid Tamil language shift. There is no doubt that social consideration drive parental choices of the language used, driving them to rapid language loss. The negative attitude known as '*aankilamookam*' was spreading amongst speakers in order to become fully English in their daily life.

Fishman (1991) notes the importance of the language being used in its written form, access to media in the language, use of the language in work and schooling, etc. However, such circumstances are hardly found within Acehese neighbourhoods nowadays. Thus, the Acehese language, based on these research results, can be stated to be at level 6 of the GIDS. That level is indicated, not only because of the attitudes of the young generation towards their mother tongue, but also because of the possibility of the language choice of Acehese language families in the future which they are becoming extremely concerned about. It has been illustrated that languages recognized as minority languages that need to be revitalized are mostly at level 6 moving towards level 7 because languages at this stage are in a state of language shift. Fishman (1991) illustrates that a minority language at level 6 is almost fully determined by the Xish own group, particularly in the home family neighbourhood rather than relying on other factors. There is no single factor having as much power as a family's though researchers do not abandon the relationship between families and other social domains as well. The ability and urging of the family itself in transmitting their native language to their children will determine the success of language maintenance.

6. CONCLUSION

Language shift is a process where the dominant language is going to shift minority languages not only in formal domains but also in informal situations. As a result, the fewer domains a language is used in, the closer it is to death. It can be seen from the research findings that Acehese now belongs to a low class domain, only used in homes and villages. According to Batibo (2005), as cited in Letsholo (2009), there are some stages identifying a language loss which are L1 gets shifted out by L2 for several purposes where the domains concerned used to be L1 interactions such as within villages and even within families. This is then followed by massive code switching, and the L1 is, finally, used only in particular circumstances such as for religious and ritual purposes. Such phenomena are inevitably on-going for the Acehese language nowadays. Therefore, in order to maintain the Acehese language, the Acehese youths are strongly advised to adopt positive attitudes towards their mother tongue since the survival of the language is fully influenced by the attitudes of the speakers themselves. Then families and social institutions are also required to take part in maintaining the Acehese language.

REFERENCES

- Alamsyah, T., Taib, R., Azwardi, & Idham, M. (2011). Pemilihan bahasa Indonesia sebagai bahasa pertama anak dalam keluarga masyarakat Aceh penutur Bahasa Aceh di Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam [Choosing Indonesian as the children's first language in the family of acehnese community who are acehnese native speakers in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam]. *Malay Language Education Journal*, 1(2), 31-44.
- Asyik, A. G. (1987). *A contextual grammar of Acehnese sentences*. (Doctoral), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Aziz, Z. A. (2014). *A sociolinguistic investigation of Acehnese with a focus on West Acehnese: a stigmatised dialect*. (Doctoral), University of Adelaide, Adelaide.
- Batibo, H. M. (2005). *Language decline and death in Africa: Courses, consequences and challenges*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bolonyai, A. (1998). In-between languages: Language shift/maintenance in childhood bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 2(1), 21-43.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2008). Language shift and the family: Questions from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12(2), 143-176.
- Clyne, M., & Kipp, S. (1997). Trends and changes in home language use and shift in Australia, 1986-1996. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18(6), 451-473.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Durie, M. (1996). Framing the Acehnese text: Language choice and discourse structures in Aceh. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 35(1), 113-137.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gafaranga, J. (2011). Transition space medium repair: Language shift talked into being. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(1), 118-135.
- García, M. (2003). Recent research on language maintenance. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23, 22-43.
- Gibbons, J., & Ramirez, E. (2004). Different beliefs: Beliefs and the maintenance of a minority language. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 23(1), 99-117.
- Krauss, M. (1992). The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, 68(1), 4-10.
- Letsholo, R. (2009). Language maintenance or shift? Attitudes of Bakalanga youth towards their mother tongue. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(5), 581-595.
- Lewis, M. P., & Simons, G. F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, 55(2), 103-120.
- Llamas, C., Mullany, L., & Stockwell, P. (2006). *The Routledge companion to sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Nicholas, S. E. (2008). *Becoming "fully" Hopi: The role of the Hopi Language in the contemporary lives of Hopi youth - A Hopi case study of language shift and vitality*. (Doctoral), The University of Arizona, Tucson.
- Ravindranath, M. (2009). *Language shift and the speech community: Sociolinguistic change in a Garifuna community in Belize*. (Doctoral), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Slavik, H. (2001). *Language maintenance and language shift among Maltese migrants in Ontario and British Columbia*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

- Thurgood, G. (2007). *The historical place of Acehese: the known and the unknown*. Paper presented at the The First International Conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, Banda Aceh, Indonesia.
- Verdoodt, A. F. (1997). The demography of language. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *The handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 33-43). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wang, X., & Chong, S. L. (2011). A hierarchical model for language maintenance and language shift: Focus on the Malaysian Chinese community. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 32(6), 577-591.
- Yu, S. (2010). How much does parental language behaviour reflect their language beliefs in language maintenance? *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 20(1), 1-22.
- Yusuf, Y. Q. (2013). *A comparative study of vowels in the Acehese language spoken in Kedah, Malaysia and Aceh, Indonesia*. (Doctoral), University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

[Received 3 June 2016; revised 8 October 2016; accepted 5 January 2017]

THE AUTHOR

Teuku Muhammad Ridha Al-Auwal is an English lecturer with the Study Program of English Education in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Samudra University in Aceh, Indonesia. He has a Certificate of the English Program for Internationals from the University of South Carolina, U. S. A. He finished his Bachelor in English Education at Syiah Kuala University in 2011 and got his Master of Applied Linguistics from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia in 2014.