

## LOCAL LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: A CULTURAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Iwan<sup>1\*</sup>, Syarif Hidayat<sup>2</sup>, Imam Miftahul Jannah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon, Cirebon, Indonesia

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#### \*Correspondence:

[iwanwungkul2023@gmail.com](mailto:iwanwungkul2023@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*Local language as a cultural treasure is very different from the sociolinguistic perspective. Culture positions local languages as wealth and relics of human creativity and karsa in the past which are very meaningful and must be maintained and preserved. When correlated with the nature of culture, of course, local languages are included in a dynamic culture which means that they will experience language deconstruction and/or reconstruction. It is impossible if the language does not accept a concept or vocabulary from another language. This means that the language will experience development both in terms of the vocabulary it has or the concept and its use. The use of language must be positioned not only as a tool for communication but as a cultural result that must be maintained and preserved. This paper tries to explain how local language preservation occurs in Indonesia in the realm of culture and sociolinguistics.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language policy is very important in terms of maintaining and preserving regional languages in Indonesia. Unfortunately, the government has not been too serious about this. We can see how freely foreign languages are used in the media in Indonesia, whether printed, written, or audio-visual. This shows that the use of foreign languages is allowed freely in the media in Indonesia. We see again that there is no Law (UU) that regulates the existence of Regional languages as one of the cultures that must be maintained and preserved. The government should also pay careful attention to its language policy through a law or government regulation.

There is some evidence of concern from the international community and the Indonesian government to maintain regional languages. UNESCO has set February 21 as International Mother Language Day while, in Indonesia in the form of Ministerial Regulations and Regional Regulations. However, the impact of language policies that have not been careful is also quite affecting Javanese speakers who are the largest community in the use of regional languages, namely Javanese with various types of dialects.

Modern society considers that using the national language is a prestige that can increase one's social status (Mudarman et al., 2019). National language speakers are also considered more educated and have higher social strata (Amin & Suyanto, 2017). Vice versa, local language speakers are considered to have a social stratum below national language speakers (Widianto, 2018). As a result, people prefer to use the national language in communication rather than using local languages (Wilian, 2010).

Currently, local languages in Indonesia have many speakers (Tartila, 2020), but are rarely used in daily conversation, so they are threatened with extinction (Abdurrahman, 2006). Grosjean (1982) reported that there are two patterns of language use relationships that can be observed, namely language maintenance and language shift. Loyalty and loyalty to the use of language with all its supporting factors according to (Purwasih et al., 2019) can cause the language to survive and develop, while the speakers' disloyalty to their language can cause language shifts which in turn endanger the language.

In the Law on the Flag, Language, and State Emblem, as well as the National Anthem, Article 1 states that regional languages are languages used for generations by Indonesian citizens in regions in the territory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Then in Article 42, paragraph (1), it is stated that local governments are obliged to develop, foster, and protect local languages and literature to continue to fulfill their position and function in social life following the times and to remain part of Indonesia's cultural wealth (Wilian, 2010).

The extinction of local languages is a major disaster for humanity because language is a very valuable cultural entity in the history of human civilization (Suherman, 2015). Harrison (2007) notes 3 major losses due to language loss, namely: loss of knowledge system, loss of cultural heritage, and the uncovering of the human cognitive system. Based on the arguments mentioned above, it is important to research to reveal the strategy of preservation of Bugis speakers in Lombok to preserve the local language in the overseas land. Thus, related to local languages in the realm of culture and sociolinguistics will be discussed in this paper.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The data is obtained by the literature review technique where the implementation is carried out by looking for sources that are relevant to what the author will write. The data obtained using the literature review technique is processed using the direct element analysis technique.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Local Language in Cultural Perspective**

Before talking at length about local languages, it is important for us to first define culture, although if we explore the meaning of cultural terminology then we will find many hundreds of definitions of culture. According to Koentjoroningrat (1997), culture is a whole system of ideas, actions, and human works in the context of community life that is made human by learning, which is further elaborated on the seven elements of culture, where language is included in the seven elements. But in short, culture is the result of human creation, taste, and work. Culture itself can be categorized into static culture; which does not change, for example, relics of cultural objects such as temples, and dynamic culture; changes. For example, language can undergo deconstruction and/or reconstruction at any time. So it

can be concluded that local language is part of a dynamic community culture that undergoes changes which of course can also lead to language shifts if not carefully considered.

Language has a strong relevance to the culture of the people who use the language. The relevance can be in the form of language tone, grammatical concepts of language, or the concept of language levels. Local language is one of the evidences of the existence of a civilization of an ancient society which in this context can be in the form of verbal or written. Therefore, local language can be interpreted as a system of knowledge in which there are values owned by the community that affect the behavior of the community itself. So if the regional language shifts, it is not impossible if it means that it signifies a shift in the values possessed by the community, both changes to outlook on life, social behavior, or other things that are characteristic of the culture of the community.

## **2. Local Language in Sociolinguistic Perspective**

Many linguists have defined what is meant by Sociolinguistics, which is a science that studies language and society and links the correlation between the structure of language by linguistics and the structure of society by sociology. In the sociology of language, it is said that the age of language depends on its speakers, meaning that if the speakers want to leave it then no one can stem this desire. Likewise with regional languages, if the original speakers themselves do not want the language, it will be very difficult to keep the regional language alive and not extinct. From the perspective of Sociolinguistics, language functions relate to how to use language properly and correctly in existing situations and conditions. Many linguists have defined what is meant by Sociolinguistics, which is a science that studies language and society and links the correlation between the structure of language by linguistics and the structure of society by sociology. In the sociology of language, it is said that the age of language depends on its speakers, meaning that if the speakers want to leave it then no one can stem this desire. Likewise with regional languages, if the original speakers themselves do not want the language, it will be very difficult to keep the regional language alive and not extinct. From the perspective of Sociolinguistics, language functions relate to how to use language properly and correctly in existing situations and conditions.

The choice of the local language or Indonesian language in communication is certainly not easy because we have to pay attention to other variables that force us to choose one of the languages to realize good and correct communication patterns so that a humane relationship is built between speakers and interlocutors. Therefore, local languages in a sociolinguistic perspective focus more on how local languages function as one of the language choices that can be used appropriately by considering the situations and conditions that occur. This means that local languages may be abandoned when they are not needed by looking at the existing situation or existing language policies. Although using local languages will show our identity. If the language is only used to the extent of its function, it is very easy for the language to shift.

## **3. The Condition of Bilingual Societies in Indonesia**

Quoting from a note in Kompas, 726 out of 746 regional languages in Indonesia turned out to be endangered because the younger generation was reluctant to use the language. In fact, of the 746 regional languages, there are now only 13 regional languages left that have more than one million speakers, most of whom are the older generation. 13 regional languages with more than one million speakers are Javanese, Batak, Sundanese, Balinese,

Bugis, Madurese, Minang, Rejang Lebong, Lampung, Makassar, Banjar, Bima, and Sasak. There are not a few regional languages whose number of speakers is less than one million or only dozens of speakers remain, including languages in the Halmahera and North Maluku regions, where the number of speakers is very limited. Broadly speaking, regional language shifts in Indonesia can be analyzed through the family domain. This is because in general, the model of Indonesian bilingual society is a diglossic society, which means that two languages have different functions and uses. For example, in official and state domains such as education and government, Indonesian is used, and local languages are usually used in the domains of family, kinship, and traditional ceremonies. This difference in function is inseparable from the government's policy towards Indonesian as the official language and national language, forcing the non-use of local languages in various domains, for example as an introduction to general education. Therefore, the range of regional language use is decreasing, only used in certain domains, such as the family domain. But the fact is that domains that should use local languages as the main language are now starting to be shifted by the use of Indonesian. Language use in the family domain should use local languages as a means of communication and interaction.

#### **4. There is a Strong Correlation Between the Decline in People's Attitude Toward Javanese Cultural Values and the use of Javanese Language**

In Indonesian society, something that is considered a culture or custom will usually be upheld and will be preserved. For example, in Javanese society, there is a *mitoni* ceremony so it will be a matter of great concern. In the context of local languages, it turns out that there is a positive correlation between appreciation of local cultural values and the use of Javanese. Unfortunately, some findings in the research show that the appreciation of Javanese cultural values is decreasing in the younger generation which has implications for the use of Javanese language. Some Javanese cultural values are:

- a. Javanese society is *Tepo Seliro* i.e. In doing something to others, we must consider how we would feel if the action was directed at ourselves;
- b. we must show respect to others according to their respective degrees;
- c. Javanese people should be *andhap-asor*, which means they should always be humble;
- d. Javanese society acts *empan-papan*, which means that in our behavior we must pay attention to our respective places, positions, or ranks.

The attitude towards Javanese cultural values is that the younger the Javanese, the more negative the perception of cultural values, especially on *andhap ashor*, *empan-papan*, and *tepa selira*. This means that these values among young people are considered ordinary things, not a value that must be upheld as Javanese (not thinking like that anymore). Meanwhile, the attitude of Javanese towards the Javanese language shows a decline from the older generation to the younger generation. For example, the Javanese language is a high culture, not all of them strongly agree or are very happy to use Javanese language when communicating with other Javanese people. It turns out that the feelings that arise are ordinary. We can conclude that the decline in the attitude of the Javanese community towards their cultural values can be interpreted as parallel to the decline in attitudes towards the Javanese language. This means that there is a correlation between the decline in Javanese people's appreciation of their cultural values and their language attitudes such as the shift in the use of Javanese language, pride in Javanese language, and concern that Javanese language

be preserved by the government.

## CONCLUSION

Local languages are included in dynamic cultures. This means that local languages will experience deconstruction and or reconstruction of language. Language will experience development both in terms of the vocabulary it has and its concepts and uses. The language shift is honestly initiated by the language users themselves who view and place language only as a tool for communication rather than the language paradigm as part of a high-level culture that needs to be preserved.

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