



Activating Minority Languages in Sulawesi Through Revitalization

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ABSTRACT

The paper reports language revitalization efforts conducted in Central Sulawesi and South Sulawesi. The languages that were attempted to be revitalized are Tolitoli language of Central Sulawesi and Konjo Language of South Sulawesi. The two languages are decreasing in their use in the everyday use domain. The revitalization effort of the Tolitoli or Totoli language, which was conducted in Nalu Village, Tolitoli Regency, Central Sulawesi, made use of rhymes, songs, and local folk tales to be performed at the Village Hall for all the residents to watch. Meanwhile, the revitalization effort of the Konjo language in Tamatto Village, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, was made through songs making in Konjo language. Some of the songs made were later uploaded and shared to the latest video or music sharing media as part of the use of information technology. Participants of this revitalization were the young generation as the native language speakers. This revitalization effort took place for about eight months which includes the preparation, selection of teachers and participants, training, and the evaluation in the form of performances or recordings. The results of the revitalization effort in the form of digital recordings and performances in front of local speakers serve as a trigger for the community to increase their native language use in everyday life. In addition, the local languages were also used as the language of publication in various existing information media to make the local languages can be known more widely.

Keywords: *Konjo, Language revitalization, Local language preservation, Tolitoli.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Revitalization is a process of increasing the vitality of a threatened language with the aim that the language fulfils its function for the community (Grenoble & Lindsay, 2006). The increase of language vitality includes efforts to protect and develop language as well as to foster language speakers. Usually, efforts to strengthen language resources are related to the threat of language extinction because speakers of one language (start to) leave their language. The fact shows that local languages in Indonesia are abandoned by the speakers because other languages with a wider range of communication can replace his/her local language in various domains. Adjustment and movement to another language with wider communication occurs due to various external and internal factors.

The extinction of a language is not just the extinction of vocabulary or grammar, but also the loss of the nation's most valuable cultural heritage. In fact, UNESCO on the commemoration of International Mother Language Day

2010 reminded that when a language becomes extinct, the world loses a very valuable cultural heritage – a large number of legends, poems, and knowledge accumulated from generation to generation will also become extinct.

The Indonesian Language Agency (Badan Bahasa) (2018, 2019) reported that there are 718 local languages in Indonesia. Some of these languages are in the brink of extinction due to the pressure from various factors outside and inside the languages. Those pressure has led the native speakers to choose the most beneficial language in their life. Due to their important role and use for language improvement in Indonesia, local languages need to be strengthened through revitalization to avoid extinction. With revitalization, the local languages' vitality can be increased so the languages are able to survive. The preservation of local languages needs to be maintained because local languages are a source of enrichment and empowerment of the Indonesian language as the national language and a source of sustainable cultural wisdom, which can maintain social balance. The revitalization effort Indonesia carried out

on local languages cannot be equated with efforts commonly carried out in various countries. They are adjusted to government policies to maintain the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The revitalization of local languages in Indonesia is grouped into three efforts, namely protection, development, and fostering of local languages.

The preservation of local languages has become an important issue and has begun to receive significant attention during modernization. Crystal (2000) believed that the death of language occurs very quickly. In relation to this, Belew and Sean (2018) stated that language extinction could be influenced by various non language factors. The rapid development of technology causes local languages to become less attractive for today's young generation. The younger generation rarely use their local language in daily communication. This is one of the threats to the local languages. Another threat is created by people mobility from one area to another. This cross-border movement of people is impossible to avoid. Therefore, a strategy is needed to maintain local language as the mother tongue of many Indonesians.

The revitalization effort reported in this study is the revitalization efforts of local languages by training the younger generation to be able to use their local language in daily communication (Hinton, Huss & Roche 2018). Revitalization efforts are varied and take place in accordance with policies within the community or a country. In Indonesia, language policy includes policies on local languages, Indonesian as the national language, and foreign languages. Local languages need to be empowered because they are the mother tongue of most Indonesians and a source of enriching and empowering Indonesian which are threatened with extinction.

Revitalization is one of the learning methods of local languages that are rarely used by speakers. Revitalization can lead to language change (Bower 2017; Grenoble & Lindsay, 2006). Language revitalization not only revives or rebuilds a dying language but also builds the confidence of the community of speakers of that language to use their language in everyday life as a language attitude that they believe in. Some of the communities involved in the revitalization focused more on educational programs, although in some cases they treated the local language as a second foreign language. Some speech communities tend to choose to teach the local language in the form of songs, local cultural terms, and rituals. This model emphasizes the use of symbols in language. This revitalization is made so that the younger generation is able to speak fluently their local language. Further, this revitalization model is expected to produce local language trainers/tutors.

Tolitoli (Central Sulawesi) and Konjo (South Sulawesi) languages have a steadily decreasing number of speakers. This condition is caused by many factors, including the use of the Indonesian language and the

strong influence of the immigrant language (Bugis) on the local community. In addition, the position of regional languages as complementary languages in schools, makes the local language learning considered unimportant. The other contributing factor is the heterogeneous regional languages in Sulawesi, especially Central Sulawesi and South Sulawesi. This situation makes it difficult for schools to develop local language learning curricula. Most schools teach foreign languages (English) rather than teaching local languages (Mayani 2016).

These polemics often occur in areas with speakers of more than two regional languages. As we know, the regions of Sulawesi, Maluku, and Papua are the largest contributors of local languages in Indonesia. In one village or district, two or more regional languages are being spoken. In Tolitoli Regency itself, there are three major languages living side by side. They are Tolitoli (Totoli), Bugis, and Gorontalo. In Bulukumba Regency, there is a Bugis language that becomes the language with as many speakers as the Konjo language (Mayani 2016).

Meanwhile, government institutions that handle education experience difficulties when it comes to teaching local languages (Alshehri, 2016; Channa, 2016; Mcivor, 2009). Schools do not easily meet the requirements of students for their local language. The problem of archiving and documenting the language itself is the first issue to handle. A language can be taught in schools if the linguistic documentation of the language is complete. Schools cannot do all of these jobs. However, schools are the means or organizers of the preparation of the local language linguistic system which will later be used in speech communities.

The decrease of language vitality in daily conversation and the role of the government in maintaining local languages through education are the basis for the implementation of this revitalization. The revitalization of the two languages (Konjo and Tolitoli) in Sulawesi uses two different learning methods, with the aim of seeing the ability of participants or learners to absorb the material provided.

2. METHOD

Community Based Research (CBR) is sociolinguistic research that involves the community of language speakers, especially young speakers. The declaration by UNESCO that all children have the right to education in their first language is the base of the selection. CBR consists of surveys, selection of teaching materials, learning, and evaluation to provide appropriate recommendations in learning local languages (Faraclas, Kester & Mijts, 2019). The community is actively involved in the processes related to revitalization activities. The implementation of revitalization is carried out in two stages: the learning/training stage and the

evaluation stage in the form of performance of the results of the revitalization.

This research was conducted in two places, Central Sulawesi and South Sulawesi. As stated by Grenoble and Lindsay (2006) regarding revitalization that adopts two methods at once (mix method), this activity invites young students aged around 7 to 20 years to actively participate in using Konjo and Tolitoli languages through literary learning media, such as song making, singing, and playing dramas. Training sessions were done after school hours at the village hall or school hall. The participants were 60 people and grouped into 3 or 4 classes, accompanied by native trainers selected from their speech communities. The main objective of this revitalization is to encourage the Konjo's and Tolitoli's speakers to use the local language in daily activities.

The learning materials used are not emphasized on language construction but rather on how participants who are native speakers of the language but use their language passively, feel proud of their language and often use it in daily conversation. Participants who were the younger generation will feel tired if they are given the same material as the learning model at school. Therefore, the revitalization team along with tutors and experts compiled teaching materials that suit the participants' background needs.

The participants who took part in this revitalization lesson were young native speakers who never used their mother tongue. They were trained to recite, understand the meaning, and remember the teaching material. As the final result, participants are expected to be able to practice their mastery of the language in daily conversation. The results of this revitalization were used as recommendations for regional language learning models.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of this activity is to revitalize the language in order to prevent or slow down the extinction of local languages in Indonesia. However, before the revitalization process is carried out, it is also necessary to document and codify the languages so that the revitalization process can be carried out properly.

3.1. Konjo Language Situation

Language Agency (2018) classifies Konjo language as endangered languages. Konjo language is spoken by the people in Bulukumba Regency, especially in the eastern part of Bulukumba. Bulukumba itself is a diverse area. Its people have different levels of education and mastery of language. In Bulukumba there are two major mother tongues, Bugis and Konjo languages.

Konjo language is spoken by the people in Bulukumba Regency which are spread over several sub-

districts such as Bonto Bahari District, Kajang District and Ujung Loe District. Konjo language is a local language that is marginalized by the presence of Bugis and Indonesian. So, it is not surprising that the Konjo language is in endangerment. Although there are many speakers of Konjo language and the distribution of the language is quite wide in Bulukumba Regency, the threat of shifting or decreasing language use by young speakers is unavoidable. Moreover, the nature of the language which is always changing according to the times, the situation and condition of the speakers, as well as the proximity of the Konjo language speakers' residences to the tourist attractions of Tanjung Bira make the shifts and declines occur more quickly.

Research on the Konjo language has been carried out by several researchers. Herawati (2010) examines the preservation of the Konjo language which reinforces the need for the revitalization of the Konjo language amid the insistence of the Bugis language. An online version of the Konjo Language Dictionary has also been made (<https://www.mediakonjo.net/>). Indarwati, Lukman, and Sahid (2022) investigate the attitude of the Gantarang community towards the Konjo language. These writings confirm the decline of the current Konjo language vitality.

We have conducted direct observations that show how young speakers of the Konjo language find it increasingly difficult to distinguish the Konjo language from the Bugis language. This condition was observed when the young speakers were asked to make a song in Konjo language. Many of them are still wrong in distinguishing between Konjo language vocabulary and Bugis vocabulary. In fact, young speakers who are still in elementary school were not able to count numbers in Konjo language. Most of the young speakers at an early age only become passive speakers so they are not accustomed to using the Konjo language. That is why it is necessary to revitalize the Konjo language.

3.2. Revitalization of Konjo Language

The revitalization of the Konjo language was carried out in Tamatto Village, Ujung Loe District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province. This revitalization effort involves the participation of the local community, both as participants and as trainers/teachers of the Konjo language. The target of this Konjo language revitalization activity is young speakers of the language aged 7-20 years. The revitalization of Konjo language is carried out by prioritizing literary appreciation to create Konjo language song lyrics. The theme of the song is the exploration of natural and cultural resources owned by the people of Bulukumba. As we know Bulukumba has many unique tourism and cultural assets. Therefore, several song lyrics created during the revitalization activities carried the theme of Bulukumba's natural wealth, including the song Tanjung Bira, the song Tanah

Toa, the song *Mari Ke Bulukumba*, the song about the Pinisi Boat, and a children's song about the excitement of schooling.

Young speakers of the Konjo language were invited to compose Konjo songs so that they became more familiar and accustomed to using the Konjo language. Some of the songs made were distributed to the latest video or music sharing media as part of the use of information technology. This method has been chosen because young speakers love to listen to music, but the music chosen tends to be in Indonesian or even foreign languages. It would be better if the love of listening to music was maximized by making Konjo songs so that young speakers would get used to listening to Konjo songs. By starting from the habit of listening to Konjo songs, it is possible for young speakers to automatically get used to daily communication using the Konjo language. In the long term, Konjo songs are not only used as a means of learning local languages, but can also be used as a medium for promoting culture and improving the creative economy. Moreover, the making of Konjo language songs will continue to be encouraged and the results will be channelled to digital platforms on an ongoing basis.

Below is one of the songs that was created by the participants.

Maeki Ri Bulukumba
 (Come to Bulukumba)
Salama 'ki Mae antama ri Bulukumba
 (Welcome to Bulukumba)
Ballo-balloi taungna
 (We are frendly people)
Haji' - haji' nyahana
 (And kind hearted)
Ri parangna tauwa ngase
 (To everyone)
Maemaki ri Butta Panrita lopi
 (Come to the land of panrita lopi)
Butta lohe pappasang kabajikang
 (A land that has many messages of kindness)
Dato' Tiro kalompoangta
 (Dato' tiro is our achestor)

Reff :
Nipaenteng ada' ri Tanah toa
 (Upholding the custom on the land of toa (kajang))
Kittetokmi Tanjung birana
 (We'll see the Tanjung Bira beach)
Kittepole Ta'bing Apparalang
 (we'll also the appalarang cliffs)
Kittetokmi Lopi pinisina
 (And we'll see phinisi ship sailing)

Opportunities to increase the vitality of the Konjo language can be done in various ways, including (1) using the Konjo language at cultural events and important ceremonies in society; (2) introducing Konjo language to

students through informal and non-formal education, it can even become local content material; and (3) instilling a treasuring attitude towards the preservation of the Konjo language to the community. By implementing them, it is hoped that the Konjo language can revive in the midst of its speakers and the goal of revitalizing the Konjo language can be achieved. With the existence of the Konjo language, it means that the values and local wisdom of the community will also be maintained.

3.3. Tolitoli Language Situation

Tolitoli language is a Polynesian West Malay language (Himmelman in Sneddon & Noorduyn, 1992) which is used by the Tolitoli ethnic group. Its speakers are scattered in North Tolitoli District, Galang District, Dakopemean District and Baolan District, Tolitoli District. In Tolitoli there are only few speakers in number but they have dialects, such as the Tolitoli language speakers in Pinjan Village. The language used in the Tolitoli tribes who live in Kalangkangan and Nalu is somewhat different, such as for example the vocabulary that represents the word "friend". In Pinjan Village it is "tau arm". The Tolitoli tribes who live outside the village of Pinjan pronounce it "Singgayan".

Wolff (Himmelman et al., 2017) stated that Tolitoli or Totoli is an endangered language in northern Central Sulawesi which is still spoken by at most 5000 speakers. It is generally considered to be a member of the Tomini-Tolitoli group, although it remains unclear whether these languages actually form a genetic group or whether they are simply geographically related. Tolitoli or Totoli is very different from the other languages in the group in terms of phonology, lexicon, and grammar. Notable phonological differences include the frequent occurrence of geminates and tolerance for closed syllables. Grammatically, the Tolitoli or Totoli language appears to have a unique sound and applicative system that combines features of the typical Filipino voice system with the features of the applicative system found in western Indonesia and the southern half of Sulawesi. Although this system is far from being fully understood, it has been suggested that Tolitoli or Totoli language played a key role in understanding the change of the Filipino type system to the type of symmetrical sound system found in most western Indonesian.

Tamrin (2018) suggested that the shift in the Tolitoli language was a result of the language selection process over a very long period of time. When a language shift occurs, the community of speakers of a language in groups tends to use the new language rather than the old language in everyday life, both within the family and community. The same thing happened to the Totoli or Tolitoli language in Tolitoli Regency. The results of the analysis show that the use of the Totoli language by the Totoli ethnic group in Tolitoli Regency has shifted to the use of Indonesian. The factors that influence the shift in

the Totoli language are that the Totoli ethnic group is not loyal to their language and is not fanatical about their language that is the Totoli language.

The results of this study provide solid evidence for Tolitoli language to be revitalized. In addition, direct observation before the revitalization activity was carried out informed us that young speakers (after elementary to middle school) could not actively speak Tolitoli. They tend to be passive speakers. In addition, the Tolitoli people prefer to learn Bugis language rather than their own language.

3.4. Tolitoli Language Revitalization

The Tolitoli language is already on the verge of extinction. As previously stated, this language is rarely used by young generation. It is used only among the elderly. It is not surprising that Tolitoli is lagging in usage compared to Indonesian and Malay with local dialects. According to local stories, the Tolitoli tribe developed from Nalu Village, where the revitalization was carried out. This story is also reinforced on the website of the Tolitoli district government. Currently most of the population of Tolitoli apart from the natives are incomers from Bugis.

Totoli Language Revitalization in Nalu Village, Baolan Subdistrict, Tolitoli Regency, Central Sulawesi was carried out for 6 months from May to October with the help of a teaching team of six people who have different backgrounds and are native speakers of the Tolitoli language. The training participants consisted of 60 participants in the age group of 10 years to 16 years. Participants were grouped into four classes with different materials and teachers. The singing class is filled with students who are accompanied by a teacher who has good vocal skills and speaks Tolitoli fluently. An example of the song being studied is the land I love (*buta kukosuai*). Speech class was tutored by a teacher who can narrate and speak Tolitoli fluently. Storytelling class was organized by a teacher who has the ability to act and speak Tolitoli fluently.

An example of the song being learned is the Story of a Sakti Anak (*Sirita Anak Sakti*). The last is a play or drama class which was accompanied by a teacher who has the ability to direct the players (director) and speaks Tolitoli fluently. The story adopted for the drama is the Monkey and the Turtle Story (*Sirita i Bolrong ai Pomponu*). Below is an excerpt from the drama that was trained.

- *Dadaan sabatu sirita pitu tau montolriusat mossumbo lengan tau dako sisia.*
(There is a story in a land where seven brothers and their families lived)
- *Sabatu waktu inang sisia mononga dei doja mogitai nasib anak ia.*

(Once the parents (mother) of these seven children asked a religious expert to be able to see (predict) the future fate of this child)

- *Injan nitongaian dei doja anak pomposan ia mopore nasibna.*
(When he was predicted by an expert, the youngest child had good luck in the future)
- *Injan inangna mokumotoi hal ia kopitu anakna ia suuanna mongusut gagau.*
(When the mother found out, these seven children were ordered to go abroad to the other land)
- *Kopitu anakna ia mongusut possumbolengan mogulreag.*
(The seven children then searched for a better life in the other land by sailing a boat)
- *Injan mogulreag sisia nikoopusan ogo ai sisia mongusutmo ogo ia.*
(When sailing on an island they ran out of water supplies on the way so they took the initiative to fetch water)
- *Onom montolriusat ia ingga mongodoongan dei tau tualri ai mongusut akaa.*
(These six siblings know that the fate of the seventh or youngest child has good luck so they too (ply) to harm him)

Participants practiced for approximately 6 months after school hours twice in a week. They practiced at the Nalu village office because most of the participants live in Nalu village. At the beginning of the training, participants were not familiar with the material being taught, even though most of the materials were songs and folktales from Tolitoli. This made the trainers/teachers and us as implementers aware that there are still many local cultures that have not been introduced to the younger generation.

Totoli Language Revitalization in Nalu Village, Baolan Subdistrict, Tolitoli Regency, Central Sulawesi was carried out with the help of a teaching team of six people who have different backgrounds and are native speakers of the Tolitoli language. The training participants consisted of 60 children in the age group of 10 years to 16 years.

The existence of a joint Memorandum of Understanding provides a strong contribution from the government in preserving the Tolitoli language. The Tolitoli Regional Government is actively developing Tolitoli language teaching materials for primary and secondary schools in stages.

The revitalization of the Konjo and Tolitoli languages was carried out to improve the ability of young speakers in their mother tongue. The training, which lasted approximately eight months, produced music videos in Konjo and literary performances in Tolitoli. The participants were able to develop their mastery of

language and are not reluctant to use it in daily conversations.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has reported the language revitalization effort conducted on Konjo and Totoli language. The revitalizations of Konjo and Totoli Language was aimed at increasing the use and skill of local languages among young speakers in daily communication. The revitalization effort was able to trigger younger generation to use their mother tongue more frequent in daily life. The Konjo young speakers were able to create songs in their languages and receive positive responds from the community. The Tolitoli revitalization effort convinced Tolitoli government to arrange Tolitoli language as teaching material for elementary students and junior high students.

The models of revitalization in Konjo and Tolitoli used examples of local materials as beneficial material in local language teaching. These models could be recommended to the ministry of education in arranging local language teaching materials. Revitalization can also improve the function of language use for languages that are threatened by language loss or language death.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful of my colleagues for their helpful and insightful advice on various issues. I also thank Purwaningsih and Satwiko Budiono for their contribution in sharing their experience in Konjo revitalization. I also thank Siti Fatina for sharing her advice about Tolitoli Language.

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