



Maintaining the Existence of Regional Languages in Lohiatala Village, Kairatu Barat District, West Seram Regency

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Abstract: Maluku as an archipelago region contains cultural richness from various aspects by its indigenous people, especially local languages which are a means of conveying thoughts and ideas. Local languages themselves have institutionalized identity values within the indigenous people who adhere to them because reality shows that the language in question confirms its origin. The difficulty is the inability of society to adapt to the development of globalization without ignoring regional languages as local wisdom and identity. Of course this shows a shift to the point of language extinction, the existence of indigenous countries is also threatened due to the loss of identity as a marker of their identity. From the description of the reality of this indigenous community, strategic steps need to be taken, namely consolidating the local language (Alune) of Lohiatala Country which in the past was used to interact by ancestors into written form, this is because in the present it is generally unknown to the younger generation or school-age children. Furthermore, it is followed up by writing a dictionary of local language vocabulary so that it can be studied by the community today and in the future. This activity will be carried out through one of the Tridharma of higher education, namely Community Service with a verification method (confirmation of the writing of the definition of the local language per vocabulary accompanied by its meaning in Indonesian) against the results of the search that has been carried out in 2023, and the publication of the dictionary book "Bahasa Alune Orang Lohiatala" with ISBN.

Keywords: The existence of the Alune language; Lohiatala

Introduction

Generally found in the reality of Indonesian society since its inception as a monolingual society, namely mastering the regional language which is considered as their mother tongue (Soekarba, 2018). There are 5 roles of mother tongue in a multilingual society and there are differences of opinion about the importance of mother tongue as a teaching aid in rural and urban areas (Risadi, 2020). Many countries have bilingual or multilingual societies, and more than 20 states have more than one national language. However, the majority of countries are monolingual nation states, meaning that they have designated one language to be used for government and legal purposes (Paauw, 2009). The name Indonesia was later popularized by the German ethnologist, Adolf Bastian through his book, *Indonesien Oder Die Inseln*

Des Malayischen Archipels and Die Volkev des Ostl Asien (1884) (RE Elson, 2008).

With more than 280 million people and around 700 regional languages spoken, Indonesia is certainly one of the most multilingual countries in the world (Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2023). Despite its extraordinary linguistic diversity, Indonesia tends to adhere to monolingualism. Regional languages are currently threatened with extinction (Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014). the national language policy through the implementation of Indonesian in the last two centuries has succeeded in uniting the linguistic heterogeneity of the archipelago (Errington, 1992), thus seemingly standardizing the multilingual nation, there is an increasing number of middle classes who consider English as an important international language (Lie, 2007; Tanu, 2014). Language is an eternal tool of

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expression that will be used by humans. The use of language is the most important thing in everyday life. Without language, humans cannot communicate well with each other. Language can also function to express the feelings of each individual. In addition to having a function as a means of communication or conveying information, language is also a form or tool of defense or existence. As a tool of defense or existence, language has its own purpose or values. In relation to linguistics, the existence or defense of this language forgets the special context in the large circle of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is a combination of two scientific studies consisting of sociology (social science) and linguistics (Somadayo et al., 2021).

A cultured society with various forms of language customs is a medium of communication or interaction between individuals. In addition to regional languages being the intended medium, the language is also one of the various elements of culture that confirm their identity as adherents of the local culture, because humans and culture are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated, the existence of humans certainly ensures that there is also a culture in the area inhabited by humans who inhabit the space (Català, 2015). Language is also understood as a means of conveying thoughts and ideas that accompany an action, as well as a symbol system which is arbitrarily formed from elements of human speech sounds and is used as a means of human communication (Fernández de Casadevante, 2023). In Indonesia there are various regional languages that represent many ethnic groups. One of the forerunners of the Indonesian language is Malay. Talking about language certainly requires a special study to be able to understand it because language cannot be separated from the community that speaks it. Situations, conditions, customs can all influence changes and developments in language. Linguistic studies of the language used by humans seem to be never-ending, this is because language continues to change and develop according to the development of human thought patterns in its time. The objects of linguistic studies also increasingly involve various aspects such as terms, vocabulary, language structures/forms, linguistic units, meanings, intentions, origins, preservation, and use. For example, people in Java, Indonesia, believe that language and culture are important to them. Historically, regional languages have been an important part of the unity and nationalism of Indonesian citizens (Zustiyantoro, 2024).

The development of Science and Technology (IPTEK) demands an increase in human resources referring to the modern education system and the world of work, where school-age children and the younger generation are faced with challenges in which mastery of national and international languages officially

becomes the standard for building interactions. Such impacts indicate competition for the existence of regional languages or local languages of communities in various regions in Indonesia (Susanto et al., 2024). It can be simply said that these areas are culturally adherent areas that have a wealth of resources that have been agreed upon locally since long ago. The difficulty is the inability of the community to adapt to developments that ignore regional languages as local wisdom and identity. Regional languages, inherited from customs, are declining in Indonesia, and this problem requires attention from language policies and planning (Suwarno, 2020), so that currently almost all regions make regional languages a local content subject (Cyber, 2014). Not only language but also cultural heritage in the form of musical instruments, customs and activities must also be maintained and preserved, the way to do this is by including it in the school curriculum in the subject content. (Batlolona, 2024)

In addition, other conditions are also faced by the community regarding the inheritance of regional language cultural values. Generally found in indigenous or traditional communities in Indonesia, the inheritance of values is oral and this is also felt to have an effect on the shift in meaning due to the interpretation of each individual from the aspect of their knowledge. In addition, the awareness of the previous generation towards the transformation of local knowledge to the next generation, as found in the Balinese indigenous community with the *masatua* tradition, namely the tradition of telling cultural values and traditions of the past to children which is now almost no longer found. This factor is caused by the busyness of parents with various other interests (Chandrakusuma, 2021).

However, there are also actions to try to maintain and preserve regional languages, such as those found in the Tanimbar Islands - Maluku. The preservation is carried out by the Christian religious institution, the Maluku Protestant Church (GPM) through an ethnic church service program using the regional language in the form of God's word, sermons and songs of praise. (Luturmas, 2022). However, other steps also need to be taken at the formal education level by developing local content into the learning curriculum. In fact, the education curriculum at the Elementary School to Senior High School (SMA) level is important as a medium for inheriting regional languages (Angraeni & Petikasari, 2020; Batlolona & Jamaludin, 2024).

The above reality is also found in the Seram-Maluku region. The Lohiatala traditional village located in the administrative area of the Kairatu Barat District, West Seram Regency, through observations, the community of school age to young men and women do not know and understand the local language. This is caused by several factors as stated above, namely, the

lack of inheritance actions from parents and the unavailability of written documents to be studied. Of course, this situation is felt to be important and aims to revitalize the pattern of community interaction by practicing the local language, while at the same time reviving it as the identity of the local community.

Method

This community service activity began with observations in 2019 on the reality of indigenous communities in the category of young generation and school-age children, where in Lohiatala State, interaction between communities is no longer found in daily life practices. According to the information obtained, this situation is different from the conditions 30 to 50 years ago, local languages were a medium of interaction and identity that characterizes individuals and collectives of the local community. The fundamental obstacle found was that the character or behavior of the community from generation to generation until now generally practiced the local language in question with oral habits (only speech and stories) but was not documented in written form.

Based on the context of this problem, the steps taken as a solution are efforts to document local language vocabulary in the form of written documents. For this reason, the equipment prepared is in the form of recording devices, ballpoints and notebooks, this activity took place from August 2023 to August 2024.

Approach and Socialization Patterns.

To overcome the problems encountered, the approach taken was to meet the head of the Lohiatala State government, hereinafter referred to as the partner for community service activities. At this stage, the process of verifying the results of observations on the practice of interaction between the younger generation and school-age children using the local language as the intended medium of interaction. Based on the results of the verification, it was stated that it was in accordance with the results of the observations. Therefore, the next step was socialization carried out persuasively by providing education on the importance of the existence and practice of local languages among indigenous peoples. The essence of the importance of this is intended to contribute to the recognition of Lohiatala State as an indigenous state in the era of modernization (now and in the future). This also received an agreement that for the local language of the local state, steps were needed to save it by writing a local language dictionary. Of course, it needs to be done because oral habits as previously stated have been passed down from generation to generation and knowledge of this

language is now relatively only known by several generations in the elderly age category.

Therefore, several generations in the elderly category were submitted to be used as a source of information about local language vocabulary along with their meanings in Indonesian. On this basis, someone from several generations who was felt to have more ability about the language, was recommended by the traditional elder Mr. Alfred Rumahpasal as the sole informant. The determination of this informant was based on the consideration that the person concerned had experience and knowledge about the traditions and customs of Lohiatala including the local language. In addition, the informant in question was someone who was trusted by the community to organize all the implementation of traditional events in the country and was recommended by the government of the country to the external environment to talk about the existence of customs on behalf of the community and Lohiatala.

Information Source Search.

Searching for information related to sources of knowledge about local languages was attempted based on the recommendation of the head of the state government. The intended effort was implemented through a visit to a single informant and conveying the purpose of the community service activities that would take place related to efforts to maintain the sustainability of the existence of local languages in the future through vocabulary consolidation so that it would be documented into a dictionary book. The delivery of this purpose was greeted with joy, because this was a hope that had been desired for a long time but no solution was found. For that reason, the informant was willing to provide information on local language vocabulary along with its meaning in Indonesian.

Data Collection and Evaluation

The next stage is data collection, the team conducted a search by identifying vocabulary based on the alphabet. Data collection to evaluation took place 4 (four) times with a time interval of 3 (three) months for each stage.

Results and Discussion

Results of Search and Evaluation Activities

As the process of tracing and evaluating the local language of Lohiatala State which lasted for 1 (one) year, there were recording and evaluation activities. Recording activities are related to tracing local language vocabulary while evaluation means the verification process of recording phrases that have been typed along with the addition of vocabulary for the latest identification from informants. Therefore, the stages

carried out can be explained as follows: the first stage in August 2023, the vocabulary search was successfully recorded as many as 155, followed by the evaluation stage in November 2023, the number of vocabulary became 205. The next stage of evaluation was carried out in February 2024, the same process was carried out so that the vocabulary increased to 355 and finally the last stage in August 2024, the vocabulary was successfully collected 565.

Efforts to record and evaluate were carried out repeatedly in order to improve the vocabulary informed by the informant. This was also done because the team gave the informant time to remember and trace the vocabulary that had not been identified. Therefore, the informant concluded that the recording of vocabulary at the time and amount as stated above that all of them had been identified and were worthy of being documented in a dictionary book.

The diagram below shows the trend of recording and evaluation of documentation of local language vocabulary of Lohiatala State.

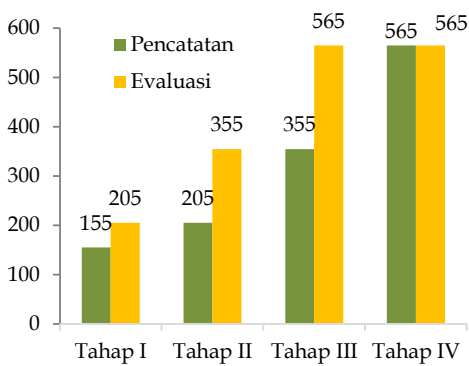


Figure 1. Local vocabulary of Lohiatala State

Results of Completion and Written Documentation in Local Languages

The results of the completion and written documentation of the local language along with its meaning as many as 565 vocabularies were consolidated to obtain 1 (one) document of the local language dictionary of the local country. Based on the historical origins of the Lohiatala Country which originated from the Alune tribe on Seram Island, therefore the document resulting from the consolidation of the local language in question was given the topic "Alune Language Dictionary in the Lohiatala Country".

These results will then be followed up to be printed into a dictionary book with an ISBN so that it will later be distributed to the community, especially the younger generation and school-age children, so that they can be studied and at the same time contribute to a paradigm shift in society regarding the importance of the tradition of writing about cultural wealth to maintain the existence of traditional lands in the future.

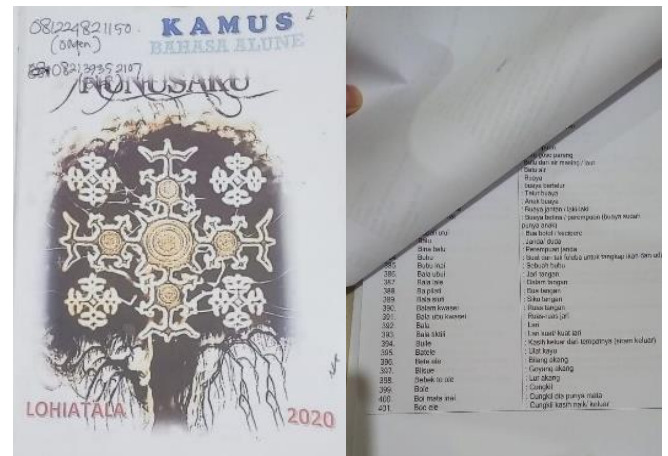


Figure 2. Written documents of local language vocabulary accompanied by verification results



Figure 3. Stages of approach, socialization, recording and evaluation

Language is a form of crystallization of the values of civilization and has an important role in directing the movement of civilization.(Siregar, 2021). With the development of language studies, there is an increase in understanding and level of thinking in a civilization.(Ashcroft, 2001). Therefore, learning a language is very important to understand the culture,

values, and social background of the people who speak that language.(Kramsch, 2023). Seram (Geser) language is one of the regional languages in East Seram Regency, Maluku Province which has been designated by the Language Office as an endangered language (Rukua et al., 2023). The strong influence of Indonesian in Maluku has both enriched and threatened regional languages.

On the one hand, the use of Indonesian has enabled effective communication and integration within the province and with the wider Indonesian society. On the other hand, the dominance of Indonesian as the primary language of instruction and communication can lead to the marginalization and gradual decline of regional languages. Despite these challenges, the linguistic landscape of Maluku has become more diverse and linguistically rich due to the incorporation of Indonesian. The interaction and contact between Indonesian and regional languages has led to language borrowing, code switching, and language innovation. These linguistic interactions make the linguistic landscape of Maluku interesting for research and documentation purposes (Iye et al., 2023). There are 70 regional languages, including Alune, Ambonese, Ambalau, Asilulu, Balkewan, Banda, Barakai, Batuley, Bobat, Boing, Buru, Damar Timur, Ternate, Tidore, Dawelor, Dobel, Elnama, Emplawas, Fordata, Hoti, Seram Illiun, Kei, Kaham, Kayeli, and many more. The number given is not complete, because there are still remote areas in Maluku that have not been studied (<https://kantorbahasamaluku.kemdikbud.go.id/>).

Conclusion

The realization of the activity of tracing and documenting written data on the local language vocabulary of Lohiatala State has been carried out well and smoothly. This is supported by the participation of the state government and traditional leaders in contributing information for the sake of completing vocabulary identification. Based on the results of the tracing, the local language vocabulary obtained was 565. This vocabulary documentation will be printed in a book to be used for public education about local languages and will have a positive impact on the existence of Lohiatala State as a traditional state in the future.

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