

# Measuring the Vitality of Konjo Language in South Sulawesi Province of Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Generally, local languages in Indonesia are only used as spoken languages so the ability to survive is greatly influenced by their level of vitality. The number of local languages that are being threatened to be extinct is getting increased, especially for minority languages. This study aims to measure the level of ethnolinguistic vitality of the Konjo language as one of the minority languages in South Sulawesi province. The level of language vitality is measured using the framework of Ehala's V-Model. This model specifies the structural relationship between its four key variables that affect the vitality of ethnolinguistic group: (1) perceived strength differential (PSD) between the in-group ('us') and the most prominent out-group ('them'); (2) the level of intergroup discordance (D); (3) perceived intergroup distance (R); and (4) the level of utilitarianism (U) in the value system of the group studied. Data are collected using a vitality questionnaire from 151 samples of the Konjo community distributed in the Bulukumba district and analyzed quantitatively with a mathematical formula ( $V = R \cdot ((S_{we} - S_{they}) + D / U)$ ). The results show that the level of ethnolinguistic vitality of the Konjo language is at 0.36 points on a 0-1 scale. So, it can be concluded that the Konjo Language in Bulukumba currently still has a high level of vitality. It indicates that the Konjo community is a strong minority community in the Bulukumba district of South Sulawesi province.

**Keywords:** Ethnolinguistic vitality, strength differential, intergroup discordance, intergroup distance, utilitarianism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language extinction is the same as the extinction of civilization. That is why, in some cases, the immediate and inevitable loss is so acute that the documentation is seen as the only action left to save languages from total disappearance because securing normal transmission as a living practice already appears impossible [1].

Human and language are two inseparable things. In life, humans use language in communicating with each other. God gives grace to humans to master one or more languages. This enables them to make contacts and interactions with the same or different languages, ethnics and regions in the world. The interactions that occur continuously then may affect in changing the society.

A language can be lost in many ways. The existence of dominant and subordinate communities in one region may lead the community's language shift to another

language. Both communities are highly potential for having language contacts. These contacts and transactions can bring about cultural and linguistic exchange. Cultural and linguistic contacts, no doubt, led to linguistic borrowing and adaptation of new vocabularies and patterns but not necessarily linguistic domination or annexation [5]. However, when the language has high vitality, the cultural and linguistic contacts with other communities will not interfere with the language maintenance.

To measure the degree of language vitality of an ethnolinguistic group, Giles, et.al [6] has proposed the notion of ethnolinguistic vitality (EV). Traditionally, ethnolinguistic vitality is divided into objective and subjective vitality [8]. Objective vitality is determined by three structural variables: Demography, Institutional Support and Status [6] while subjective vitality is understood as "group members' subjective assessment of in-group/outgroup vitality", which "may be as important

in determining sociolinguistic and inter-ethnic behaviour as the group's objective vitality" [7].

After two decades, Ehala (1, [4] proposed a theoretical framework of a vitality model. The V-model is the extension of ethnolinguistic vitality (EEV). The vitality of a group depends on the behaviour of its members: the group is vital when the members associate strongly with the group and invest their time and energy in its functioning. The group ceases to exist when the members shift their loyalty to another collective. Thus, the vitality of the group is the consequence of cumulative individual actions. Therefore, Ethnolinguistic vitality in the V-model is understood as a perception of groupness together with emotional attachment to this group and readiness to act collectively as a group. As a social-psychological phenomenon, vitality is tightly connected with ethnic/linguistic identity. EV can reflect the ethnic and linguistic identities of community members and inter-ethnic relations in their country of residence.

Konjo community mainly lives in the east of Bulukumba district in South Sulawesi, namely; Kajang, Herlang, Bonto Tiro, and Bonto Bahari (Ningsih, 2016). Konjo is one of the minority communities in South Sulawesi province. It is grouped as a dialect of Makassarese and has about more than 200.000 speakers. However, the Konjo community believed and perceived their language as different from Makassarese or Buginese, and they prefer to identify themselves as *tau Konjo* (Konjonese) rather than Makassarese. According to Ethnologue, Konjo has been a threatened language. It derived from the levels in the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS). But, the existence of indigenous people "*ammatoa*" in the Kajang Sub-district of Bulukumba can support the vitality of the language and the maintenance of the culture of the community. Therefore the purpose of the present study is to provide a detailed account of ethnolinguistic vitality based on the perceptions of the Konjo community. It reflects on their ethnic and linguistic identities using the V-model. The concept of the V-model shows the structural relationships between four key variables that affect the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups. They are perceived strength differential (PSD) between the in-group ("us") and the most prominent out-group ("them"); the level of intergroup discordance (D); perceived intergroup distance (R); and the level of utilitarianism (U) in the value system of the group studied.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The method used is quantitative due to the data being collected from 151 samples of Konjo people living in Bulukumba district using a vitality questionnaire by Ehala [2] which has been translated into *Bahasa*. The questionnaire is divided into six conceptual groups of questions: R1, R2, G1, G2, U and D. This allows the summary indexes to be calculated for

each conceptual group as the mean value for all individual items that can be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 21.0. At last, the vitality degree is measured with a mathematical V-model ( $V = R \cdot ((S_{we} - S_{they}) + D / U)$ ) in a way that makes it possible to assess the vitality factors on a scale. By calculating the average score for the sample and/or finding subgroups with different vitality scores, it becomes possible to assess the vitality of a given group, i.e. its readiness to act as a collective entity in intergroup relations.

## 3. ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Variable Analysis

To measure the degree of language vitality, Ehala [2] has been developing the V-Model that specifies the structural relationship between its four key variables (R, PSD, D, U) that affect the vitality of the ethnolinguistic group. This model specifies the structural relationship between its four key variables that affect the vitality of ethnolinguistic group: (1) perceived strength differential (PSD) between the in-group ('us') and the most prominent out-group ('them'); (2) the level of intergroup discordance (D); (3) perceived intergroup distance (R); and (4) the level of utilitarianism (U) in the value system of the group studied.

Before determining the degree of language vitality using the V-model of Ehala's formula, firstly we need to determine the value of each variable (R, PSD, D, U) of the vitality model separately. So, at last, it can be decided the formula's type that will be used for measuring the vitality degree based on the results of  $PSD + D$ .

#### 3.1.1 Intergroup Distance (R)

The variable of intergroup distance **R** is comprised of two components: **R1** expresses the distance in terms of the choice of language, and **R2** shows the respondent's assessment of his or her cultural distance concerning both communities. The intergroup distance is indicated by belongingness to one or the other linguistic network and by cultural distinctiveness. It is reflected in the subject's responses to the questions of how much they consider themselves to belong to the Konjo community. In analyzing the intergroup distance, the value of R variable is calculated as the composite values of both components R1 and R2, " $R = R1 + R2$ ". To make the results easier to understand, all variables were converted to a scale of 0 – 1, so the minimum distance is expressed by the value 0 and the maximum distance is 1. Then, the R index was measured as their arithmetic average.

From the means score of R1 (0.391) and R2 (0.295), it can be found the final results of R variable is 0.686. The result indicates that the Konjo community tend to have high loyalty and grouped self-awareness. They are

proud to show their identity as Konjo people (*tau Konjo*) everywhere and also have high effort to maintain the Konjo language. Moreover, it is supported by the existence of Ammatoa indigenous people in Kajang who keep maintaining their culture and their language. The Konjo community upholds all forms of rules contained in *pasang ri Kajang* (messages in Kajang) and applied them in daily life. They believed that *pasang ri Kajang* was a life hold that has an important role in their survival.

### 3.1.2 Perceived Strength Differential (PSD)

PSD expresses how strong the in-group is perceived in comparison with the most relevant out-group. By the term in-group, it means the group which the respondent could characterize as “we”; the out-group may be any group which the respondent would characterize as “they”. So, S-we signifies the perceived strength of the in-group and S-they signifies the perceived strength of the out-group. In this case, the symbols S-we and S-they have different references depending on whose perceptions are measured. In this study, to calculate PSD, the summary scales of S-we (G1) and S-they (G2) were formed as the mean values of items belonging to the Konjo community. Mathematically, this can be formulated as follows: “PSD = S-we – S-they” and fell within the interval from -1 (very weak) to +1 (very strong). If the result of the calculation equals 0, it means that groups are perceived as equal among themselves.

After calculating the summary scales (S-we and S-they) from the Konjo community, as expected, it can be found the final result of the PSD scale of the Konjo community is “0.328 – 0.339 = -0.011”. It shows that the Konjo community is quite strong compared to the out-group in Bulukumba.

### 3.1.3 Intergroup Discordance (D)

Intergroup discordance (D) expresses the perceived legitimacy of power relations as well as distrust towards the outgroup. Tajfel and Turner [9] argue that if the low status of the in-group is perceived to be legitimate, the members of such groups are more likely to abandon their membership. If the situation is perceived illegitimate, the members could be more prone to fight collectively for improvement. Perceived illegitimacy is the main factor that contributes to the discordance (D) between a group. Discordance (D) is a composite variable summarizing the perceptions of the legitimacy of the intergroup situation and distrust toward the outgroup. Therefore, to calculate the summary scale for D, the values of legitimacy and distrust were calculated first. So, the discordance index is calculated as the sum of legitimacy and distrust:  $D = \text{legitimacy (Le)} + \text{distrust (Dt)}$ .

Based on the formula above, it can be found the discordance value of the Konjo community is “0.314 (Le) + 0.285 (Dt) = 0.599”. In terms of perceived legitimacy value (0.314), the Konjo community

indicates a fair amount around 0.3 out of 1.0, where a score of 0.5 would indicate a neutral or indifferent feeling. Moreover, the values for perceived distrust for the Konjo community (0.285) are close to the neutral zone, being slightly on the side of outgroup favouritism (below level of 0.5).

Socio-political situations in Bulukumba district potentially contribute to the level of D of the Konjo community. The sensitivity of the Konjo community through their language’s stigmatization and status can support in-group social mobility and affect the intergroup relations with other communities in the future.

### 3.1.4 Utilitarianism (U)

Utilitarianism is a broad understanding that people act as it is economically most useful for them [10]. To measure the value of the utilitarianism index of the Konjo community, the notions of utilitarianism (Ut) and traditionalism (Tr) are used which relates them to the theory of human values. The value of the utilitarianism index is calculated to the format required for “U (U =  $\log (Ut/Tr) + 1$ )”. As the index of utilitarianism (U) ranges from 0 to 2.

So, it can be found the utilitarianism value of the Konjo community is “ $\log (0.469 / 0.339) + 1 = 1.13$ ”. In particular, Ut expressed values connected with openness to change and self-enhancement dimensions such as achievement, self-direction, hedonism, power, and stimulation. Tr values are connected with a conservative dimension that includes tradition, conformity, and security [2]. The result of the U value indicates that the Konjo community are more open to change and have better self-enhancement. This might be influenced by the high level of discordance, so, the community are trying to move to a higher level.

## 3.2. Vitality Analysis

The interaction principles of the vitality factors of ethnic groups are formulized with the help of two equations:

$$V = U. ((S\text{-we} - S\text{-they}) + D) / R, \quad (1)$$

if  $(PSD + D) < 0$

$$V = R. ((S\text{-we} - S\text{-they}) + D) / U, \quad (2)$$

if  $(PSD + D) > 0$

The choice of the equation depends on the PSD + D value, which could be a negative or positive, depending on the values of PSD and D. Formula (1) is used when PSD + D is less than 0. Negative PSD is common to minority groups, but not always and not unconditionally. Formula (2) is used when PSD + D was equal to 0 or exceeded 0.

**Table. 1**  
**Vitality Value of Konjo Language**

PSD	U	R	D	PSD +D	V
-0.011	1.13	0.686	0.599	0.588	0.36

After calculating each variable, the value of language vitality of Konjo can be determined by using equation 2 above due to the PSD + D value being exceeded to 0. As a minority community, Konjo has a low value of PSD and high D. In this situation, the Konjo community may feel strongly enough to demand a change in the unequal relationship to the outgroup. In the long run, this could mean the prevalence of social mobility, leading to possible assimilation, or, if social mobility is not possible to a permanent stigmatized situation. Based on the table.1, it can be seen the results of variables calculation and the final results shows that the V value of Konjo language is 0.36. Based on the degrees of vitality scale in table 2, the V value of the Konjo language is high vitality even though it is categorized as medium-high level. So, it can be concluded that Konjo is still a strong minority community in South Sulawesi province.

**Table. 2**  
**Degrees of Vitality Scale**

Category	Values of V
High Vitality	> 1.5
	0.6 ... 1.5
	0.3 ... 0.6
	0.1 ... 0.3
Stable Vitality	0 ... 0.1
	0 ... -0.1
Low Vitality	-0.1 ... -0.2
	-0.2 ... -0.3
	-0.3 ... -0.4
	< -0.4

Source: Ehala & Zabrodska [3]

**4. CONCLUSION**

After analyzing the vitality value of the Konjo language, it can be concluded that the Konjo community can be characterized as a strong minority community in the South Sulawesi province of Indonesia. By using the analysis of the V-model's formula, it is found that the value of the language vitality of Konjo is 0.36 which is still categorized as high vitality (> 0.1). The result indicates that the Konjo community tend to have high loyalty and grouped self-awareness. They are proud to show their identity as *tau Konjo* everywhere and have

high effort to maintain Konjo language. Furthermore, the Konjo community tend to be more traditional than utilitarian. They show a more simple life as one of impact to the trust of community namely *pasang ri Kajang* that is used as a guideline of life and supports the Konjo language high vitality. The messages are tightly maintained by Ammatoa indigenous region in Kajang as the main symbol of the Konjo community's existence in the Bulukumba regency.

**AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

SN carried out the vitality study and participated in the design of the study as well as performed the statistical analysis. Z participated in data collection and helped to draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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