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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN BATAK TOBA SOCIETY

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Abstrak

Budaya dan Bahasa tidak bisa dipisahkan satu dengan lainnya. Hubungan empirik antara bahasa dan budaya dapat dilihat dari tiga hal yaitu : kegiatan yang dilakukan, jenis pakaian adat dan alasan mengapa orang tersebut melakukannya. Tulisan ini membahas identitas budaya Batak Toba seperti ungkapan horas dan keberadaan marga beserta ungkapan lainnya. Kemudian simbol budaya Batak Toba juga dikemukakan yang membahas pakaian budaya ulos, tradisi tortor, filosofi budaya hamoraon, hagabeon, hasangapon, budaya tabu beserta ungkapan eupimisme. Pada akhir bahasan dikemukakan beberapa ungkapan-ungkapan yang pembaca atau pendengar hanya mengerti apabila memahami konteks budaya dai etnis Batak Toba.

Kata Kunci : Bahasa, Identitas dan konteks budaya

1. Introduction

Culture can be defined as ideas, customs, and art of a particular society. It consists of three aspects namely; what people 'do' (**cultural behavior**), what people use in what they 'do' (**cultural artifacts**), and what makes people 'do/use' (**cultural values**). (Kovecses 2006). The culture itself is usually defined in one of two ways : either as a set of practices, codes, and values that mark a particular nation or group's most highly thought of works of literature, art, music, etc. These works can also be seen, of course, as enshrining the values and codes of the culture which produced them. It is in the first sense that this essay will consider culture in the light of the discourse and language which both informs and is informed by educational settings. Our perception to someone's social identity is very much culturally determined to what we perceive about a person's culture and language, and it will be conditioned by our own culture to see, and the stereotypical models that already built around our own. That is why the group identity is a cultural aspect that focusing about diffusion of ethnic, racial, national concepts or stereotypes.

In relation to Identity, linguistic relativity is an influential hypothesis that concerns the relationship between the language we speak and the way we think and act. Whorf hypothesis in Kovecses (2006 :34) elucidated that linguistic relativity comes in a strong and weak version:

Strong version : The language we speak determines the way we think.

Weak version : The language we speak influences the way we think.

Cultural stereotypes, cultural behavior and its values

Claire Kramsch 2000 stated that group identity based on race would seem easier to define, and yet there are almost as many genetic differences, say between members of the same white, or black race as there are between the classically described human races, not to speak of the difficulty in some cases of ascertaining with hundred percent exactitude a person's racial lineage.

Group identity is a question of focusing and diffusion of ethnic, racial, national concepts or stereotypes. Let us take an example . In Singapore, It is not difficult to identify the Indian people and Chinese, but we will have difficulty in telling the difference between Malay and Indian. The Chinese for example, identify themselves ethnically as Chinese even though they speak languages or dialects which are mutually unintelligible.

Despite the fact that a large number of Chinese don't know how to read and write, it is the Chinese character-writing system and the art of calligraphy that are the major factors of an overall Chinese group identity. A further example of the difficulty of equating one language with one ethnic group is given by the case of the Sikhs in Britain. Threatened to loose public recognition of their cultural and religious distinctiveness, for example, the wearing of the Sikhs turban in schools, Sikhs religious leader have tried to bolster the group's identity by promoting the teaching of Punjabi, endogamy, and patterns of behavior felt to be central to Sikhism, including his styles and the wearing of turbans. However, seen objectively, neither the Punjabi language nor the wearing of turbans is peculiar to Sikhism either in India or Pakistan of Britain.

There are some cultural identities in Batak Toba Society which related to 'what the people do' (cultural behavior it self). Normally they are divided in to three categories, they are related to death , birth and feast. In this paper, the writer will propose some cultural Identities in Batak Toba society with reference to cultural behavior, cultural artifacts, and cultural values. This study might have some benefits or increase the reader's knowledge about Batak Toba Culture.

The relationship between language and culture.

Peter Trudgil 1985 stated that, there is no inherent or necessary link between language and race. It remains true, however, that in many cases language may be an important or even essential concomitant of ethnic group membership.

The relationship between language and culture can be seen from two point of views. One is called the *language that determines culture*. It is the structure of the language that determines the way in which the speakers of the language view the world. Example : In Indonesia the picture of rice is numerous such as *padi, pulut, dodol, leman*, etc, while in English the picture of rice is only one which is called rice. From this information we understand that eating much might be the culture of Indonesia people and at the same time become our cultural identity. The other one is called *culture that determine language*, it is the language that realized by the culture. Example; *Andung* in Batak Toba culture is a very sad song to show that there someone died in a certain Batak

Toba people. In this case, Andung is one of the cultural identity of Batak Toba people.

From the two explanations above, the writer understands that language and culture are interrelate each other. Our different cultures that represent different views in different structure of language is one of the our cultural identity.

2. The Problems

The problems of the study are formulated in questions which might cover some cultural identities with reference to language of Batak Toba people. They are the problems that argue about cultural behavior, cultural artifacts, and cultural value. The problems are :

1. How the language and cultural identity are realized in social context ?
2. What are the cultural identities of Batak Toba people ?
3. In what occasion do they do and why do they do that ?

3. Contextualization cues, situated inferences, and cultural stereotypes.

The words people exchange in verbal encounters are linked in a myriad of ways to the situational and cultural context in which they occur. Thus, for example, A's words to B : 'I need to get in there. Can you open the door?. B only understand if he knows and is able to grasp the semantic meanings of A's utterance, but he must also relate the I" to the friend he knows and recognize him by his voice and his outward appearance; he must refer to 'there' to a room he knows lies behind the door which he sees from where he is standing and so on. The listener's interpretations of what is being said among the infinite range of potentially relevant factors of the **context**. These cues help listeners make the relevant **situated inferences** i.e. evoke the cultural background and social expectations necessary to interpret speech. Through the use of contextualization cues, speakers and hearers can convey to each other what their expectations are with respect to the communication they are engaged in. Participants in verbal exchanges have to manage their interpretation of each other's utterances in accordance with how they perceive the situational and cultural context to be on an instant-by-instant basis.

Our perception of someone's social identity is very much culturally determined. What we perceive about a person's culture and language is what we have been conditioned by our own culture to see, and the **stereotypical** models already built around our own. Group identity is a question of focusing and diffusion of ethnic, racial, national concepts or stereotypes.

4. Language and cultural identities in Batak Tobanese

Klaire Kramsch , 2000, stated that there is a natural connection between the language spoken by the members of a social group and that group's identity. By their accent, their vocabulary, their discourse patterns, speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community. Besides, Linda Thomas,2000: 143 stated that your social identity is not something that you can always determine on your own; it is also bound up with how others perceive you. Indeed language and construction of group identity

are as shared linguistic norms within a group. The application of these relationships also occur to Batak Toba society like the following :

The expression of “Horas “ and ‘Andung’

The expression of ‘Horas’ is a Batak Toba cultural identity which is used to addressor, to speak to in greeting. By hearing the expression of the word ‘horas’, the listener might understand that the speaker is a Bataknese. In contrary ,the Batak Toba people will present a very sad song to show that there someone died which is called ‘Andung’. It is one of the cultural identity of Batak Toba People.

The regional dialect of Batak Toba people

A Dialect is a variety of a language which differs from other varieties in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (accent). (Jhon Edwards 1982:19) . It is also said a *language variation* in one language which is different way of lexical, grammatical and phonological aspects. It may reflect class, ethnic, or regional differences and finally the cultural identity. *Regional dialect*: it is a regional differences in pronunciation, choices of forms, words or syntax, e.g: Batak Toba people normally have only one vowel /e/ instead of vowel /□/. Again, the Batak Toba Community also has a special regional dialect like the expression of vowel /e/. Since the Batak Toba have only one vowel /e/, For example, The Batak Tobanese always pronounce the word {kemana} ‘where’ instead of {kōmana}. Of course by hearing such as this dialect it will be easier to identify whether the speaker is a Batak Toba clan or not.

The existing of family name (Marga)

The easiest way to see the identity of Batak Toba people is the existing of family name which is embedded after the real name. The family name (marga) of a member of the Batak tribe describes the personal identity of ethnic kinship and is used as the starting point to communicate with other members of the Batak society in accordance with the philosophy ‘*Dalihan Na Tolu*’ (the three elements serving the kinship relation in Batak Toba tradition). That is the reason why it is very difficult for a man from other tribes to be given a family name of the Batak unless he is officially named in a grand ceremony. Even in such case, he will not be fully admitted as a genuine Batakness by other ‘margas’ of the same ancestor. For instance, an outsider who has been officially inaugurated to be a member of ‘*Tampubolon*’ clan will not be admitted as an elder by other “*margas*” of “*Silalahi*”, who are the younger brothers of *Tampubolon*. Another value of ‘*marga*’ is the same marga supposed to be the same family, that is why it is not aloud to get married with the same family name. A Batak people also will say their family name first to another Batak people when they want to introduce each other and until now, the Batak people still maintain this tradition.

Tortor

Tortor is the traditional Batak dance which is used as a reflection and validation of social organization to form and build the relationship in social organization . In this case, tortor becomes a medium that helps Batak people to legalize the kinship organization, like to build the monument for the predecessor

and shows the familial relationship of their surname (marga) that they come from the same predecessor.

Tortor is also used as the medium in the religious ceremony. Before the Christianity in Tapanuli, tortor was held every year by Parmalim as a symbol of fearness and respect to *Debata Mulajadi Nabolon* based on the Batak's calendar. After Christianity, it is a dance that used as a medium to praise and adore God.

5. The cultural Symbol of Batak toba society

The wearing ulos

The most important cultural identity of Batak toba people is the wearing 'Ulos'. It is a cultural artifacts which is used in special occasion like when someone is died, or someone has festivity. The Batak Toba people will give their sympathy to the death of someone with wearing the ulos. It is also given to the wife's taker by the wife's giver in a certain marriage party as a respect to their daughter.

Cultural Philosophy of Batak Toba people.

The meaning of the word "Batak" in the Batak dialect refers to the virtue, sacredness, originality, genuineness and strength . In relation to the family tree (tarombo) and racial lineage, it can be stated that the Batak tribe is really genuine. The geanony of the Batak tribe depicts genuiness and originality. The kinship system of the Batak tribe is normally based on ' Dalihan Na Tolu'".

In Batak Toba community there are three words that they used as their principle life in everyday life. They are 'hamoraon (*prosperity*) hagabeon (*affluence*) and hasangapon (*honor*) which are symbolic to the Batak Toba society.

Taboon and Euphemism

Ronald Wardhaugh 1986, has coined that taboo is one way in which a society expresses its disapproval of certain kinds of behavior believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because such behavior is held to violate a moral code. Consequently, so far as language is concerned, certain things are not to be said or certain object can be referred to only in certain circumstances, for example : In Batak Toba Culture, a husband is supposed to be taboo to talk to his younger brother's wife and similarly in Batak Karo culture, a wife supposed to be taboo to talk to her father-in-law. This situation caused by the cultural Identity of each ethnic group. Taboed subjects can vary widely : one's mother -in-law; certain game animals; sex; death; excretion; bodily function; religious matters; and the left hand (the origin of sinister).

6. Performative utterances (cultural context) in Batak Toba culture:

Performative utterance is a cultural context which is used to describe a word, sentence which can only be interpreted by understanding the culture. Claire Kramsch 2000 (26) coined that one had to understand why they said what they said and how they said to whom they said in a specific context of situation. In addition, one had to link their words, beliefs, and mindsets to a larger context of culture. Similarly Austin (1962) in Wardaugh 1989 : 275) has stated that in using

a performative utterance, a person is not just saying something but is actually doing something if certain real conditions are met.

In Batak Toba tradition, there are many performative utterances related to ceremony, party, festivity, special celebration, even in daily activity which the outsider might not understand without knowing the cultural context of Batak Toba itself and most of them are related to birth, marriage, and death, examples :

Bahen hamu siranai

The literal meaning of this expression is the guest ask the hostess to give some salt. When a family has festivity, the hostess has already prepared food for the guest and before eating, the guest normally ask the hostess by saying 'bahen hamu siranai'. In this case, it doesn't mean that the food is lacking of salt but the guest really want the hostess to say something to welcome the guest to eat.

Manikkir tangga

The literal translation of this expression is to peep at the ladder. In Batak Toba culture, however, this cultural action is done when the wife's giver visits the new married couple with purpose to check whether their daughter has already pregnant or not. In this occasion, the family of the wife taker will come to welcome the family of the wife's giver and the wife's giver usually bring gold fish for eating together.

Hotang-hotang.

The literal translation of hotang-hotang is rattans. If another people know that some body has just buy a car for example, he or she will say andingan bahenonta hotang-hotang nai ?. The term of hotang-hotang in this expression has nothing to do with rattans, but the people just want something like making party, asking money from the owner of the new car as a celebration of having new car. It is also happen when somebody has just graduated from universities, his/her friend will ask him to make a small party as a hotang-hotang to celebrate this successfulness.

Piso-piso.

The literal translation of piso-piso is knives. But in this case the piso-piso means something (money) that we want to give to our father/mother or father and mother in law as a reply back of their giving inheritance. It is always done if a hula-hula (wife giver) gave an inheritance to his/her daughter/son in-law, his/her daughter together with his/her son in law will give some money to reply what the father/mother in law has already given.

Pasituak na tonggi

Literal translation of this statement is giving money for buying the sweet wine. As soon as the wedding ceremony has finished, the wife's giver (hula-hula) will ask some money to be used to buy a sweet wine (if they step in in a certain place and drinking a sweet tuak) before they arrive to their house. This expression, however, have never been done by the wife's giver to use the money to buy the sweet wine, this is only as a ritual culture to give some additional money to the wife's giver before they go home.

Mauli bulung

The literal translation of mauli bulung is having beautiful leafs. In this case there is no relationship between beautiful leafs itself to the cultural expression of in Batak Toba culture. It is an expression to a highest classification of old death man or woman. An old died man/woman can be categorized to be mauli bulung if he/she has these criteria :

- * All his/her sons/daughters have already married.
- * All his/her sons/daughters have already had son or daughter
- * Most of his/her son/daughters have enough welfare or prosperity.

Actually, there are some classification of the 'death' of Batak Toba people.

1. 'Mabalu jongjong' : It is a term addressed to a mother/father if he/she is dead without having children yet, though there is still possibility he/she will get married again with another people.
2. 'Matoppas tataring' : It is a term used to a family if they lost their mother.
3. 'Matipul ulu' : It is a term used to a family if they lost their father.
4. 'Mate punu' : It is a term if a mother/father died without having son. He/she just have daughter.
5. 'Mate pupur' : It is a term if a mother/father died without having children.

Anak buha baju

The literal translation of anak buha baju is a children without having cloth. Concerning with the Batak tradition, this term is always used to say the first children in the family.

Si julluk mata ni horbo

The literal translation of this expression is to prod at the eyes of the buffalo with a pole. In Batak Toba Culture, this expression is addressed to somebody that always speaks frankly in any time and in any occasion without having diplomacy.

Conclusion

Culture is the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, of the members of a particular society. Culture is usually defined in one of two ways : either as a set of practices, codes, and values that mark a particular nation or group : or as the sum of a nation or groups most highly thought of works of literature, art, music etc. Culture can be seen from two aspects. They are material culture (product) such as food, house style, music etc, and the Non material culture (process) such as attitudes, ways of thinking etc. These two aspect of cultures might show the cultural identity by observing at least three aspects, they are :

'what people do' (cultural behavior), 'what people use in what they do (cultural artifacts), and 'what makes people do /use (cultural values.

It is a widely believed that there is a natural connection between the language spoken by members of a social group and that group's identity. In order to have a deeper understanding about a certain culture, the meaning of a certain expression is not only acquired through what speakers say to one another but also through what they do, what they believe to respond to the demands of their environment. We can easily to identify the Batak Toba's cultural identities which are related to birth, marriage, and death. The understanding of context of culture of Batak Toba, is very essential for the reader/listener in order to understand the whole context of the writer or speaker.

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