The Speaking People of South Halmahera Languages: A study on Cultural Relationship

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Abstract: Linguists have made efforts to examine the relationship between languages from cultural perspective. It has been a challenging study to explore cultural relationship between languages in a speech community. This study specifically attempts to describe the cultural relationship among the speaking people of south Halmahera languages i.e. Buli, East Makian, Gane, Gebe, Maba, Patani, and Sawai. Qualitative approach and ‘wörter und sachen’ method were used to draw up and to explain the cultural inventory. The results of this study indicated that cultural relationship exists between the speaking people of South Halmahera languages especially those who live near the language homeland. However, those who geographically live away from their language homeland make regular and direct contacts with speakers of different languages and cultures. The contacts have caused lexical borrowings, syntactical changes, as well as language and cultural divergences. These linguistic phenomena occur due to cultural influences.

Keywords: speaking people, South Halmahera languages, cultural relationship, cultural influences.

I. INTRODUCTION

The claim about the relationship between language and culture traces back to Sapir-Whorf (or Whorfian) hypothesis. The hypothesis consists of two principles: linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism. On linguistic relativity's view, people who speak different languages notice and think about the world differently from one another. The principle states the form of the language itself affects awareness. In addition, on linguistic determinism's view, the language we use to some extent controls the way in which we view and think about the world around us. The principle argues the form of a language can strongly influence or control someone's worldview (Kramsch, 1998:11-14); (Sharifian, 2015:3-17).

There is an interactive and dialectical connection between language and culture. These two fields are impossible to escape and to overstate each other. In this case, many scholars propose various comments on this relationship. Anttila, on commenting Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, summarizes that language is culture; it mediates action; culture stated in language; action described in language. This conception infers that language becomes a molder of thoughts, cultures, and philosophies (Anttila, 1972:382). On the other hand, Cockerham declares that culture shapes the form and use of language while language is an expression of culture (Cockerham, 1995, Arafah, B., & Kaharuddin. (2019). Overall, Kramsch closes the multiple and complex link between language and culture by stating that language expresses cultural identity, language embodies cultural reality, and language symbolizes cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998:3). Kramsch further elaborates that language is the principal medium
through which cultural knowledge passed on from one generation to the next. It is a principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. However, culture regulates the action of language. Culture establishes the utterances become meaningful. Kramsch states “the words people exchange in verbal encounters are linked in a myriad of ways to the situational and cultural context in which they occur” (Kramsch, 1998:27). The interdependent link between language and culture explained above becomes guidance in approaching language and culture on historical comparative linguistics view.

This paper aims to explain the cultural relationship of South Halmahera speaking people of East Makian, Gane, Gebe, Buli, Maba, Patani, and Sawai which is genealogically supposed descendant from the same ancestor, and linguistically establish a family of South Halmahera languages.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

What is Culture?

Culture is a difficult term to be defined precisely. The word ‘culture’ tends to be used in many different ways in everyday language and discourse. Sometimes we use the word culture to refer to certain ethnic. We also use the word culture to reflect the music and the arts, food and clothing, rituals, traditions and heritage of certain society. In short, we use the word culture to refer to many different things in our social life. If culture is difficult to define, so what is the working definition of the term ‘culture’? The old fashioned definition of culture introduced by American Anthropologist, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917). In his work *Primitive Culture* (1817), Tylor defines culture as "that complex whole that includes knowledge, art, morals, law, custom and any other capacity and habit acquired by man as a member of a society" (Magli, 2001:111).

In addition, Steers, Nardon, & Sanchez-Runde (2013:74-76) state that the definitions above can be grouped into three categories. They point on individuals, environments, and work norms and values, as described in the following:

1. Culture is shared by members of a group, and, indeed, sometimes defines the membership of the group itself. As such, cultural preferences are neither universal around the world nor entirely personal; they are preferences that are commonly shared by a group of people, even if not by all members of the group.

2. Culture is learned through membership in a group or community. Cultures, in the form of normative social behavior, are learned from elders, teachers, officials, experiences, and society at large. We acquire values, assumptions, and behaviors by seeing how others behave, growing up in a community, going to school, and observing our family.

3. Cultural training and socialization. After we grow up, culture still tells us what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior, attractive and unattractive, and so forth. As a result, culture heavily influences socialization processes in terms of how we see ourselves and what we believe and hold dear. This, in turn, influences our normative behavior, or how we think those around us expect us to behave.

A View of Fishman and Kramsch on Language and Culture

notions of language relation to culture. Fishman (1996) proposes three type of relation:

- language as a part of culture;
- language as an index of culture;
- language as symbolic of culture.

In the same fashion, Claire Kramsch, as one of the most important more recent researchers within the field of language, culture and learning, says in her book ‘Language and Culture’ (1998: 3) that:

- language expresses cultural reality;
- language embodies cultural reality;
- language symbolizes cultural reality.

**Fishman: language in relation to culture**

Concerning the first point, Fishman describes language as ‘an inevitable part’, ‘a major and crucial part’ of culture, and ‘all those who seek fully to enter into and understand a given culture must, accordingly, master its language’. Fishman also says that ‘language shift, or loss of a culture’s intimately associated language, is indicative of extensive culture change’. All these quotations argue that it is important for social researchers not to neglect language when dealing with ‘a given culture’. He draws attention to the fact that this relationship is reciprocal: language is a part of its ‘associated’ culture, but culture is also a part of its ‘associated’ language.

The second point: ‘language as an index of culture’, Fishman describes as follows: ‘The role of language as an index of culture is a byproduct (at a more abstract level) of its role as part of culture. Languages reveal the ways of thinking or of organizing experience that are common in the associated cultures’ – a little further down, he talks about ‘culture-bound languages’. Here, Fishman is indirectly referring to the discussion of the Whorfian hypothesis, which has greatly preoccupied.

The third point: ‘language as symbolic of culture’, Fishman explains as follows: ‘Language movements and language conflicts utilize languages as symbols to mobilize populations to defend (or attack) and to foster (or reject) the cultures associated with them.’ He emphasizes that the relationship is reciprocal, that language and culture symbolize each other (Laureano et al, 2018).

As can be seen, Fishman is talking here about culture-bound language and about the fact that language and culture are ‘intimately associated’ with each other. Naturally, one cannot know with any certainty to what extent and in what way Fishman is of the opinion that language is culture bound – it ought, for example, to be stressed that Fishman does not support the strong but the weak version of the Whorfian hypothesis.

**Kramsch: language in relation to culture**

Kramsch is a discourse theorist who talks about ‘meaning as action’. Her book is broadly based on recent socially and culturally-orientated linguistic thinking. The first point: ‘language expresses cultural reality’ Kramsch explains in the following way: The words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock
of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their author’s attitudes and beliefs, their point of view that are also those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998:3). This description, which focuses on vocabulary, is fairly close to Fishman’s no. 2: ‘language is an index of culture’, even though Fishman is probably thinking more of the grammatical categories of language. But Kramsch does not use the holistic and essentialist concept of culture that Fishman does – she uses a more general expression, ‘cultural reality’, which she admittedly does not discuss explicitly, but which stands for something common: ‘common experience, shared knowledge’, etc.

The second point: ‘language embodies cultural reality’ she explains as follows:

But members of a community or social group … also create experience through language. They give meaning to it through the medium they choose to communicate with one another, for example, speaking in the telephone or face to face, writing a letter or sending an e-mail message, reading the newspaper or interpreting a graph or a chart. The way in which people use the spoken, written, or visual medium itself creates meanings that are understandable to the group they belong to, for example, through a speaker’s tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998:3).

Here we have the idea that the way in which linguistic practice is implemented helps create and shape meaning.

The third point: ‘language symbolizes cultural reality’ is described that language is a system of signs that is seen as having it a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language (Kramsch, 1998:3). This is approximately the same as Fishman’s no. 3: ‘language symbolizes culture’, but, while Fishman is particularly interested in the macro sociolinguistic and political aspects, Kramsch is thinking more of the linguistic interaction at the micro-level.

Reconstructing Culture

Reconstructing culture can be approached through historical linguistics side, since cultural and historical information is often indispensable for reaching the proper understanding of change. And words become the key to understand the culture of certain group of people, because words are lived experience which mediates both language and culture in process of encoding and decoding the meaning. However, in reconstructing culture through historical linguistics point of view, it needs an analytical effort to eliminate borrowing words. Anttila (1972:377-381) argues the interrelation between culture and the effort in reconstructing the culture via language as follow:

Language does not exist in a vacuum; it is used in concrete cultural and historical circumstances. ….Since culture generally does not lend itself to the precise segmentation and comparison necessary to establish genetic relations, linguistics as the oldest cultural science can help. No cultural aspect can be studied without reference to the linguistic signs used for it.

Crowley (1987:276-284) further explains that historical linguistics can allow us to go back quite a thousand years in time. Given the fact that a language bears a very close relationship to the culture of the speaker to speak it, we can also tell something about the nature of the culture of a people simply by looking at the language they speak.
Reconstructing culture in historical linguistics approach relies primarily on the internal linguistic evidence of the proto-lexicon. Although relying primarily on linguistic evidence, such study generally has a cultural or anthropological aim rather than a linguistic one. Fox (1995:322) explains the aim of using proto-language in establishing the proto culture, as cited in the following.

The possibility of reconstructing a word or root in the proto-language with a particular meaning is taken as evidence that the speakers of the proto-language were familiar with the concept involved. In this way we hope to be able to determine such characteristics of the original speech community as the level of material culture attained, the type of activity members of the community engaged in, their social organization, religion, law, and so on.

Comrie (2009:37) seems support the idea of Fox by stating that there is an implication of reconstructing (parts of) a proto-culture and civilization through proto-language. However, he proposes that linguistic evidence alone is not sufficient to provide a complete picture of a proto-culture; it must be supplemented by information from archaeology, history, folklore, institutions and other sources. Antilla (1972:291) also states that reconstructing culture by using word available in a language is not enough; we must know the exact cultural context to understand it.

III. METHOD

The qualitative method was used in analyzing the cultural relationship by applying ‘wörter und sachen’ (Germany word and thing) method. The ‘wörter und sachen’ method—pioneered by Rudolf Meringer and by Hugo Schuchardt—was grounded in the belief that words are inseparable from the things to which they refer. This idea gained popularity in historical linguistics, as it implied that words that were recent additions to a language would be more morphologically transparent (Burkette, 2015:9). As cited from Campbell, Burkette further explains that the wörter und sachen method was also used to investigate the "cultural inventory" of recent Indo-European proto-languages, by showing that cultural items represented by widespread cognates were older than less widespread ones (Campbell, 2004 cited from Burkette, 2015:9). Further, Campbell and Mixco state that the more a word has no detectable morphological analysis the longer it can be presumed to have been in a language; and can be assumed to be older in the language than words that do have a clear morphological analysis. (Campbell & Mixco, 2007:12).

Campbell and Mixco further elaborate more applicable use of ‘word and thing’ method by explaining that the use of linguistic information (especially lexical) from a language to make inferences about the history, culture, society and environment of the people who spoke the language in prehistoric times. This method often involves the investigation of reconstructed vocabulary of some proto-language for its cultural content and thus for clues about its speakers. The use of reconstructed proto form is intended to bring a clearer portrait of cultural relationship. In addition, the analysis is focused only on some words of ‘plants and animals’ available in the ‘Sulawesi Umbrella’ wordlist, for instance the ‘plants and animals’ intake as a source of nutrition and energy.

RESULT

Food serves many social functions. It does not only support nutrition for human being, but also plays an important role in daily life, religion, and socioeconomic (Ma, 2015).

Food: sources of carbohydrate
Sago is produced from sago palm in form of flavor. Sago, PSH \(*yof\), is the primary staple food in providing carbohydrate. As the primary staple food, sago which is served into various kind of cuisines, such as suy or \('pupi, salamin or baku niwi, and sin(y)ole\), is considered as ethnic foods, namely those foods that are regarded as unique to a specific group, defined by its culture, sociodemography area of origin, and social status (Bermudez, 2016, Andi, K., & Arafah, B. 2017). In South Halmahera speaking people, men are responsible in producing sago. Since this work consumes more energy, so producing sago is generally done by at least two men.

The secondary sources of carbohydrate for South Halmahera speaking people are banana (PMP \(*punti < PSH *tɛlɛ\) and cassava (PSH \(*kasbi\). For South Halmahera speaking people, women responsible are not only cooking for family but they are also responsible to provide what to cook. Since planting banana and cassava does not consume more energy, it usually done by women in a new open land (dry garden); while the men are doing fence for saving garden against wild animals, for instance pig. The way of banana and cassava served for family intake to fulfill their carbohydrate need are presented on the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banana/Cassava</th>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tɛlɛ/kasbi foyno niwi (boiled with coconut squeezed)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tɛlɛ/kasbi ngani (boiled)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tɛlɛ/kasbi sinanga (fried)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tɛlɛ/kasbi song (baked)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rice (amasik, pipe, and fas) is the tertiary source of carbohydrate for South Halmahera speaking people. The word ‘rice’ has three cognate sets in South Halmahera languages family, ‘amasik’, ‘pipe’ and ‘fas’ which split the people of South Halmahera languages into three groups. 1) ‘amasik’ for East Makian and Gene; 2) ‘pipe’ for Buli, Maba, and Patani, and 3) ‘fas’ for Irarutu, Gebe, and Sawai. All the three words for ‘rice’ are innovation words, since there is none of the three words reflected from the higher proto, neither PAN nor PMP. In addition, the people only know the ‘rice’ in general, therefore the words ‘amasik’, ‘pipe’ and ‘fas’ is used to represent ‘cooked rice’, ‘unhulled rice’, ‘hulled rice’, and ‘rice seeds’. This case implies that people of South Halmahera languages do not have agricultural tradition and sufficient knowledge on rice plantation.

**Food: sources of protein**

The ultimate source of protein for South Halmahera speaking people is fish, cockles and oysters besides egg, chicken, and meat. Ma (2015) reports that:

In many societies, women play an important role in food production, selection, purchase, and processing. It is usually women’s responsibility to cook; some women are responsible for milking, breeding poultry and livestock, and also sowing and harvesting. As a wife and mother, she is the family food provider. Most of the woman’s life depends on fulfilling these traditional obligations.
Women engage in the trade of the market, and in the decision making of type, quantity, and quality of food purchased (Ma, 2015).

This condition is also happened in South Halmahera languages’ speaking family, where women go fishing for family intake in order to meet their protein need, while men go fishing for selling in order to provide financial need for family.

**Food: sources of vitamins and other minerals**

Vitamins and other minerals are got from vegetables and fruits. The ethnic vegetable of South Halmahera speaking people is ‘sayar garo’, it is made from a mixed of cassava leaves, banana bud, and papaya leaves and its inflorescence. As vegetable, eggplants are served into different ways: fried, boiled, and baked. Other ways of ‘eggplant’ intake is served in raw vegetables with a spicy sauce, ‘dabu-dabu’.

**Betel and areca nut chewing**

Linguistically, the tradition of betel and areca nut chewing derived from the words: ‘areca (betel) nut’ is found in PMP *buaq < PSH *mila; ‘betel’ is found in PMP *buaq < PSH *gis; and ‘lime’ is found in PAN *qapuR < PSH *yafi. In addition, the word PSH *mila is available in Gebe and Sawai ‘mala’, Patani and Maba ‘mina’, Buli ‘palu’; East Makian ‘galol’; the word PSH *gis is found in Gane ‘gias’, East Makian ‘gyas’, Sawai ‘gyɛs’, Patani and Maba ‘gis’; and the word PSH *yafi is available in Gebe and Buli ‘yafi’, Patani ‘yafa’, and East Makian ‘yahi’.

**Betel and areca nut chewing: strengthen the teeth**

Betel and areca nut chewing is a tradition found in South Halmahera languages people. Generally older men and women of South Halmahera languages people are chewing betel and areca nut. They believe that by chewing betel and areca nut regularly, it will strengthen their teeth. The composition of betel and areca nut chewing consists of a little bit of betel, an areca nut, and a little bit of lime in order to make the chewing becomes red.

**Betel and areca nut chewing: traditional medicine and healing**

The betel and areca nut chewing is also added with ‘ginger’ PSH *yɛy in order to used in traditional medicine to cure certain sickness. Usually all the items are chewing together and spittle onto certain the parts of body which get sickness. Meanwhile, for the pain inside the body, the sick people should drink a boiled mixed of certain kind of leaf (PSH *wlu) and bark of tree (*kaino). People cannot provide leaves and barks of tree as medicine for themselves, only those are capable who get knowledge from their ancient. In traditional healing, *gis, *mala, *yafi, and traditional cigarette are also available on a white plate. It used to heal someone suspected get annoyance from any evil spirit and magical spells. It is also used as a bridge in ritual conversation with the ancestors, in performing epic dancing, and some other formal contexts.

**Betel and areca nut chewing: social activity**

Chewing *gis, *mala, *yafi is also found in social gathering and in marriage proposal. In social gathering, the host will welcome the guests by serving them with *gis, *mala, and *yafi in order to show solidarity, hospitable and friendly. And the last but not least, specifically in Buli, Maba, Patani, and Sawai community, betel and areca nut become a bridge in a marriage proposal, the man
party is going to leave a case of betel and areca nut. If in the range of agreeable time, the woman party does not return the case, it means that the proposal is received and both parties are going to come to the next steps, and vice versa.

**Monkey**

The word ‘monkey’ is not found in PAN or PMP, but it is found in Proto Hesperonesian-Formosan (PHF) *luCuŋ and Proto Hesperonesian (PHN) *ayuŋ. The word ‘monkey’ has two sets of cognate in South Halmahera languages, ‘mia’ and ‘nok’. The first cognate ‘mia’ is found in Sawai, Maba, East Makian, and Buli; while the second set ‘nok’ is found in in Gane, Patani and Gebe. The word ‘monkey’ has split the speakers of South Halmahera languages into two groups. However, in reality, it is not found any kind of ‘monkey’ in both groups. Therefore, it is assumed that the words ‘mia’ and ‘nok’ are borrowing words in South Halmahera languages. Since the ‘mia’ and ‘nok’ are both borrowing words in South Halmahera languages, so that there is no proto South Halmahera for ‘monkey’. However, we may insist to say that the word ‘mia’ is the older one since it is widespread to four regions, Maba, Buli, Sawai, and East Makian.

It is difficult to draw the exact borderline of culture in modern and heterogenic society and to determine the relationships of culture among the societies. The difficulty lies on the fact that there are many variables which create and shape the culture. Although there is no one-to-one relationship between anyone’s language and his or her cultural identity, language is the most sensitive indicator of the relationship between individual and given social group (Kramsch, 1998:77).

The cognate sets such as *kasbi, *in, *tol, *mila, *gis, *nini, and *luf indicates that these words are older and become cultural items since they are widespread cognate sets. If widespread cognates is determined as the older words and become cultural items. We can include the cognate sets like *yof, *tԑr, *koke into cultural items list because they are more widespread cognates than the others set. The words ‘rice’ has three cognate sets which splits South Halmahera speaking people into three groups: fas (Irarutu, Sawai, and Gebe); piŋe (Buli, Maba, and Patani); and amasik (Gane and East Makian). Since these three words are used to represent ‘rice cooked’, ‘rice unhulled’, ‘rice hulled’, and ‘rice seeds’. This case indicates that ‘rice’ is not a core culture of South Halmahera speaking people. It is neither a staple food nor an ethnic food. And of course South Halmahera speaking people have limited knowledge on ‘rice’. The word fas, piŋe, and amasik are borrowing words. Other borrowing word is mia and nok which refers to ‘monkey’. Monkey is not found in the region of South Halmahera speaking people. The only place wherein ‘monkey’ is available is on Bacan Island. Therefore both mia and nok are borrowing words. Gane (nok-nok) and Patani (nok) are borrowing from Bacan, nonok. All in all, these cognates become the evidence to support the existence of cultural relationships among South Halmahera speaking people. This evidence also supports Crowley's (1987:276-284) that we can tell something about the nature of the culture of a people simply by looking at the language they speak. However, we need other information to support linguistic evidence, since using linguistic evidence alone is not sufficient to provide a complete picture of culture; it must be supplemented by information from archaeology, history, folklore, institutions and other sources.

The other evidence to determine the cultural relationship of South Halmahera speaking people is ethnic food, namely those foods that are regarded as unique to a specific group, defined by its culture, sociodemography area of origin, and social status (Bermudez, 2016). The ethnic foods which express the cultural relationship of South Halmahera speaking people are yof (baked sago), suy (sago porridge); salamin (baked mixed sago and coconut), sinyole (roasted mixed sago and
coconut). These foods serve as a group characteristic, because they can be used as a character of one group, divided by regions, families, races or religions. Viewing from ‘worter und sachen’ technique, the name of these foods and the object referred are older in South Halmahera speaking people because these words are not detectable into morphological analysis. ‘Baku niwi’ for instance in Gane speaking people and ‘Cokaiba’ in Gamrange society can be analysis clearly into morphological analysis, ‘baku niwi’, baku=sago, niwi=coconut and ‘cokaiba’, coka=evil, iba: mask, since these words can be analysis into morphological analysis, both words imply that they are new in these two communities, so they are not represent the culture of South Halmahera speaking people.

The word ‘sago palm’ shows that the South Halmahera languages are splitted into three groups. If we draw a straight line to the eastern part (Patani and Gebe) the languages in this line use ‘yof’. The languages in the northern part (Maba and Buli) use ‘pipi’ (Maba) and ‘pupi’ (Buli). The languages to the southern part (Gane and East Makian) use ‘baku’.

The spread of the three words ‘eggplant’, ‘banana’, and ‘fly’ splits South Halmahera languages into two groups in general. The word ‘eggplant’ has two set cognates, ‘kok(i/e)’ (used in Maba, Buli and Patani, Gebe), and ‘palola’ which is used in Sawai, Gane, and East Makian. In the same pattern, the word ‘banana’ also splits the South Halmahera languages into two parts, which is represented by ‘tɛlɛ’ (used in Maba, Buli and Patani, Gebe), ‘lɔka’ (Sawai, Gane, and East Makian), and ‘fud’a in Irarutu. The word ‘fly’ in Patani and Maba language is ‘lɔŋ’, in Buli and Gebe language is ‘laŋ’, in Sawai and East Makian language is ‘plen’ and ‘plaŋ’ respectively, and in Gane language is ‘bubal’. The next word is ‘bat’. All South Halmahera languages (Patani, Maba, Buli, Sawai) which are considered as the homeland of South Halmahera languages use ‘fni’ to refer to ‘bat’, except in Gebe, Gane, East Makian, and Irarutu language; they use ‘kafani’, ‘ifnik’, ‘nik’, and ‘kakuri’ respectively to refer to ‘bat’.

Using Wörter und Sachen technique in analyzing ‘plants and animals’ of South Halmahera speaking people shows that there is cultural relationship of South Halmahera speaking people who live near the language homeland. On the other hand, geographical distance which separates the speaking people of South Halmahera languages from their language homeland, it enables them to make regular and intensive contacts with other languages and cultures, which in turn causes the language changes, lexical borrowings, as well as language and cultural divergences. This condition implies that language is influenced by culture.

IV. CONCLUSION

Using Wörter und Sachen technique in analyzing ‘plants and animals’ of South Halmahera speaking people shows that there is cultural relationship of South Halmahera speaking people who live near the language homeland. On the other hand, geographical distance which separates the speaking people of South Halmahera languages from their language homeland enables them to make regular and intensive contacts with other languages and cultures, which in turn causes the language changes, lexical borrowings, as well as language and cultural divergences. This condition implies that language is influenced by culture.

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