

## Conference Paper

# Social Contexts of Phonological Contrasts and Indexicality: Variability and Identity among Singkils

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## Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to look at the relationship between linguistics variation and identity in Singkil, an Austronesian language spoken by the aboriginal speakers living dominantly in five districts namely Kuta Baharu, Simpang Kanan, Suro, Gunung Meriah and Singkil, which are administratively under Singkil regency of Aceh province, Indonesia. According to Ethnologue, Singkil is a dialect of Batak Alas-Kluet (btz). Variation displayed at all levels of language structure ranging from syntax to fine-gained features of pronunciation, provides one of the defining features of human language. Differences in variation may result from biological given, e.g. differences in laryngeal analogy and physiology among men, women and children causing different levels of fundamental frequency. Differences in variation may also arise on account of social patterning of behavior acquired as a result of a speaker's regional socio-cultural and language background. These alternatives are consciously noticed by listeners and invariably used by speakers as a source of identity markers. Singkil speakers use these phonetic forms as marker and identity when they interact with other Singkil speakers, it can be seen clearly from the use of phoneme /f/ and /r/. The phoneme /f/ changes to [ʰp] when it is in initial position, and phoneme /r/ becomes [x], whether it is in initial, medial and final position. The change of /f/ to [ʰp] and /r/ to [x] is exclusive in-group identity marker because at no stage they (Singkil speakers) use these sounds when talking to BI speakers.

**Keywords:** social contexts, indexicality, variability, identity.

## 1. Introduction

In the social context, language is not only a means of communication but also it is a means of creating and maintaining social relationship among speakers of the language. As an illustration, take an example, there are two persons in the waiting room of railway station. At first, they do not know one another. They, then, begin to make a talk to avoid their boredom. They talk many things. They give information to one

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and another. This is the function of the language as a means of communication and at the same time as a means of creating social relationship. If they are from the different social and geographical backgrounds, they will use different dialects. Here, we have what we call social dialect and geographical dialect (Trudgill, 1983:14). For instance, if one of them is someone speaking Indonesian language, who is from North Sumatra, will probably use Indonesian language with a certain accent spoken by people from that part of the country; and the other will probably use the other dialect (Kade-Kade dialect) if he is from Singkil.

The facts show that there are more than one language existing and being used in a given speech community. A situation in which there are, at least, two languages are used is known as a diglossic situation; a person having mastery of two languages and using them alternately is known as a bilingual speaker; and the mastery of two (or more) languages by the individual speaker is known as *bilingualism* (Ferguson, C.A,1959 and Grosjean, 1982: 54)

In the other hands, linguistics has focused on the relationship between linguistic signs and things in the world. So linguists need a way of thinking about how social and personal identities and linguistic forms are related. One influential model of this way begins with the concept of indexicality.

With respect to the above situation, Kade-Kade dialect is a dialect used in Aceh Singkil regency. an Austronesia language spoken by the aboriginal speakers living dominantly in five districts namely *Kuta Baharu, Simpang Kanan, Suro, Gunung Meriah* and Singkil, which are administratively under Singkil regency of Aceh province, Indonesia. According to Ethnologue, Singkil is a dialect of Batak Alas-Kluet (btz).

According to Central Bureau of Statistics of Singkil regency 2015, the Singkil speakers or Kade -kade are very dominant who live in this regency. It can be seen from the demographic distribution of Singkil speakers in different areas of Singkil regency is given in Table 1.1 below.

## 2. Literature Review

The notion of indexicality derives its inspiration from Peircean concept of 'index'. Indexicality shows how the relationships between categories and concept on a macro-sociological plane manifest or translate themselves in everyday exchanges and conversational interaction between individuals. Silverstein has been an influential contribution to the indexicality theory. His work echoes the taxonomy provided by Labov (1972: 178-80), which suggests that linguistics variable can carry different social meaning arising out of 'indicator', 'marker' and 'stereotype'. According to Labov, a variable

TABLE 1: The Demographic Distribution of Singkil Speakers in Singkil Regency (Central Bureau of Statistics of Singkil Regency, 2015).

No	Sub-Districts	Number of Speakers
1	<i>Danau Paris</i>	723
2	<i>GunungMeriah</i>	30.869
3	<i>Kota Baharu</i>	6.332
4	<i>Kuala Baru</i>	229
5	<i>PulauBanyak Barat</i>	20
6	<i>PulauBanyak</i>	50
7	<i>SimpangKanan</i>	12.495
8	<i>Singkil</i>	5.500
9	<i>Singkil Utara</i>	723
10	<i>Singkohor</i>	2.500
11	<i>Suro</i>	8.829
	Total	68.270

feature can be seen as an indicator when the speakers themselves remain unaware of its function of group membership and use variant from in different social contexts.

The three types of social meanings outlined by Labov correspond with the three others of indexicality namely first-order of indexicality, second- order of indexicality and third- order of indexicality, as proposed by Silverstein.

Social contexts of language choice have been understood by adopting two basic approaches proposed by Auer & Di Luzio (1992) and Li Wei (1998). These two approaches have been characterized as:

- (a) Brought- along meaning: this approach views identity construction as primarily indexical. It believes that language X indexes an identity as an X-er, whereas language Y indexes as Y-er because it is achieved by speaking Y-ish. Here it is in and through the interaction that social meaning is 'brought along' for constructing an identity. The existing situation in Indonesia, where Bahasa Indonesia is used in all formal situations for examples in school, university, government offices etc (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1998) and Singkil language being confined to informal domains of language use, clearly attests the existence of Ferguson's classical conception of diglossia. The complementary languages: the 'high' language (H) used for formal purposes and the 'low' language (L) used for informal purposes, provide a framework for understanding indexicality for a given language choice.
- (b) Brought – about meaning: the brought about meaning is used for constructing an identity by bringing both the local and cosmopolitan identities. This approach

suggests that speakers commit themselves to using dominant language (Bahasa Indonesia) when needed, and at the same time discard using dominant language at home and instead used their local and authentic forms for indexicality and identification. These contrastive sounds, referred as 'shadows' by Hill (2005), serve as "evidence of patterning and recurrence in the community to tie them and potential social types". According to Mendoza-Denton (2010) 'Brought - about meaning' approach also creates a possibility of producing hybridism and new indexicalities because of its commitment to local and cosmopolitan identities.

### 3. Research Method

In this research, there are methods and techniques done by researchers to collect and analyze data. To conduct this research, the techniques used participant observation and interview; furthermore, the researchers applied the descriptive qualitative method. Bogdan and Taylor (in Basrowi and Sudikin, 2002) said that qualitative research is a research procedure that produce descriptive data in the form of speeches or writings and behavior of those being observed. Thus, this method enables researchers to show the description, fact and the accuracy of data naturally. 20 Singkils speakers involving 10 males and 10 females were the object of this research. This research was carried out in five districts, namely; *Kuta Baharu, Simpang Kanan, Suro, Gunung Meriah* and *Singkil*. From each district were taken 4 Singkil speakers.

To collect the data, the researchers applied several systematic techniques; first, determine a place for doing research. Second, determine the target that will be the sample of the research, third, enter the field, interview, record and take a note the spoken and written words or sentences produced by the Singkils. Finally, ask them to utter the request words were from the researchers.

### 4. Discussion

The descriptions and analyses of the findings are directed to answer the research questions: (1) what are the contrastive phonological sounds found in Singkil speakers? (2) How is the indexicality found in Singkils?

In line with the research questions, the followings are the answers of the research questions mentioned above. In order to get phonological contrasts and indexicality from 20 Singkils, the researchers are concerned with phonemic and phonotactic discrepancies between the Singkils' own language (Kade-Kade) and the L2 language (Indonesian language).

## 4.1. Contrastive Phonological Sounds in Singkil

### 4.1.1. Phoneme /f/ in Bahasa Indonesia & Singkil

The phoneme /f/ in Bahasa Indonesia appears in initial and medial positions. And this phoneme in Singkil also occurs in initial and medial positions. In the phonetic features, they are different. The phoneme /f/ in Bahasa Indonesia is labio dental, fricative and voiceless. Meanwhile, the phoneme /f/ in Singkil is not quite labio dental, rather it is very close to bilabial /p/. The phoneme /f/ is changed to [p]. Kade-Kade does not have any word carrying, hence the three words here are borrowed from Indonesian language. In the phonetics features, the phoneme /f/ in Singkil occurs in initial position is [ᵐp] and is nasalized. And in final position is devoicing [p]. The following are its analyses:

<b>PHONEMIC OPPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>BAHASA INDONESIA</b>	<b>SINGKIL</b>
Initial: 'fitnah' [fitnah] = slander	'fitnah' [ᵐpitnah] = slander
Medial: lafal' [lafal] = read	'lafal' [lapal] = read
Final: 'taraf' [taraf] = standard	'taraf' [tarap] = standard
In short, the Singkil speakers are however familiar with /f/ as they pronounce it while reading Qoran. See diagram 4.1 below:	
/f/	<p style="margin-left: 40px;">[ᵐp] [p] [p] [f]</p>

From the diagram above, it can be seen that the phoneme /f/ becomes [ᵐp] and it occurs in initial position. It was only happened when the Singkils were speaking to the other Singkil speakers and not to other group speakers. It can be seen from the instances below:

(1) A: *Kune kona bisa ia fitnah bakhi?*

[kune,kona,bisa,ia,ᵐpitnah,baxi]?

'why did you slander him yesterday?

B: *Odak lot aku pitnah ia bakhi*

[oda?,lot,aku,ᵐpitnah,ija,baxi]

'No, I did not slander him yesterday'

From the sentence above, A and B are Singkil speakers, and then, one of them used [ᵐp] when interacting with the other Singkil speakers. It shows that the phoneme /f/ in 'fitnah' changes to [ᵐpitnah], it is due to the manner of Singkil speakers' speech.

The phoneme /f/ becomes [p] in diagram above can occur when the Singkils interacting with their group and also out of their group. And the position of /f/ becomes [p] in medial position. It can be seen from the following sentences:

(2) A: *Cok kona lafalkan lebek doa tidukh*

[coʔ,kona,lapalkan,ləbeʔ,doa,tidux]

'Can you read du'a before sleeping?

B: *aku makden hafal doa idi*

[aku,maʔden,hapal,doa,idi]

'I have'nt memorized it yet'.

(3) A: *Apa yang kamu hafal tadi malam?*

[apa,jaŋ,kamu,hapal,tadi,malam]

'What did you memorize last night?

B: *Aku hanya membaca, bukan menghafal*

[aku,hajä,məmbaca,bukan,məŋhapal]

'I only read, didnot memorize last night'.

From the sentence 2 above, where A and B are Singkil speakers. They use [p] when interacting with their group. Meanwhile in sentence 3, where A is a Singkil speaker interacts with B is from out of Singkil speaker. From two sentences above, it shows that the phoneme /f/ becomes [p] can occur when the Singkils interacting with their group and also out of their group.

#### 4.1.2. Phoneme /v/ in Bahasa Indonesia & Singkil

The phoneme /v/ in Bahasa Indonesia appears in initial and medial positions. And this phoneme in Singkil also occurs in initial and medial positions. In the phonetic features, they are different. The phoneme /v/ in Bahasa Indonesia is labio dental, fricative and voiceless. Meanwhile, the phoneme /v/ in Singkil is not quite labio dental, stop and it is very close to bilabial /p/. The phoneme /v/ is changed to [p]. As there is no word of the phoneme /f/ in Singkil because the two words here are borrowed from Indonesian language. The following are its analyses.

### PHONEMIC OPPOSITIONS

#### BAHASA INDONESIA

Initial: 'vitamin' [fitamin] = vitamin

Medial: 'revisi' [refisi] = revise

Final: nothing

From the analysis above, it shows that the phoneme /v/ becomes [p] in initial, medial and not in final position. See the diagram 4.2 below:



#### SINGKIL

'vitamin' [pitamin] = vitamin

'revisi' [repisi] = revise

nothing

From the diagram above, it can be seen that the phoneme /v/ becomes [p] when it occurs in initial and medial position. It was only happened when the Singkils were speaking to the other Singkil speakers and also to other group speakers. It can be seen from the sentences below:

(4) A: *Kona minum vitamin kade?.. kok bisa' gomok begen*

[ko,minum,pitamin,apa,ko?,bisa?,gomo?,begə'n]

'What vitamin do you drink till you are fat like this?

B: *Khajin olah khaga dan minum susu*

[xajin,olah,xaga,dan,minum,susu]

'I am used to do exercise and drink milk'

(5) A: *Kacau laporan kali ini, habis direvisi semua..*

[kaco,laporan,kali,ini,abis,direpisi,semua]

'The report is harmful, it should be revised at all'.

B: *Biasa tu, santai ja.*

[bijasa,tu,sante,ja]

'It is normal, just be relaxed'.

From the sentence 4, there are two speakers, such as A and B. And both of them are from Singkil speakers. When they were speaking to each other the phoneme /v/ in 'vitamin' changes to [p]. And the sentence 5, it has two speakers are A as Singkil speaker and B from out of Singkil, when they were speaking to each other the phoneme /v/ changes to /p/ which is in medial position.

#### 4.1.3. Phoneme /z/ in Bahasa Indonesia & Singkil

The phoneme /z/ in Bahasa Indonesia appears only in word initial and medial positions. And it is voiced, alveolar and fricative. And it can be put in the initial and medial

positions. While in Singkil, the phoneme /z/ is not alveolar and fricative but it is voiced, palatal stop and affricative. So the speakers of Singkil usually pronounce [j] for the phoneme /z/. The following are its analyses.

<b>PHONEMIC OPPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>BAHASA INDONESIA</b>	<b>SINGKIL</b>
Initial: 'zakat' [zakat] = tithe	'zakat' [jakat] = tithe
Medial: 'lezat' [ləzat] = delicious	'lezat' [ləjat] = delicious
Final: Nothing	nothing

From the analysis above, it shows that the phoneme /z/ becomes [j] in initial, medial and not in final position. See the diagram 4.3 below:



From the diagram above, it can be seen that the phoneme /z/ becomes [j] when it occurs in initial and medial position. It was only happened when the Singkils were speaking to the other Singkil speakers and also to other group speakers. It can be seen from the sentences below:

- (6) A: *kapan zakat fitrah diberikan rupanya?*  
 [kapan, jakat, pitxah, diberikan, rupajä]?  
 'When will the Zakat be given anyway?  
 B: *O.. biasanya tu dikasi sebelum hari raya idul fitri..*  
 [o]...[biasajä, tu, dikasi, səbelum, haxi, raya, idul, pitri]  
 'O... it is usually given before the day of l'ed Fitri'
- (7) A: *Bekune khohoh omakku dai,gek?*  
 [bəkune, xohoh, oma?ku, dai, ge?]  
 'How was the dish of my mother just now?'  
 B: *Lezat ku khasa dai khohoh emakmu, enakmo*  
 [ləjat, ku, xasa, dai, xohoh, əma?mu, ena?mo]  
 'Your mom's dish was very delicious, it was great'.

From the sentence 6 and 7, there are two speakers in 6, such as A and B. A is singkil speaker and B is out of Singkil. When they were speaking to each other, the phoneme /z/ in 'zakat' changes to [j]. And the sentence 7, it has two speakers are A and B from Singkil speakers, when they were speaking to each other the phoneme /z/ changes to /j/ which is in medial position.

#### 4.1.4. Phoneme /j/ in Bahasa Indonesia & Singkil

The phoneme /j/ in Bahasa Indonesia appears only in word initial and medial positions. And this phoneme /j/ is voiced, palato alveolar and fricative. And it can be put in the initial and medial positions. While in Singkil, the phoneme /j/ is pronounced [s]. It is alveolar and fricative. The following are its analyses.

<b>PHONEMIC OPPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>BAHASA INDONESIA</b>	<b>SINGKIL</b>
Initial: 'syarat' [ʃarat] = qualification	'syarat' [saxat] = qualification
Medial: 'tamasya' [tamaʃa] = picnic	'tamasya' [tamasa] = picnic
Final: Nothing	nothing

From the analysis above, it shows that the phoneme /j/ becomes [s] in initial, medial and not in final position. See the diagram 4.4 below:



From the diagram above, it can be seen that the phoneme /j/ becomes [s] when it occurs in initial and medial position. It was only happened when the Singkils were speaking to the other Singkil speakers and also to other group speakers. It can be seen from the sentences below:

(8) A: *Tolong kau SMS kan dulu, apa ja syaratnya?*

[tolon,ko,es,em]es][kan,dulu,apa,ja,saratjã]

'May you send me the message what the requirements are?'

B: *Bentar lagi ya*

[bɛntar,lagi,ja]

'After few minutes'

(9) A: *Tuhumang keluakhga pak Ali laus tamasya sada minggu sekali du?*

[kade,keluaxga,pa?,ali,laus,tamasa,sada,mingu,sɛkali]

'Is Mr ali's family go to picnic once in a week?'

B: *Wei, kalaki laus bertamasya sada minggu sekali*

[wei,kalaki,laus,bɛxtamasa,sada,mingu,sɛkali]

'Yes, they go to picnic once in a week'

From the sentence 8 and 9, there are two speakers in 8, such as A and B. A is singkil speaker and B is out of Singkil. When they were speaking to each other, the phoneme

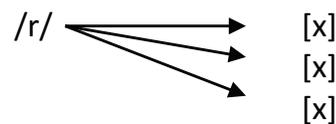
/ʃ/ in 'syarat' changes to [s]. And the sentence 9, it has two speakers are A and B from Singkil speakers, when they were speaking to each other the phoneme /ʃ/ changes to /s/ which is in medial position.

#### 4.1.5. Phoneme /r/ in Bahasa Indonesia & Singkil

The phoneme /r/ in Bahasa Indonesia is trilled and alveolar and it occurs in initial, medial and final positions. This phoneme has different sound when the Singkil speakers produce it. The Singkil speakers pronounce /r/ becomes [x]. [x] is velar, fricative and voiced. And /x/ is in three positions namely initial, medial and final. Its phonemic oppositions and phonetic features as follows:

<b>PHONEMIC OPPOSITIONS</b>	
<b>BAHASA INDONESIA</b>	<b>SINGKIL</b>
Initial: ' <i>ramai</i> ' [ramai]= crowded	' <i>rami</i> ' [xami] =ramai = crowded
Medial: ' <i>harta</i> ' [harta]= treasure	' <i>harta</i> ' [haxta]= harta= treasure
Final: ' <i>umur</i> ' [umur]= age	' <i>umur</i> ' [umux]=age

From the analysis above, it shows that the phoneme /r/ becomes [x] in initial, medial and final position. See the diagram 4.5 below:



From the diagram above, it can be seen that the phoneme /r/ becomes [x] when it occurs in initial, medial and final position. It was only happened when the Singkils were speaking to the other Singkil speakers. If the Singkil speakers were interacting with other group, [x] is changing to normal [r]. It can be seen from the sentences below:

(10) A: *kapan zakat fitrah diberikan rupanya?*

[kapan, jakat, pitrah, diberikan, rupajã]?

'When will the *Zakat Fitrat* be given?

B: *o.. biasanya tu dikasi sebelum hari raya idul fitri..*

[o]...[biasajã, tu, dikasi, sãbelum, hari, raya, idul, pitri]

'O.. it is usually be given before 'ed day'.

(11) A: *anakmu umurnya berapa?*

[ana?mu, umurjã, bãrapa]

'How old is your son?'

B: *Sekitar lima tahun gitu*

[səkitar,lima,tahun,gitu]

'He is around 5 years old'.

From the sentence 10 and 11, there are two speakers in each conversation such as A and B. A is Singkil speaker and B is out of Singkil. When they were speaking to each other, the phoneme /r/ in 'fitrah' and 'umur' do not change and still remain [r]. On the other hands, the phoneme /r/ will change to [x] whether it is in initial, medial and final position, when the Singkil speaker interacting with other Singkils. It can be shown from following sentences:

(12) A: *Bekune pana hadean khamisu kidah?*

[bəkune,kita,oda?,simbah,bakhi]

'Look at it is crowded! What happens there?'

B: *Lot metendeng antakha motokh pake Honda dai*

[lot,mətenden,antax,motox,pake,Honda,dai]

'There is an accident between Honda and car'.

(13) A: *Kona enggo beak, jadi mengkade kona kekhajo leja tole?*

[kona,əŋgo,beak,jadi,mengkade,kona,kəxajo,leja,tole]

'You are having much wealth, so why are you still working hard?'

B: *Tekhima Kasih untuk nasehatmu, imbangku*

[texima,kasih,untu?,nasehatmu,imbanjku]

'Thanks for your advice, my friend'.

From the sentence 12 and 13 above, both of speakers are from Singkil speakers. So that the phoneme /r/ will change to [x] whether it is in initial, medial and final position, when the Singkil speaker interacting with other Singkils.

## 5. Conclusions

After the analysis of the Phonological system in Bahasa Indonesia and Singkil, some conclusions are drawn as the following. First is Bahasa Indonesia and Singkil phonologically contrast with each other, there are several consonant phonemes in Bahasa Indonesia namely /f/, /ʃ/, /v/, /z/, and /r/ which cannot be found in Singkils' daily

speaking. These sounds have different phonetic realization and are phonotactically different. The second is Singkil speakers use these phonetic forms as marker and identity when they interact with other Singkil speakers, it can be seen clearly from the use of phoneme /f/ and /r/. The phoneme /f/ changes to [ʰp] when it is in initial position, meanwhile the phoneme /r/ becomes [x] whether it is in initial, medial and final position. The change of /f/ to [ʰp] and /r/ to [x] is exclusive in-group identity marker because at no stage they (Singkil speakers) use these sounds when talking to BI speakers. Third, language is reflexive; it means language is always about itself, no matter what else it is also about. Every utterance is an example of how an utterance can be structured, how it can sound, and what it can accomplish. Finally, connection between linguistic form and indexical meaning can be highlighted as people interact. (Barbara Johnstone cited in Llarmas, 2010, pp.32)

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