

# Multilingualism as The Cause of Teochew Dialect Extinction in Medan

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**Abstract.** The title of this article is "The Role of Multilingualism in the Decline of the Teochew Dialect in Medan." The present study is grounded on the theoretical framework of Sociolinguistics, which encompasses the examination of language characteristics, variations, and functions, as well as the analysis of language usage within social interactions. The objective of this study is to provide an overview of the social context of the Teochew community in Medan, with a specific focus on the Teochew dialect. The employed research methodology is qualitative in nature. The terms "data collection method" and "technique used" pertain to the approach employed for gathering information, as well as the skillful manner in which it is recorded and documented. The Chinese population residing in Medan is recognised for their multilingual abilities, as they are proficient in speaking multiple languages. These languages include Bahasa Indonesia, which serves as the national language of Indonesia; Hokkien, a dialect commonly used for communication in Medan; their respective mother tongues, employed for intrafamilial and intraethnic interactions (Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, Hailufeng, Hokchiu, Henghua, and Hainan); Mandarin, spoken by a subset of the Chinese community; and English, acquired as a global language of instruction. As a result of their multilingualism, individuals of Chinese descent, particularly those from the Teochew community, have a tendency to incorporate elements of their native language into their everyday speech. Consequently, a significant proportion of individuals progressively lose proficiency in and cease to utilise their native language over the 4.0 period, leading to the endangerment of the Teochew Chinese dialect in Medan.

**Keywords:** Teochew, Multilingualism, Sociolinguistics, Dialect extinction

Received: 15 June 2023 | Revised: 19 August 2023 | Accepted: 15 September 2023

## 1 Introduction

This research discusses Teochew dialect extinction in Medan due to multilingualism. The language raised in this research is Teochew in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Medan, as the capital of the province of North Sumatra Indonesia, particularly Medan is a multicultural city consisting of various kinds of ethnicities with various regional languages. The regional languages in Indonesia have similarities in the pronunciation of several vocabulary words. Similarities among regional languages can occur due to language and social interactions [1][2].

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Teochew dialect is chosen to be analyzed as it is fundamentally based on awareness that dialects have essential function and position among Indonesians. The writer would also like to clarify that the Chinese living in Indonesia especially in the districts of Medan, Medan city, is not merely Hokkien as there are Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, Hailufeng, Hokchiu, Henghua, and Hainan ethnic groups.

Bilingualism is a person who has the ability to speak two languages. Multilingualism is the ability of an individual in speaking more than two languages depending on the society where he is involved in [3][4]. It is more likely that the individuals who live in a multilingual community speak more than one language than for individuals who live in a monolingual society. Therefore, there are more multilinguals in areas where regional or minority languages are spoken. In Indonesia, bahasa Indonesia is used as the lingua franca among the multilingual locals. It is a standardized variety of Malay; a descendant of Proto-Austronesian language. Most Indonesians, aside from speaking the national language, are also fluent in their local languages, for example Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Bataknese, Chinese and many others [5].

In the context of individual multilingualism, there exist discernible variations in the process of acquiring and utilising multiple languages. Simultaneous acquisition of several languages can occur when an individual is exposed to two or more languages either from birth or at various stages during their lives. The holistic perspective on multilingualism emphasises the distinct traits exhibited by individuals who are multilingual, as compared to those who are monolingual. Multilingual individuals leverage the languages they possess as a valuable tool for communication, so benefiting from a broader repertoire of linguistic resources compared to their monolingual counterparts. The consideration of multilingual speakers employing different languages, either in isolation or in combination, is of utmost importance, since it is dependent on their communicative requirements and the individuals they are interacting with. Monolingual individuals exclusively employ a single language in all circumstances, whereas multilingual individuals employ several languages and do not utilise each language for identical goals in all communicative situations, domains, or with the same individuals [6][7]. Individuals that possess the ability to speak many languages may choose to peruse a newspaper in one language, while opting to engage with a technical report in a different language. The individual who possesses multilingual abilities may engage in online conversations using two different languages, depending on the linguistic preferences of their conversation partners. However, when it comes to watching films, they tend to exclusively see films in only one of those languages. The

notion that bilingual individuals possess identical and flawless proficiency in two languages is a fallacy [8]. Indeed, this holds true to a much greater extent when three or more languages are implicated.

As mentioned previously, locals in Indonesia will use bahasa Indonesia; however, differ from other cities, Medan Chinese use Hokkien as the lingua franca among the Chinese in Medan. When there are Chinese in city A, for instance, they speak bahasa Indonesia or local languages in city A to communicate with each other unless they are from the same ethnics, they will use their own mother tongue. In Medan, among the Chinese speakers, they use Hokkien dialect as the lingua franca. Once they know that their interlocutors are from the same ethnics, they will turn their Hokkien dialect to their own mother tongue to show their familiarity. In other condition, some Chinese are also trained in speaking Mandarin as their Chinese identity and English as the must-learnt international language for Chinese. Especially during this 4.0 era, when everything is digitized with English and a lot of international schools are surrounding Indonesia, people in Indonesia are also getting fluent in speaking English. It means, Chinese in Medan are capable of speaking bahasa Indonesia, Mandarin, Hokkien, their own mother tongue, and English.

The objective of this study is to examine the phenomenon of multilingualism among Chinese speakers, specifically focusing on the Teochew dialect, and its potential impact on the decline of dialect usage. This research adopts a sociolinguistic approach, which is an interdisciplinary field that explores the connection between language and society. The aim is to enhance our comprehension of language structure and its role in communication. A language can be defined as a code or system employed by individuals to engage in communication with one another [9]. When individuals desire to engage in communication, they opt on a specific code through which they can effectively convey their emotions and thoughts. In the field of sociolinguistics, language diversity is commonly seen through two distinct phenomena known as code flipping and code mixing. Individuals often exhibit a tendency to blend or alternate between languages during their interactions with others, a phenomenon commonly observed in bilingual or multilingual contexts.

Code mixing is a linguistic phenomenon wherein a speaker transitions from using one language to another within a single instance of speech. The phenomenon being referred to is the utilisation of a particular language or linguistic variant within a context characterised by a relaxed atmosphere, typically occurring amongst individuals who

have a close and intimate bond [10]. Code mixing refers to the act of blending two distinct codes or languages, typically without a shift in subject matter. When a speaker engages in code mixing, an additional language is included into the linguistic repertoire of the speaker, while the primary language continues to undergo further development [11]. Code mixing frequently manifests in a single sentence, wherein one constituent is expressed in language A while the remaining constituents are articulated in language B. In formal contexts, speakers often resort to code-switching due to the absence of a precise idiom within the language being used. Consequently, it becomes necessary to incorporate words or idioms from other languages [12].

## 2. Method

To gather the necessary data for this study, method known as the proficiency, recording, and note-taking approach [13][14]. This method facilitated the conduction of sociolinguistic interviews with the participants, allowing for a comprehensive data collection process. The sociolinguistic interview serves as the primary approach for gathering data in sociolinguistic research, enabling researchers to amass substantial quantities of speech from individuals who are knowledgeable about the language or dialect under investigation. The interview is characterised by an extended, informally-structured dialogue between the author and the interviewee, like typical everyday conversations [15].

## 3. Result and Discussion

1. a. Where are you going, Jasmine?

[lə4 ai1 k<sup>h</sup>ə1 ti3 kə3, Jasmine?]

- b. I am going to teach my private student who studies at Prime One School.

[wa4 ai1 k<sup>h</sup>ə1 ka1 wa1 kai3 private hak3 sen1 jan3 t<sup>h</sup>ak3 na3 Prime One School kai1.]

2. I really love eating dumplings with soy sauce.

[wa4 ceŋ1 sek1 suka ciak3 pangsit p<sup>h</sup>oi1 kecap.]

3. I will be late for 15 minutes. Please wait for me at the hotel receptionist for the check-in.

[wa4 bakalan telat cap3 ŋə2 hun3 ceŋ1. Tolong tan1 wa1 na3 hotel receptionist kə3 check-in.]

4. Although it is not a farewell party, everyone treats her like she is going to leave tomorrow.

[sui1 zaŋ4 əm3 si3 farewell party, tapi noŋ2 coŋ3 kai3 naŋ4 tui1 tai3 ji1 kayak ji1 ma1 zek1 ai1 li3 k<sup>h</sup>ui1 liau4.]

5. I got stuck in the traffic jam.

[wa4 tu4 tiok3 macet.]

6. The students are having flag ceremony in the field now.

[hak3 seŋ1 lagi wu3 upacara bendera k<sup>h</sup>ə1 lapangan.]

7. It seems that he likes to drink milk tea with boba and eat peanuts.

[k<sup>h</sup>ua3 tiok4 ji1 suka lim1 milk tea kak3 boba c<sup>h</sup>am3 ciak3 kacang.]

8. I am asking Ricky to print the files for me.

[wa4 kio3 Ricky kak3 wa1 print mik3 kia2.]

9. My phone is in low battery.

[wa4 kai3 handphone ai1 low bat liau4.]

10. My computer is broken.

[wa1 kai3 computer p<sup>h</sup>ai4 liau4.]

11. The students need to record their testimony and upload it on the Instagram by tagging our ID.

[hak3 seŋ1 ai1 record ji1 naŋ3 kai3 testimony liau4 upload k<sup>h</sup>ə1 Instagram liau4 tag wa4 naŋ3 kai3 ID.]

12. The students need to do the writing in a free topic.

[hak3 seŋ1 ai1 co3 cə3 ju4 kai3 free topic kai3 writing.]

13. The wi-fi is very slow.

[wai2 fai2 a1 ne1 lek1.]

14. I have not planned anything for my presentation next week.

[au3 lui1 pai3 kai3 presentation wa4 a1 boi3 cun3 pi2 kək3.]

15. I haven't got the report of the school fee payment.

[wa4 a1 boi3 wu3 t<sup>h</sup>ak3 c<sup>h</sup>ek3 lui1 kai3 e report.]

16. Do you still keep Mr. Gunawan's contact number?

[lə4 masi wu3 siu1 Mister Gunawan kai3 tiaŋ3 ɔi3 bə4?]

17. If she does not deduct my bonus, it is still acceptable for me.

[na3 si1 ji1 bo3 khau3 wa1 kai3 bonus wa4 masi wu3 pian1 cik3 siu2.]

18. Do you still have the grading guide file for exposition writing?

[lə4 masi wu3 exposition writing kai3 grading guide bə4?]

19. I am going to have a meeting with board of the staff tomorrow.

[ma1 zek1 wa4 ai1 kak3 wa1 kai3 staff meeting.]

20. Susan does not like to apply brown eyeshadow on her eyelids.

[Susan bo3 suka jəŋ4 coklat eyeshadow k<sup>h</sup>ə1 ji1 kai3 mak3 ciu1.]

21. I have not downloaded the files from the email.

[wa4 a1 boi3 download email kai3 file.]

22. She decided to quit from the school due to financial problem.

[ji1 kuak1 tia3 c<sup>h</sup>ut3 wan1 ɔk3 təŋ2 jin1 wei3 lui1 kai3 məŋ3 təŋ1.]

23. She postponed the forum to the following week because there were not many participants this morning.

[ji1 undur forum k<sup>h</sup>ə1 au3 lui1 pai3 jin1 wei3 ca2 k<sup>h</sup>i3 bə3 a1 ne1 ɔi3 naŋ4 tɔi3.]

24. I don't get used to put on high heels. I prefer flat shoes.

[wa4 bo3 sit3 kuan3 c<sup>h</sup>əŋ3 kui3 ɔi1. Wa4 k<sup>h</sup>ak1 suka pau1 ɔi1.]

25. I do not have any kebaya. May I put on dress instead?

[wa4 bo3 kebaya. Wa4 ɔi3 sai4 c<sup>h</sup>əŋ3 dress bəi2?]

26. My name is Stella. I am 29 years old. I will be 30 years old in two months' time. I am working as a private teacher now. I teach Mandarin and English. I am a Christian. I go to Mawar Sharon Church. Currently, I also participate in interpreter ministry. I am in Mandarin team. I supposed to get married last May. But because of corona, my wedding got postponed so I am going to get married next year. But I still thank God because through this pandemic, I got a lot of blessings from God.

[wa4 kai3 mia4 mia3 Stella. Wa4 keŋ1 ni4 ziap3 kau2 hoi3. Ke2 nɔ3 kai3 guek4 wa4 ai1 sa3 cap3 hoi3 liau4. Wa4 təŋ3 kim2 lagi ka2 naŋ3 po2 sip1. Wa4 ka3 kai3

si3 hua3 gək4 kak3 im3 bun2. Wa4 si3 cə3 kai3 sin1 ja3 səl kai3 naŋ3. Wa4 k<sup>h</sup>ə1 Mawar Sharon kai3 ka1 təŋ1. Wa4 juga wu3 c<sup>h</sup>am1 kia1 interpret na3 ci1 kai3 ka1 təŋ1. Wa4 c<sup>h</sup>am1 kia1 hua3 gək4 e3 fan4 ji4 t<sup>h</sup>uan2 kai3 interpret. keŋ1 ni4 e3 ŋə2 guek4 wa4 jin1 kai1 kek1 hun1 liau4. Tapi jin1 wei3 corona, wa4 undur wa4 e3 kek1 hun1 jadi me1 ni4 cia3 kek1 hun1. Tapi wa4 tetap ai1 kam1 sia3 cu4 karena sui1 zaŋ4 wu3 ini pandemi, tapi wa4 tetap t<sup>h</sup>an3 a1 ne1 ce3 kai3 cək1 hot1 dari cu4.].

#### 4. Conclusion

There are many words in Teochew which tend to be replaced with Bahasa and English as the informants do not know their Teochew version. In their daily conversation, they usually code-mix some words or phrases with adopted languages that describe the exact words rather than explaining the forgotten or unknown words with figures by using Teochew. This phenomenon happens due to the globalization era when speaking English is the trend and speaking Bahasa is a compulsory. It is truly suggested that dialects can still be preserved among the youngsters with the support of social media like YouTube.

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