

# FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE CODE SHIFTING IN MADURESE PEOPLE WRITING (AN ETHNOLINGUISTICS STUDY VIEWED FROM SOCIOLINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE)

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**Abstract:** Madurese language is used by Madurese people as their means of communication in all aspects of life. A research-worthy phenomenon occurs in their language-written-form choice that is Madurese people tend to cease using Madurese language when they interact in written form. This is an interesting sign that there is somewhat different language use between spoken and written form and likely this phenomenon will become a threat to the existence of Madurese language in the future.

**Key words:** Madurese language, code shifting, written text

Madura, with its four regencies; Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan and Sumenep, is not only inhabited by Madurese, but also Javanese, Arabs, Chinese, Sumatranese, and Sundanese. Although its social structure is built up from many ethnics, the majority of its population are the native speakers of Madurese language and they communicate using that language.

National policy obligates *Bahasa Indonesia* as the official language used by the whole nations. Madura as a part of Indonesia also applies the language to be used in the island. As a result, they become bilingual or even multilingual speakers.

Based on their ability as bilingual or multilingual people, we may ask what will happen if these people meet in a “multilingual setting”: what language or languages will they use? When this question is linked to the modern communication context when communication using mobile phone be-

comes a new trend, what linguistic phenomenon then transpires in that place? What language or languages do they use in phoning? Or, what language or languages do they prefer in writing SMS (Short Message Service)? These are very interesting questions to discuss.

Yule (1985:8) stated that a very large number of languages found in the world today is only used in spoken form. It rises as the consequence of not having the written form thereof. It leads to a case that many people are able to perform “a very excellent language” in their society yet; failed to carry out the language in written form. Consequently, the language gradually vanishes. This shocking statement I presume is really accurate and can be proven by many cases related to the use of Madurese language in written form. The cases are so plenty that I begin to worry about the existence of Madurese language in the future. The cases are

mostly about the unavoidable fact the-so-called code shifting.

As a Madurese, I notice an interesting phenomenon in our daily interactions related to our written communication. This is true that as we interact we use Madurese language, yet when this interaction shifts to the written one, the use of Madurese language does not arise anymore. This is an interesting sign that there is somewhat different language use between spoken and written. The different use of Madurese language makes me have a very big question in my mind. The question is; does this phenomenon only happen in our interactions or does it happen to other people's interaction and become a new culture in our society? If it is true that this phenomenon is a new culture, then I believe what Yule state related to the vanishing language is valid. Madurese language gradually vanishes.

Based on the writer's concern over the existence of Madurese language, this article is written. In general this article provides the following information: a) The use of Madurese language in society, b) factors that contribute code shifting in written communication. c) The impact of code shifting to the existence of Madurese language in the future.

## **MADURESE PEOPLE, MADURESE LANGUAGE AND ITS USE IN SOCIETY**

Madurese people are the third largest people group in Indonesia. They make up 7% of the entire Indonesian population. Presently about three and a half million Madurese still live on the island of Madura, while another nine and half million live primarily on Jawa (Java). Other major areas of Madurese people can be found in Jakarta, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. Madurese people are renowned for their harsh character and lifestyles. This is probably caused by their natural surroundings and their history of

oppression by others, both of which make life very difficult for them. Nevertheless, their harsh temperament can be seen positively if one examines their work ethic. Most of them work extremely hard and refuse to give up. Both men and women do not shrink from hard work in order to meet basic needs (PJRN: 2006). Based on the data from East Java Central Bureau, Madura has 3.492.132 citizens. The citizens comes from four parts of Madura, those are Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan and Sumenep. Bangkalan has 886.080 citizen, Sampang 833.640, Pamekasan 740.150, and Sumenep 1.032.260. From that number 80% is native Madurese. The rest 20% are Javanese, Sundanese, Arabs, Chinese, and Sumatranese.

Madurese is the spoken language of people from Madura island in Indonesia; it is also spoken on Kangean Islands, Sapudi Islands, and in parts of the province of East Java. It is classified in the Sundic subgroup of the West Malayo-Polynesian group of the Austronesian languages family. It was traditionally written in the Javanese script, but the Roman script is now more commonly used. Number of speakers though shrinking are estimated to be 8-10 million (Wikipedia, 2006). No one likely spoke other languages until formal education and information grew rapidly in that area. As the rate of education and information grows, now Madurese speak not only Madurese language, but also *Bahasa Indonesia* and Javanese. Yet, they still use Madurese as their prime language in their daily conversation.

Madurese builds a strong-well-established-culture in their society. They respect much on their culturally bound as Madurese and possess a very strong solidarity among them. As the result, Madurese people seldom left their native language in daily conversation among them.

Greenberg defined language as a set of culturally transmitted behaviour pattern shared by a group of individuals (Greenberg in Bell, 1981:23). That is why a certain lan-

guage will be used by the member of society similarly as their elderly used in the past. This language will live a long with the existing processes of transmitting of the language in that society. What the ancestor said in that language in the past will be spoken in the same way by their descendants. Holmes (1992:3) stated “ Language provides a variety of ways of saying the same thing addressing and greeting others, describing things, and paying compliments.” This variation also occurs in Madurese language, and of course it gives much influence on the existing dialect of Madurese. Yet, it provides no barrier in Madurese communication.

When we talk about Madurese language, we also talk about their language transmission. As this society grows still, the transmission brings impacts to the language. The transmission creates many changing especially in the use of the language in multilingual settings. Here, code shifting exists.

### **FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE CODE SHIFTING IN WRITTEN FORM**

Many previous studies propose some factors that contribute code shifting. Gil provides three dominant factors that are more plausible to examine the process of language shift. Those are; language status, demography and institution. (Gil in Setiawan 2001:175). In Madura, I found five factors that contribute most in Madurese language shifting. Those are, *demography, language status, characteristics of Madurese language, diglossia and trend*

#### **Demography**

Demography should be taken into account for its contribution to code shifting. I have stated in my previous statement that Madura is not only inhabited by Madurese, but also Javanese, Arabic, Chinese, Sumatranese, and Sundanese. Together with the Madurese, these new inhabitants build a

harmonic society. They share distinctive roles and create a particular demography like the one we can see now. Although the new inhabitants let say the Javanese, are minor and small in number, they play crucial roles in Madura island. Many of them occupy important social positions. They work as civil servants, teachers, doctors, labourers, even street vendors. Their occupations force them to intermingle with Madurese otherwise, they will not survive. However, they have a very crucial problem that is they do not know Madurese language. This lack of language knowledge seems to become everlasting communication-crash-barrier if they do not overcome it immediately. Luckily, they know *Bahasa Indonesia* and they make use of it as a bridge of communication. They use *Bahasa Indonesia* to interact with Madurese. Madurese, on the other hand respect these people much and they also use *Bahasa Indonesia* to show their respect. Madurese speak *Bahasa Indonesia* to conduct understandable communication with the new inhabitants. They also apply the language in written communication. In sending SMS or in writing a letter, they use *Bahasa Indonesia* as the preferable language. In this case, we can say that it is almost impossible for Madurese to use Madurese language to write something that is addressed to Javanese.

#### **Language Status**

Referring to Appel’ and Muysken’s that language shifting occurs because of the status of the language, namely minority language (Gil in Setiawan 2001:175), Trudgill claims that a minority language that is smaller and less influential is unlikely to become official language. When a language does not become an official language, then its survival is hardly achieved. That is to say that the language is used less and less and finally language shifting is unavoidable (Gil

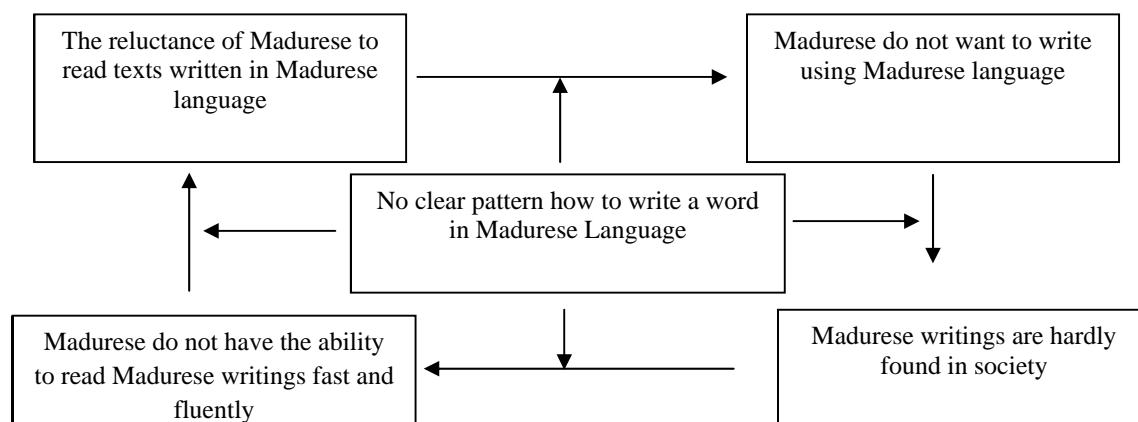
in Setiawan 2001:175). What Trudgill said is suitable with what is happening with Madurese language. Madurese language although widely spoken by Madurese people, still cannot become an official language. As a result, the use of Madurese language in formal situation is always the second choice. This is the result of becoming a minority language in its own hometown. Being a minority language gives modest benefit to Madurese. As we come to the written one, the use of Madurese is almost left. This includes the use of Madurese language in educational world.

The disuse of Madurese language in schools is actually the problem's core of the absence of Madurese language in written form. To achieve the knowledge how to write, people must pass the so-called formal education in schools. The process is conducted in a formal way and gives the impact on the use of the medium of instruction in schools. As national policy proclaims *bahasa Indonesia* as the medium of instruction in every school, students speak and read using *bahasa Indonesia*. In written form, students write in that language too. The students, since they do it for years, then get used to using *bahasa Indonesia*. This very long process appears as a new custom in society. When the students are asked to speak, they will speak using *bahasa Indonesia*. When they are instructed to choose reading materials and read them, they will choose materials written in *bahasa Indonesia*. When they are asked to write something, they will write Indonesian sentences using alphabetic script and will not write using *ha na ca ra ka* system, a writing system used by ancient Madurese people. Unlikely no one writes Madurese language using alphabetic form. When someone does so, it implies that the person wants to achieve a certain goal, for example to do *pelajaran ba-*

*hasa Madura*'s assignments, to attract people's attention in the form of banners, to write a speech script for a traditional ceremony, to deliver a message from a certain institution in the form of ads, or just to promote products.

The reluctance of Madurese people to write something using Madurese language and the very limited number of Madurese writings in society, result a new problem. The problem is about their Madurese competence to understand texts written in Madurese language. Since they "have abandoned" their skill to write Madurese language for years, they need a long time to understand a text, or even a sentence. A very short sentence *Ale' nemmo baja palsu* will be very difficult to understand by Madurese because they are not accustomed to reading a sentence like this. Besides, the word *baja* has ambiguous meanings since it can be interpreted into three meanings; *baja* for tooth, *baja* for steel, or *baja* for a crocodile. When a Madurese reads this sentence, he or she will likely get confused with what the meaning is, whether the sentence has a meaning: my little brother found a bar of fake steel, or my little brother found a fake tooth, or my little brother found a fake crocodile. The problem is worsened by the lack of intelligibility of Madurese writing system. The writing system here refers to a well-known and acknowledged system of how to write Madurese words using alphabetic script. This dilemma makes Madurese people feel reluctant to write something in Madurese language. As a consequence, Madurese language gradually vanishes in written form.

The dilemma can be viewed as a 'chained factor' that each component contributes something to another component. The chained factor can be seen in the chart below:



### The Characteristics of Madurese Language

The third factor relates to Madurese language itself. Madurese words have special characters comparing with other languages' words. The first special character lies on the 'plosive' sound that exists in many words. The second one lies on the number of their consonants in a word. A word *Beddha* (face powder) is an example of these special characters. The number of consonants in a word sometimes makes Madurese people get confused to write them. A word *kamma'ah* (where) in a sentence *Dha' kamma'ah?* (where are you going?) is a tangible example that writing Madurese expressions is not as easy as writing Indonesian expressions. If a person writes this expression in the form of SMS, and the format of his or her writings is based on people's custom that is clipping the words shorter, not only the receiver will get confused to read the message, the sender of SMS, will also have to think hard to prepare his or her SMS. An SMS message *Tng bdhn rassna sake* that follows clipping format will definitely confuse the reader. The actual meaning of this message is *my body hurts*. The word *bdhn* when it is written completely will appear as *badhan* (body). But because Madurese people are not accustomed to reading texts written in Madurese language, they might come to

another meaning. *Bdhn* might be read *budhun* (ulcer) and it is completely different from *badhan* (body). This misinterpretation sometimes will be harmful for Madurese people's relationship. To avoid this SMS problem, Madurese use Indonesian language instead of Madurese, and because of that code shifting occurs.

### Diglossia.

Some communities normally have diglossia situations. This means that one language is normally used for high matters such as social and education and another for everyday concern.

Diglossia phenomenon occurs in Madura. As a community which holds the norm tightly, madurese give their respect much to their elders. The respect is shown by shifting the language to the higher or the highest level. Madurese have three levels of language. Those are *Enja'-iya*, *Enggi-enten*, and *Enggi-bunten*. *Enja'-Iya* is commonly used to communicate with close friends, colleagues at the same age, or younger-aged-relatives. *Enggi-Enten* is used to respect common-older-people. *Enggi- Bunten* which is the highest level, is used to communicate with older people especially the people who occupy a very respectful position. This person might be parents, a teacher, a religion leader and a ruler. Education is a common sphere for diglossia in Madura. Students speak to teachers using *Basa Alos*

(High language) that is *Enggi-Bunten* or infrequently *Enggi-Enten*. The use of that language indicates that the students know much how to respect elder. Those who do not use the two levels of the language will be considered as impolite and uneducated students.

Unfortunately, the use of *Enggi-Enten*, and *Enggi Bunten* nowadays has been abandoned, particularly by teenagers who live in urban area. Many teenagers do not know how to use this level of language. It happens because they have never been taught intensively to use the language. They use Madurese but the level is only *Enggi-Enten*. It appears to be a problem for them to communicate with elder. Trying to avoid being called impolite and uneducated students, they use *bahasa Indonesia* instead *Basa Alos*. In this case, they are still able to communicate with the elder without leaving their respect. In written communication, they do it the same way.

Writing is a complicated skill. Not only the writer needs to be smart in constructing ideas about what he/she is going to write, he/she has to be able to find good diction. This skill is very important to possess otherwise the reader or the receiver of the message will not understand the ideas behind the message. The process of finding ideas and diction according to some people is very difficult to accomplish, particularly for Madurese. When a Madurese writes something using Madurese language particularly using *Basa Alos*, he/she must pass this process. First he/she must look for ideas. The second he must find a good diction. Then, he needs to think hard how to write the words in Madurese language since he/she is not accustomed to writing something using Madurese language. He/she also must be very selective to chose the appropriate words in *Basa Alos* just to make sure that the language is polite enough before it is sent. This is a tiring process that not many Madurese want to undergo. To make

it easier, Madurese shift the language to *bahasa Indonesia*.

### Trend

Trend refers to the actual phenomenon that exists in society. As the electronic communication era develops fast in Madura, there are no more boundaries between Madurese and people from different communities. Madurese will be able to communicate or even to see many people of Indonesia via telephone, mobile phone, internet, radio or television. Here, mass media especially television plays a significant role in language sift. TV channels broadcast many programs related to trends, entertainment and information. Those programs are broadcasted in more or less in *Bahasa Indonesia* (many *sinetrons* are broadcasted in *Bahasa Indonesia*-Betawis accent). TV channels also exhibit artists' lives and the way they communicate each other. The channels also promotes the use of modern slang words (*Bahasa Gaul*) that are derived from *Bahasa Indonesia*. Madurese especially teenagers, also watch this, and likely, adopt this trend. They use *Bahasa Indonesia* not because of their needs, but it is merely because they want to be called trendy and modern. In writing, they prefer to choose *Bahasa Indonesia* to Madurese in order to prove themselves that they are educated well, or to be considered as unleft-behinded people.

### THE IMPACT OF CODE SHIFTING TO THE EXISTENCE OF MADURESE LANGUAGE IN THE FUTURE.

Code shifting occurring in Madurese society is actually a common linguistic phenomenon. This phenomenon can be found in all multilingual societies. It appears to satisfy the need of a way to communicate with other people who speak different language. As long as this phenomenon exists temporarily, the existence of the domain language (the language that is being shifted)

can be maintained. Nevertheless, if this practice is applied continuously or even permanently, this will give negative impacts and at last will threaten the host language. In Madura island, when Madurese people shift their language to *bahasa Indonesia* all the time, this will harm Madurese language. Madurese people, as they are accustomed to using *bahasa Indonesia*, will find inconvenient if they are, one time, forced to reuse Madurese language. The habit of not using Madurese language, if descended to their next generation, will make their young generations not to have a good ability to use Madurese language, though their “blood” is Madurese. If there is no preventive action to stop this to happen, Madurese language will vanish.

The vanishing process of Madurese language can be seen easily. One of the clear examples is Madurese language has been vanishing in written form. This is supported by many facts. For examples 65 banners that scattered in Bangkalan regency, only two banners are written in Madurese language. The rest 63 uses *bahasa Indonesia*, whereas in fact the banners were designed by Madurese and aimed for Madurese. Also 50 Bangkalan students being interviewed, mentioned that they (43 students) had hardly used Madurese language when they sent SMS. The rest 7 students mentioned that they did use Madurese language when they sent SMS, but that was not so frequent. From the graffiti written at the back of twenty-nine dumper trucks, only two graffiti were written in Madurese language. The rest twenty-seven graffiti were written in *bahasa Indonesia*, though the truck’s license plate were M, an official license plate’s letter for Madurese vehicles. The two Madurese graffiti that were written in Madurese, only used very simple phrases; that was *te ngate*, (be careful) and *Ale’ sayang* (my beloved sister/wife). (d) From the whole store billboards scattering in Bangkalan regency, none was written in

Madurese language. (e) Only one local mass media was written in Madurese language. (Azhar, 2008)

The facts stated above, give a clear proof that Madurese language has been in the process of vanishing. If there is no preventive action performed to stop this from happening, then Madurese language will completely be vanished.

To prevent Madurese language from becoming extinct, two ways can be done; those are encouraging young Madurese people to write using Madurese language and building new custom on reading and writing using Madurese language. If these two things can be performed, they will generate a positive domino effect towards the improvement of Madurese language in the future. For the first time, the young people might face many difficulties to write something using Madurese since they often have to look up their Madurese dictionary just to make sure they write their sentences correctly. They might also often ask questions to their elder whether their sentences are quite “*alos*,” or not. It seems this is hard to do, but at least by doing this, an action has been performed. The young will keep studying. They will be very busy buying books written in Madurese language, and read them all to make sure they are competent enough in their own language. When they are competent, probably some of them will become Madurese authors and write books using Madurese language. The more they write books written in Madurese, the more Madurese books exist in society. The more Madurese books can be found in society, the Code Shifting phenomenon will not become a threat for madurese language anymore.

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