CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Language behavior of social groups is generally determined by socio-cultural and linguistic norms occurred in the society. In a society where a number of ethnic languages comes into contact, the forces which contribute to language maintenance, bilingualism, language shift and linguistic consequences i.e. ethnicity and nationalism will vary depending on the focus of social mobilization.

A major problem in the accurate prediction of such linguistic consequences lies in identifying the salient factors, which contribute to language maintenance or shift i.e. answering the question “under what condition” (Paulston, 1985). One can even argue that the most important factor influencing language choice of ethnic groups is economic, specifically one of access to jobs (Brudner, 1972).

Weinreich (1954) pointed out that language shift should be studied against time in the context of loyalty and the functions of the languages in contact. Often, in a contact situation, linguistic divisions may be congruent with
corresponding social, political and religious divisions and may affect the process of shift accordingly. A bilingual group in a contact situation may take a partial rather than a total shift by retaining the use of the mother tongue for certain functions.

Fishman (1966) observed that different reasons may be responsible for language maintenance or shift in different communities because each situation of contact is likely to be different from the other in its multidimensional facets of social, psychological and cultural conditioning. It is, therefore, not possible to construct a universal model with a set of fixed variables for the study of sociolinguistic behavior. The exploration of each community demands a fresh tapping and discovery of relevant factors leading to differences in linguistic behavior.

The present study presents an overview of language contact that occurred among seven main ethnic groups in Medan namely Java, Batak Toba, Batak Karo, Mandailing, Minangkabau, Melayu and Chinese and other linguistic consequences such as language maintenance, language loss, ethnicity and nationalism as the results of urban development. As a capital city, Medan experienced a rapid growth of
population. In 1971 – 1980 census, 1980 – 1990 census and 1990 – 2001 census there was approximately 2.5% of addition in urban population. On the contrary, rural population decreased dramatically. Migration, in one-way or another, is the main factor for this phenomenon. The ways of life of people in urban areas and easy access to job and money attract people in rural areas to migrate and try to seek a better life in big cities like Medan.

Migration relates to language contact of different ethnic groups, which finally results in two important language processes namely language maintenance and language shift. Medan with its heterogeneous population accelerates the process of language shift that creates the crisis of ethnic identity. Language and identity are strongly related. Identity may be at the level the group or the individual, hence language is seen as an integral part of a group's identity and of the identity of the individuals within the group. Dixon states that "if a group is to maintain its ethnic identity and social cohesion it must retain its language. Once a group has lost its language it will generally lose its separate identity and will, within a few generations be indistinguishably assimilated into another, more
dominant group" (Dixon 1980:79). Identifying ethnicity by maintaining ethnic language will result in code switching and code mixing, especially in a situation where a number of ethnic groups come into contact. Code switching and code mixing will not happen if ethnic groups start shifting to a common lingua franca as experienced by young and middle aged generation in Medan who start using Bahasa Indonesia in all domains.

There are two possible processes in order to maintain ethnic identity in urban areas. First, migration to urban areas will create a heterogeneous society therefore an acceptable means of communication is needed in order to enable all members of society with different ethnic languages background to communicate. The variety in socio-cultural background of Indonesian society is not only a precious heritage that should be preserved but also a source of creating heterogeneous societies. We can assume then, a heterogeneous society in Medan is different in one way or another from other heterogeneous societies in other cities on the ground of several factors. Politically, an acceptable means of communication that is used to unite all ethnic groups has been
solved by officiating Bahasa Indonesia and by the establishment of Bahasa Indonesia communities.

Second process is, in urban areas ethnic languages experience redefinition in functions and roles. Traditionally, ethnic languages are used in all aspects of life and the only means that are suitable to articulate various ethnic expressions. But, in urban area like Medan ethnic languages stand side by side and compete with Bahasa Indonesia in functions, roles and domains. If ethnic languages are used exclusively in some domains and Bahasa Indonesia in other domains, we will have ethnic languages' maintenance. But, if Bahasa Indonesia replaces ethnic languages in all domains, language shift will occur.

Some problems should be overlooked as the results of language shift:

1. Shifting of traditional values that are better expressed through ethnic language.

2. Rising of new values and norms as the consequences of using new language as a means of communication.

3. Disappearing of ethnic language's functions and roles in its domains and,
4. Rising of new language variety.

Ethnically, someone's status will be determined by his/her position in the group. But, nowadays in urban society, someone's status is determined by his/her social and economic achievement. Similarly, various ethnic kinship addresses are now being replaced by simple Indonesian addresses, which lack the zest of meaning.

In analyzing language maintenance and language shift in Medan we need to add two other related processes, language spread and language loss. Language spread is a process where there is an increase, over time, in the proportion of a communication network that adopts a given language or language variety for a given communicative function (Cooper, 1982:6). Most language spread probably takes place as lingua franca, as language of wider communication (LWC), and English is a good example.

'But languages also spread for purposes of within nation communication, and when they do so, not as an additional language like English in Nigeria, but as a new mother tongue like Bahasa Indonesia, then language spread becomes a case
of language shift. When such language spread through shift takes place within groups, we have a case of language loss.

While the question of shift is mainly related to group, the question of loss is basically one that relates to the individual. It is the individual losing the ability to use the language. In as much as loss of language within the ethnic groups is discussed, this loss no longer relates to the change of norms characteristic for a group, but to an aggregate of the loss that occurs within each individual in the group.

In its simplest form, loss occurs when that ethnic group member cannot do things with the ethnic language he was able to do earlier. For example, he used to discuss things with his friends or read ethnic literatures without the aid of dictionary, but now he encounters difficulty doing these things. Some of the proficiency he used to have is no longer accessible. This phenomenon is now being experienced by many ethnic group members in Medan.

Schmidt (1990) noted that recognition of language loss is often delayed, that is, speakers feel that their language is healthy enough within the in-group network until the remaining fluent speakers are all old, even if younger people are all semi
speakers, passive understanders or have no knowledge of the traditional language, and normal transmission stopped long ago. By the time a community becomes aware of impending language loss, it may be very difficult to reverse.

Another kind of problem often confronts communities in which the younger speakers of the language speak something which is radically different from what is spoken by fluent elders. If the speech of the younger people is regarded by the elders as inadequate because of puristic attitudes, the younger people may be discouraged from continuing to speak. Conversely, if the semi speaker version of the language is accepted within the community, even by the elders, the changed version may persist or rapid change may continue.

The problem of maintaining ethnic language in one language-nation relates to nationality and ethnicity. Fishman (1968) has argued for a distinction between nationalism and nationism is his "Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationism", where he attempted to sort out some of the terminological confusion accompanying nationalism. He suggested that "the transformation....of tradition bound ethnicity to unifying and ideologized nationality.... be called
nationalism" (1968:41). An ethnic group is a reference group invoked by people who share a common historical style (which may be only assumed), based on overt features and values, and who, through the process of interaction with others, identify themselves as sharing that style. Ethnic identity is the sum total of feelings on the part of group members about those values, symbols, and common histories that identify them as a distinct group. Ethnicity is simply ethnic-based action. (Royce, 1982:18).

The resurgence of ethnic awareness in one nation brings into question the goal of complete assimilation for all ethnic groups. Ethnic identity has often been seen as a problem that must somehow be overcome. Social scientists have often considered religious and ethnic groups as "vestiges of a primitive past that are destined to disappear". But the writers of new pluralism have argued that racial, religious and ethnic groups are a basic component of our social structure that affect our institutions and are at times more powerful than economic forces in their influence.

The major difference between ethnicity and ethnic movement is when ethnicity as an unconscious source of
identity turns into a conscious strategy, usually in competition for scarce resources. An ethnic movement is ethnicity turned militant, consisting of ethnic discontents who perceive the world as against them, an adversity along ethnic boundaries. While ethnicity stresses the content of the culture, ethnic movements will be concerned with boundary maintenance. Ethnic movements by themselves probably cannot maintain a language but will affect the rate of shift so that the shift is much slower and spans many more generations. Fortunately, ethnic movement in the sense of militancy did not occur in Medan.

Apart from the extent of linguistic assimilation, the intergenerational differences can also be seen in terms of language choice, i.e. the functional reallocation of languages in everyday interaction. Among seven ethnic groups understudy, only the young generation of Batak Karo and Chinese who preserve their ethnic languages while for the young generation of other five ethnic groups, Bahasa Indonesia is increasingly replacing ethnic languages in all domains. The argument that ethnic languages are part of the nation's resources appeals to the notion of preservation of the national treasure, and to the
idea that languages are resources like minerals, technical skills or numbers of workers. In other words, ethnic languages should be regarded as national treasures, parts of national heritage and so deserving of protection.

Fishman (1972) points out that a nation’s political and cultural foundations are weakened when large parts of the population do not feel encouraged to express behavioral patterns that are traditionally meaningful to them. A wealth of knowledge that is there in ethnic languages can not be conveyed if ethnic languages are not maintained. This knowledge is usually made accessible through language maintenance work both to descendants of members of the speech community and to the nation.

Another interesting outcome of language contact situation in Medan is the use of mixed Ethnic-Bahasa Indonesia code. The use of the mixed Ethnic-Bahasa Indonesia code raises many questions like, what is the language of Medan? Is it the standard Bahasa Indonesia that is taught in schools or is it a mixed Ethnic-Bahasa Indonesia code? Which one of these do the linguistic communities in Medan learn as Bahasa Indonesia?
Some foreign languages like English, Arabic, and Dutch have also made perceptible inroads into language contact situation in Medan. Some words from those languages are borrowed extensively for inter- and intra ethnic groups communication. In a future study it would be interesting to investigate how far foreign words have intervened into linguistic communities’ communication in Medan.