



**THE REASONS OF LANGUAGE SHIFT IN GAYONESE  
AMONG CHILDREN AT SOUTHEAST ACEH REGENCY**

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*Submitted May; Accepted June; Published Augustus*

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to find out the reasons of language shift occurs in children at Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency. The Gayo dialect, the native tongue of Jambur Damar village in Southeast Aceh Regency. This study applied qualitative research method. The study subject were ten children of Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency. Furthermore, observation, interview and documentation were employed in collecting the data. After collecting the data, it was analyzed by the following stages, transcription, identification and classification. The findings showed that the reasons language shift occurrence in this study were habitual language usage and environment. Meanwhile, environment is one of the reasons that greatly influenced the language shift because it was used to connect with neighbors in the Jambur Damar village who spoke different mother tongues.

**Keywords:** *Language Shift, Reasons, Gayonese Language, Southeast Aceh*

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**How to Cite:** Sartika, D. (2023). The Reasons of Language Shift in Gayonese among Children at Southeast Aceh Regency. *Jurnal Linguistik Terapan Pascasarjana Unimed*. 20 (2): 116-122.

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**ISSN: 2407-7410**

**INTRODUCTION**

The importance of language in human life cannot be overstated. Language is not just a means of communication but also an access point into the speaker's culture. Behavior, events, and situations can all be changed by language. Children and language are in the same boat. A multitude of obstacles must be overcome by children when learning their first language, including the requirement to recognize between loud speech flows and meaningful speech units, apply labels to evolving preferences, and comprehend the varied syntax and morphology found in the more than 7000 languages spoken worldwide. On the other hand, young people seldom ever speak some languages, especially more traditional ones like Gayonese, preferring to communicate with one

another in Indonesian instead. Therefore, language shift occurs when a group of speakers begins to use a language from a wider society, like a majority or national language, instead of their mother tongue or a minority language. As a result, the community is using one language more and more in place of the range and functions of a minority language (May, 2012). In contrast, the mother tongue is more likely to disappear in a bilingual or multilingual community if another language predominates (Fishman, 2006).

However, Holmes (2001) stated that language shift often refers to the process through which one language replaces another in a community's linguistic repertoire. A language shift occurs when a mother tongue of a minority language is replaced with a language that is more commonly spoken in society. As the majority language eventually supplants the minority language, language shift can occur in a variety of circumstances for different individuals and groups, but generally speaking, it impacts the younger generations.

Understanding the function of language in nationalism and as a means of communication in society is a necessary first step towards comprehending why someone shifts to a dominant language. The direction of a language shift is frequently toward the language that is dominant. Furthermore, Holmes (2001) also claims that the dominant language has an impact on social achievement, status, and prestige. People who are idolized by young people, such as pop singers, fashion models, and disc jockeys, use it in official speeches at ceremonial events, as well as newsreaders on radio and television. In the greater society, it can also be applied in glamorous situations. The fact that many young speakers of minority groups seize the chance to use the majority language while neglecting or giving up on their native tongue (L1) should not come as a surprise.

Language shift can also be accelerated by negative attitudes and values toward a language. This happened when the ethnic language is no longer regarded as an essential indicator of identity and is no longer highly valued. When a language is not highly regarded as a language and is not viewed as a marker of ethnic identity, Holmes (2001) has identified some factors that lead to language shift. Because of their positive views, which help them resist pressure from the dominant group to adopt their language, she also anticipates that speakers will continue to use their ethnic language in a range of circumstances. She also stated that those who are young adjust to a new language the fastest.

Language is a crucial indicator of identity (Yusuf et al., 2013). Identity is the means by which individuals express themselves in their native tongue. If people believe they belong to a distinguished social group a belief that is primarily shaped by how society as a whole views them their attachment to language will be strong. A bad ethnic identity will add to the ethnic group's poor

reputation. If the ethnic group does not place a high value on their language, the minority language's poor status will eventually cause it to perish. If the group believes the language is useless, then members will not require to learn it. Ultimately, as the ethnic group shifts to using the language with greater prestige, it will stop using its minority language in a wide range of contexts.

Fishman (1991) stated that language shift frequently occurs in speech communities when the original languages are under threat due to a decrease in intergenerational continuity, with less and fewer users or uses occurring with each generation. Language shift is obviously happening based on the fact that fewer people in that generation are speaking their original tongue. Consequently, Holmes (2001) argues that while the possibility of a language shifting grows with the number of domains in which it is used, the possibility of a language being kept increases with the same number of domains.

Furthermore, Lucas (2001: 47) highlights the significance of language shift, which occurs when individuals within a community begin speaking languages other than their mother tongue. This has consequences for different minorities. Through the practice of "language shifting," which teaches people to successfully adopt various languages into their environments, languages gain greater appreciation.

In this case, the research takes the object language shift of children in Jambur Damar Southeast Aceh Regency. Therefore, the researchers are interested in examining the reasons of language shift occurs in children at Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency. Moreover, the reasons that causes the parents applied their children to use Indonesian as the their first language are children from the family whose parents especially mothers has a variety languages in their families and environments.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted in the village of Jambur Damar in Aceh province's Southeast Aceh Regency. The research design employed in this study was descriptive qualitative. When describing and analyzing the objects in descriptive research, the surrounding environment is taken into account. Ten children from Jambur Damar village who had experienced language shift between the ages of 9-12 years old were specifically selected to take part in the study. These instruments were used to support the techniques: an audio recorder, interview guideline, and note-taking. Data for the study were acquired through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were done in order to gain deeper insight into the variable the reasons of language shift in Jambur Damar village. To obtain in-depth conversations, note-taking and recording were employed. The analysis process consists of the following steps: collecting, classifying, analyzing,

and deciding. Then, the data were presented into results and discussions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theoretically, there are three main reasons that influence language shifts they are cultural identity, the value of a language, and prestige. However, this study discovered two additional reasons of language shift, namely the habitual language usage, and environment. The research problem the reasons of language shift occurs in children at Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency can be illustrated as in the chart below:

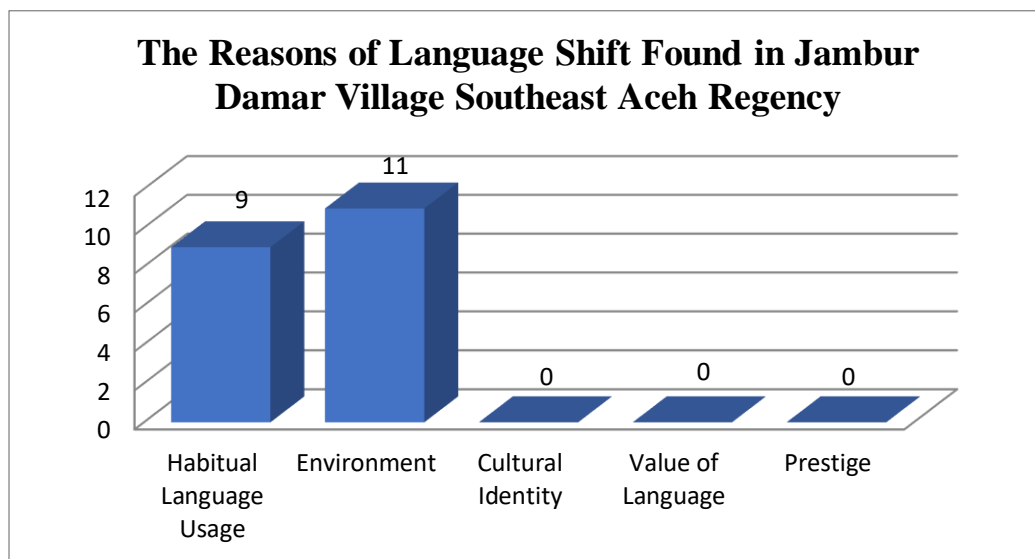


Chart 1. The reason of language shift in Jambur Damar

It revealed that the reasons language shift occurs of children in Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency namely habitual language usage and environment. In this investigation, 20 data were found. Children of Jambur Damar village, Southeast Aceh Regency, were also included in this study due to their habitual language usage, which was influenced by their upbringing, education, and social environment. However, the environment also played a significant role in language shifts, as it was utilized to communicate with neighbors in the Jambur Damar village who spoke different mother languages. The character shifted the way he spoke as a result.

On the other hand, social environment also affect how children form their opinions as well as how children in the Jambur Damar village are changing the Gayo language. Through the regular use of language in context, the children get acquainted with the language. The children observe a shift in the Gayonese language when they are with their friends. Children who speak Gayo with friends have a distinct Gayo accent, but they are also exposed to a range of other languages. For more details, it can be seen some of the data as follows.

- *Habitual Language Usage*

#### Data 1

- R : *Kenapa kamu nggak pakai bahasa Gayo, apa alasannya?*  
(Why don't you used the Gayo language, what is the reason?)
- Az : *Hmm, karena dari orang tua udah kayak gitu, dan orang tua pun nggak pernah pakai bahasa Gayo dirumah, jadi aku nggak bisa bahasa Gayo.*  
(Hmm, because my parents were like that, and my parents also never used the Gayo language at home, so I couldn't speaks the Gayo language.)

The dialog above illustrates why language shift occurs, which is consistent with the reasons mentioned in the interviews: habitual language used in daily life within the family. The reason for the shift from the Gayo language to Indonesian in Jambur Damar village is that the children, who are unable to speak Gayo, prefer to use Indonesian. However, if a child is accustomed to hearing both of their parents speak Indonesian, they will undoubtedly choose to follow their parents' language in daily life, even though those around them are predominantly from the Gayo tribe.

#### Data 2

- R : *Ada lagi alasan yang lain kenapa kamu nggak pakai bahasa Gayo?*  
(Is there another reason why you don't speak Gayo?)
- Km : *Hmm, kurasa karena banyak juga anak tetangga dikampung ini nggak pakai bahasa Gayo, makanya kami pun kayak gini, kami nggak terlalu bisa bahasa Gayo hehe, banyak kata kata bahasa Gayo yang kami juga nggak ngerti, makanya kami nggak pakai bahasa Gayo.*  
(Hmm, I think because there are also many neighborhood children they don't used the Gayo language, that's why we are like this, we cannot speak Gayo very well hehehe, and there are also many words that we don't understand, so we don't try to use the Gayo language.)

As found in the interviews, language shift was caused by habitual language use, as demonstrated in the dialogue above. Given that these speakers tended to use Gayonese exclusively in particular situations, it became clear that the respondents' surroundings and habitual language usage had a major role in their decision to shift to a vernacular. In this case, though, children are aware of the Gayo language; they just lack the vocabulary to speak it well, and they are also uneasy using their mother tongue because of the unsupportive environment, particularly in the family.

- ***Environment***

#### Data 3

- S1 : *Ngga ada siapapun aku udah mancis.*  
(There's no one, I'm already Mancis)
- S2 : *Siapa kin tadi yang jaga?*

(Who was on guard earlier?)

S2 : *Arni yang jaga.*  
(Arni is on guard)

The interaction between the two children who were playing hide-and-seek in their neighborhood is described in the dialogue above. It is evident that they conversed with their companions in complete Indonesian, a practice adopted by children of Jambur Damar village. That's why there is a language shift from the Gayo language to Indonesian: the children speak Indonesian in their families, and when they hear other children speaking the same language in their surroundings, the other children follow suit, even though the majority of them are members of the Gayo tribe and appear to prefer speaking Indonesian to their native tongue.

Data 4

S1 : *Nafisa ko nggak ngaji? Hari ini udah mulai lagi ngaji lah.*  
(Nafisa, don't you recite the Koran? Today it has started again.)  
S2 : *Nggak tau aku lah, dimana ngajinya kin?*  
(I don't know, where is recite the Koran now?)  
S1 : *Nggak dikampung lagi, ngajinya udah pindah.*  
(Not in the village anymore, recite the Koran has moved)  
S2 : *Hmmm... Kutanyak dulu sama mamakku lah.*  
(Hmmm... I asked my mother first)  
S1 : *Iya, tanyak terus.*  
(Yes, keep asking)

In the dialogue above, two children are having a conversation. It is clear that the first speaker asked questions in full Indonesian to the second speaker, and vice versa. This indicates that even though they are from the same speech community the Gayonese ethnic group, they shift the Gayo language to Indonesian when interacting with each other in their environment. Because of this, when speaking with friends nearby, both children prefer to use Indonesian rather than Gayo. This is the reason for the shift in Gayo language in Jambur Damar village, which is mostly caused by environmental factors.

## CONCLUSIONS

The reasons language shift occurs in Jambur Damar village Southeast Aceh Regency due to habitual language usage and environment are the two main reasons of language shift. This study revealed 20 data points that explain why children in Jambur Damar village, Southeast Aceh Regency, shift their language. Children in Jambur Damar village, Southeast

Aceh Regency, were also included in this study's habitual language usage due of their upbringing, education, and relationships with family and friends. However, the environment also played a significant role in the language shift, as it was utilized to communicate with neighbors in the Jambur Damar village who spoke different mother languages. The character shifted the way he spoke as a result.

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