



## The Impact of Social Status on Language Shift: A Case Study on Family Domain Language in Lembar

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### **Abstract**

Every society is stratified in different classes and they are mainly measured through economic conditions. Diversity among the people in terms of their position, status, abilities is a very common phenomenon in this world. Age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, power, economy are a few influencing factors which are promoting divisions among the group. This research is about social status which triggers lexicon shifts on nuclear family of Lembar society. This aims at finding out factors which lead to lexicon shift as well where the shifts mainly occur. The participants were 20 from low socio-economic status with span of age 20 to 50; no particular gender takes into account. Data obtained from this research clearly shows that people's inclination towards prestigious variety comes after their desire to be upper class like. People's social network/mobility is one of the influencing factors that determines people to shift the language. People who possess good education, job opportunities and wealth obviously influence low economic people to use high standard language.

**Keywords:** Social Status; Nuclear Family; Language Shift; Family Domain Language

### **Introduction**

Diversity among the people in terms of their position, status, abilities is a very common phenomenon in this world. Age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, power, economy are a few influencing factors which are promoting divisions among the group. The dominance of powerful group on distinctively less powerful groups is almost customary practice. Grouping people together according to their social rank or economic condition is the general notion of social class system.

People of these classes are distinctive not only in their possession of wealthier assets, power, favorable regard, educational qualification or status, but also in their speaking manner, style or linguistic features. A professor from a well-known college is not expected to speak like a person who works in a garment factory. A businessman can never use a beggar's accent while talking with his partner. We can easily identify who belongs to which level. From their professions we can infer their economic conditions and thus their belonging social classes can also be identified. So a clear distinction of using semantics, syntax, phonology, phonetics, vocabulary or style helps us to distinguish any particular person and their position in the society.

Every society is stratified in different classes and they are mainly measured through economic conditions. Thus different groups set up in the same society where the members of the each group habitually differs from those of the other groups. However, this paper will only focus on language differentiations of different classes. People's social status acts as influencing factor to triggering his/her code choice.

In Indonesian context, people who got a good command in standard Indonesian and have a good communication skill are usually in an advantaged position in the society especially who lives in city areas. So it becomes very challenging for those who newly migrated to cities or shifted their classes as a consequence of social mobility. A teenage boy from remote village migrate to city for the sake of getting better higher education may shift his social status along with his language choice. As he used to speak in local dialect, he will initially face much difficulty while interacting with city dwellers. A girl from a lower class after married off in a higher class family will not only encounter with a new environment but will also immerses in new communicative style and registers. Though initially it will be very hard for them to shift from their regular variety, with the influence of his/her surrounding context that particular speech code will become their permanent variety and thus their linguistic feature will gradually change as a result of their socio-economic change.

Since Indonesian is a prestigious language, speakers of local vernacular prone to use the language in every situation both conversing with people within the same areas and with others from other regions, then code switching from low variety to high variety language may inevitably come to pass. The changing language use is seen through the whole conversation of youth. Tendency in using two variation simultaneously has proved the luxury of Indonesian among the speakers of Sasak. Code switching phenomenon has been voiced throughout conversation and among speakers of Sasak. This overuse of Indonesian has led to the possibility of code shift in some areas of society.

Speakers of local vernacular in the island of Lombok (Sasak language), for instance, tend to use Indonesian language. The language is regarded as a formal and a high standard language and is mostly spoken by higher status person in daily communication. This phenomenon triggers lower middle class society to adjust to this situation.

Social status along with other factors plays important effects to this situation and somewhat becomes major source of code shifting in Sasak nuclear family. This basic assumption needs to be proved and Therefore, this research will particularly pay much attention to the reasons and dominant factors why people in family domain shift their language as well as in which nuclear family the shifting code mainly occur.

### ***Review of Related Literature***

#### ***Language Variations in Sasak***

Variety can be identified as a particular dialect, variation can refer as different styles and accents of expressing that code or dialect. Sasak language has got several varieties with particular speech communities which are usually known as dialects. However, Standard Colloquial Sasak can also be considered as a variety. But people's way of speaking that same variety differs from class to class and thus the term variation arise. Gender, social class, regional differences are a few determining factors of a person's language variation. An adult woman never speaks like a school-going child. A school teacher will speak in more polite and humble manner than a rickshaw puller. Speech utterance style of the people from northern part can easily be differentiated from the southern part dialects. Thus situations have produced linguistic inequalities among the country and socio-economic class another major notional factor regarding the matter. Though many researchers do not consider these effects straightforward but social class indeed plays a very important role in creating language variations (Milroy and Gordon 2003).

By observing their use of language, people can easily be categorized into their respective social classes or regions that they belong to.

The power of making High variety and Low variety lie upon a particular speech community who are holding prestigious position in the society. They are popularly known as educated elite society and they mainly decide that which language will possess the status of high variety or low variety and will play dominant role or weaker role in the society. For example, a group of people who is the native speakers of a certain language holds important positions and is politically very powerful in the society, with the major portion of the total population belongs to this group. So their language might get the status of High-Variety and the other sub-divisions or the language of minor speakers will get the status of Low-Variety. Thus, High variety of Sasak is chosen over Low variety since it is the mother tongue of native elites. However, different varieties of the main Sasaknese according to their status and acceptance in the society have different grammar system, morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, vocabulary etc.

### *Social Stratification and Social Mobility*

Grouping people together according to their status and economic condition is a general notion of social class and produces a stratified society. The sociologists and modern thinkers are trying to identify what makes a particular social class but usually inequalities in Power, Wealth and Status of the individuals determine different groups in social hierarchy. From Karl Marx's view on social stratification, each class has been distinguished to the other classes from the mode of production; where one class controls and directs the process of production while another class is, or other classes are, the direct producers and providers of services to the dominant class in the society.

A person's class has always been influenced by the class where they were born into but there is a chance of shifting up or down of the classes. After having better education, well-paid job or through some other factors, a person's economic condition can be changed in a better position and he might shift his class to "middle income" or "upper middle income" from the "lower-middle income". Such situation is known as social mobility. In modern era, the theory of social classes often assume in three general categories which include the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. From Karl Marx's perspective, people of upper class are those who control the mode of production. Khandaker (2004) found all the elite class societies such as political elites, senior civil and military bureaucrats, Big-business class and industrialists, Retired civil servants and military officers in this category of social class.

Among the three divisions of social hierarchy, people from the middle class are lying in the second position. Comparatively people from this class are more conscious than the other classes. Thus the social mobility occurs in this section most. However Khandaker (2004) has categorized teachers, semi employed, government workers, small time businessmen in this class. Lastly, people with lowest social rank, who are standing due to low income with, lack of skills or education, are considered as the people of lower class in social hierarchy. However, in Sasak community even the lowest social rank tend to use high standard lexicon in his nuclear family, for instance, they prone to use Indonesian such as the word "ayah, ibu, bapak, paman, bibi and so forth" rather than maintaining his own variety such as 'amaq, inaq, tuaq, inaq kake and so forth.

### *Social Network and Social Distance*

"Social network theory is often used to investigate why people who might share the same social characteristics (such as class or region) nevertheless behave differently linguistically, especially with

respect to participation in language change. What the Milroys found was that new language features are much slower to take root in dense and multiplex social networks those where a few people interact with each other often (the dense part) and in multiple ways” (Herk 2012 p.18). People of a different groups who has interacted with each other over the years, are their social networks. The frequency of contacts with the surrounding interlocutors reinforces particular sociolinguistic norms. If someone’s neighbor and co-workers are also their friends, than their speech codes will influence each other more frequently than their other relatives who may live in distant places.

Social distance between the interlocutors is one major effective factor to determine the intelligibility of their discourse. Speech appropriacy is one very influential factor between the interlocutors. If a person is in office and having chit-chat with one of his/her colleagues, who also belongs to same region, than it is more likely to happen that he is going to carry out the conversation with that colleague in regional dialect by breaking the rule of idle conversation. It is obvious that having a chit-chat in one’s regional dialect with a partner who belongs to the same region of the speaker creates a deeper feeling of integrity.

### ***The Influence of Social Class on Language Use***

#### *Attitudes*

While giving the explanation of psychological and socio cultural factors of language contact, Weinreich (1968) brought out “attitude toward each language” as an important “extra linguistic” matter upon with a few other issues. Each speaker has their own “idiosyncratic” interest on any particular language. His attitude might get “stereotype” effect as well. Attitudes toward particular culture or community also influence certain language as well (p. 2-3). In Sasak soociety, there is a particular group of people who are ashamed of having regional accents on their spoken variety then they always use standard language or switch code between Indonesian and Sasaknese . These attitudes of the speakers are exhibited through one’s behavior (Language Attitudes, 2014).

#### *Education*

In Indonesia, education is one very important issue which is creating language variations among different classes. This class issue also played a signification role during the second half of the nineteenth century when educational development occurred by the Indonesian renaissance. The education through Indonesian medium spread fast over the country. But because of high expense, elite society were benefitted by the system and rural people with lower income were totally deprived of this opportunity (Shukla & Kaul 1998 p.26-29). This inappropriate balance in education system among the classes is still remained in the society.

This education variation is creating language variations as well. Most people from upper society sends their children toprestigious schools where they can acquire education and can differentiate standard accents. There they get good opportunity to practice standard language as well as foreign language which later on sustain in their nature. If someone who is not that much rich but have a well paid job, can afford to send their children to any public schools where they may not receive standard accent but they will be knowledgeable and have an educated breadth of vocabulary.

On the other hand, poor children who belong to working class sector need to support their family by providing their income. So they prefer to involve themselves in working sector more than getting formal education. Parents with low income are mostly less worried about their children’s education. They

have no knowledge about educational scholarships as well and hesitate to send their children in any formal educational institutions for lack of money (Lott 2012 p.652).

### *Consciousness*

“Labov’s (1972) terminology- “careful” versus “casual” styles reflected the underlying theory that stylistic variation was a consequence of differential degrees of attention of speech. That is, he argued that his speakers became more aware of their own ways of speaking as the interview activities moved along a national scale towards greater formality. They are less attentive to their speech in “casual” style, more attentive in “careful” style (Coupland 2007 p.36). Language awareness among the social classes is seen to differ in many circumstances. Many linguistics norms had been specified for certain social situations. For example, people from upper class take non-standard languages or dialects in a formal situation as an insult. So on those situations, their language consciousness reluctance them and create awareness to their language appropriacy.

People especially from upper or middle class society are associated with these consciousnesses more. But people from working or lower class that are lack of sensing such social norms are usually seen less concerned and unconscious about the matter. However, Language consciousness also develops the sense of appropriate languages in right situation. For example, Sasaknese has few specific taboo words. Language consciousness provokes the idea among the people of using such words in a certain situation.

### *Profession*

If one speaks like an educated person there is a high chance for him to get a prestigious or well paid job. So the power of holding a good job again becomes dominated by socially classified languages. Since the city areas provide better jobs, people from different regions including the remote areas have tendency to migrate and settled down in city areas. So the varieties of speeches are very common scenario in city areas which gives us a well prove of social statuses (Spolsky 1998). Here standard language speakers are rewarded with prestigious and well paid jobs. So people are seen to avoid their regional languages and use standard varieties more. Sometimes this frequent use of standard variety makes them standard variety users permanently. As a result, their next generation also gets their languages and contributes in a same way.

On the other hand, working class people do not find any extra privilege to switch or develop their languages. Sometimes for better livelihood, people from remote areas also come into city areas and because of lack in formal education they get involved in working sectors where formal languages are less important matter. People have a tendency to talk like those people with whom they regularly deal with (Spolsky 1998). Because of different social class statuses, some involved in standard job and get the opportunity to remove their dialect accents and the other remain as same language speaker even after shifting their place.

### *Convergence and divergence*

Convergence and divergence are two very important processes under language accommodation theory. People belong from two different regions or have different social backgrounds, use different varieties of languages. But during their conversation we can see that “their percentage of use of some features often converge” (Spolsky 1998). On the other hand, divergence occurs when anyone decides to

“move his/her speech away from the other party” (Spolsky 1998). Because of convergence theory, we can't see the existence of any particular dialects in city areas of Bangladesh since standard language users most in there. Different regional peoples come across in city areas for sake of their education or profession. But few people also can be seen holding their regional accents in spite of living in city areas for so long. This happened because of their divergent attitudes. Soon people frequently become accustomed his speech tendency to those of his interlocutors (Labov 2010). Co-existence of several dialects in a particular area is also the result of people's divergence attitude.

### *Linguistic Insecurity and Crossover Effects*

As Hudson said, “Linguistic insecurity, a term introduced by Labov (1972: 133). At least in United States and Britain some people who are socially sub-ordinate think that they speak badly (p.210). Linguistic Insecurity, however, is one very common fact for which people are seen producing prestigious variant of language in order to present them in desired way (Ismail 2013). In sasak society, lower middle class or upper working class people have tendency to “jumps over” the next higher class while speaking for which sometimes this is specified as “lower middle class crossover effect” (Meyerhoff 2006). They often want themselves hearing not like who they are but as who they want to be. As a result sometimes they are seen to produce even better vocabularies than their next higher class.

People from a particular class may speak differently from others within the same class, because they are aspired to be in the higher class. This is referred to as “class aspiration”. “Regular and uniform shift towards a prestige norm in “careful speech” can be taken as evidence of a linguistic change in progress” (Coupland 2007). Sometimes crossover effect also occurs because of social mobility. People from urban areas are seen to change their social hierarchy with a better position.

In a capitalist society, ‘status’ not directly derived from Marxian ‘class’ must be recognized, and this leads to differences in what Weber called ‘styles of life’, marked by such things as ‘housing.

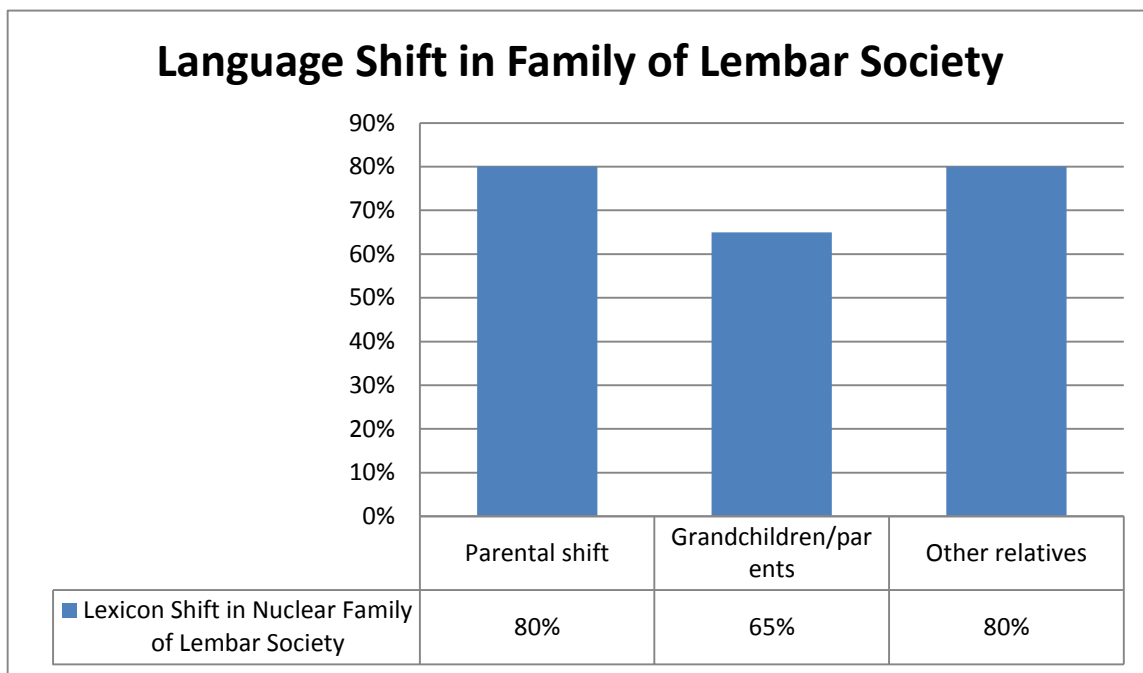
### **Result**

No	Question	Family calls					
		Non standard	standard	undecided	Percentage		
					NS	S	UD
1	What do the participants call his her parents?	15	5	0	75%	25%	
2	What are the participants called by their child or children?	3	17	0	15%	85%	
3	What do the participants call their parents' sibling?	16	4	0	80%	20%	
4	What are the participants called by their brother's or sister's child/children?	4	16	0	20%	80%	
5	What do participants call their grandma/pa?	11	5	4	55%	25%	20%
6	What are participants (wiling to be) called by their grandchild or future grandchild?	2	13	5	10%	65%	25%

We can tell from the table above that the lexicon shift occur mostly in every part of family calls. Table no 1 and 2 are the shifting code in calling parental name. The participants mostly called his or her parents in non-standard language or in local vernacular on the other hand, once the participants get marriage and have kid 85 % of the participants shift the calls from local vernacular to standard language which is regarded as a prestigious language.

Table no 3 and 4 is a picture of lexicon shift in a call of relatives from parents’ brother or sister. The table showed that formerly 80% of the participants called their parents’ brother or sister in local language however, presently 80% of the participants tend to use Indonesian as standard language in nuclear family calls.

And lastly, the table no 5 and 6 is a sheet of data which presents tendencies of Sasak people use Indonesian in relative’s calls. This table showed that 55% of participant called their grandparents in local vernacular 25% of them did in Indonesian. Nevertheless, the tendency of using Indonesian has been shown in above table. About 65% of the participants shift their calls to Indonesian while 10% would retain using local language and 25% has decided yet whether to use either language because he doesn’t have generation yet.

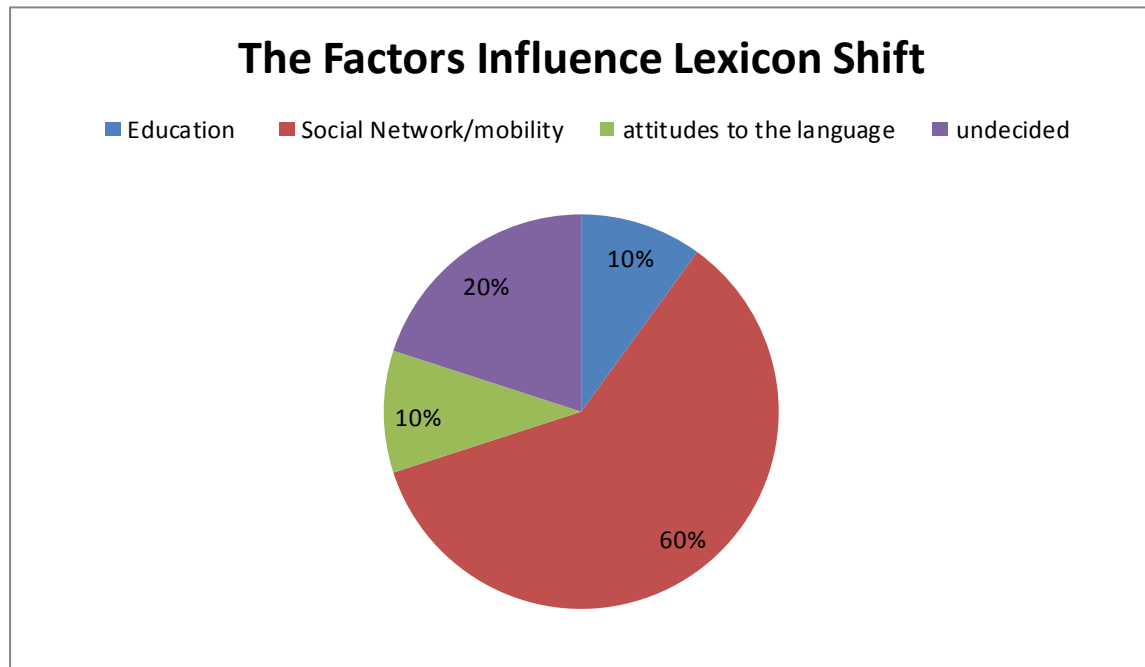


Regarding to reasons why society in Lembar tend to use Indonesian in nuclear family calls are dealing with social status attached to individual, below is data why the lexicon shift and what social status underpins the shift.

Parameter	Frame of social status													
	Occupation		Education		Wealth		Linguistic insecurity		Social network/mobility		Attitudes to language		Undecided voters	
	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P
Percentage			2	10%					12	60%	2	10%	4	20%

Note: N = Number P = Percentage

From the table, we could see that the reason why participants use standard language is dominantly due to social networks 60% while the rests are education 10% and attitudes towards the language is 10%. The result implies that the calls in family is predominantly influenced by surrounding people who have good education, occupation as well as people who are rich and have wide range of social networks. It can be seen in the pie chart below.



### **Conclusion**

Data obtained from this research clearly shows that peoples' inclination towards prestigious variety comes after their desire to be upper class like. Discussion about some of the significant factors of the findings which will help to conclude whether social status is really effective in promoting the lexicon shift or not. People's social network/mobility is one of the influencing factor determines people to shift the language. People who possess good education, job opportunities and wealth obviously influence low economic people to use high regarded language.

From the findings it can clearly be conceived that most of the participants got the chance to change their status by born variety; mostly it occurs when they shift their community or involve themselves in particular practice. For instance, if a child born in a lower class family, it will learn its parental language first which might be any dialect. When he will grow up and communicate with outer society for sake of earning, he might gradually get rid of his dialectal variety and a better variation will naturally arise in his speaking style through practice. His earning frequencies will develop his social structure also; therefore he will be upraised in lower middle class position. Thus social mobility will change his linguistic feature as well.

It is also noteworthy that most of the people from the lower background conceived the fact that standard variety users are benefited from the society mostly. Thus their expectancy to see their next generation as standard variety users derives. Everyone has a hidden expectancy to see their next generation in a better off position in the society and since standard variety is equated with prestigious position, their desire immerse towards that very strongly.



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