The Maintenance of the Javanese Language Among Migrant Communities in Pangkajene Sub-district, Maritengngae District

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms, strategies, and supporting and inhibiting factors for maintaining the Javanese language in the diaspora community in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The phenomenon of language shift that occurs due to social mobility and interaction with different language environments is the background to the importance of this study. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the maintenance of the Javanese language is carried out through the use of language in the family, social activities, and religious areas. The strategies applied include passing on the language to children, using Javanese in traditional activities, and getting used to it in daily communication. Supporting factors include a sense of pride in ethnic identity and the existence of a community of fellow diaspora, while inhibiting factors include the dominance of Indonesian and Bugis languages in the surrounding environment and the lack of interest of the younger generation. This study emphasizes the importance of the role of families and communities in maintaining the sustainability of regional languages in a multicultural society. Keywords: Javanese Language Maintenance; Migrant Communities; Maritengngae District

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping human civilization, acting as a powerful medium through which ideas, beliefs, and cultural values are transmitted and preserved across generations. It is not only a tool for communication but also a living and evolving element of culture. As social beings, humans inherently depend on interaction, and language serves as the primary channel for these interactions.

Linguistically, language is understood as a system of sound symbols produced by the human vocal tract, which encompasses an array of vocabulary and grammatical rules (Marhaida & Sukri, 2024). Through language, people are able to construct social realities, express identities, and maintain cultural continuity in both traditional and modern settings.

Indonesia is renowned for its linguistic diversity, with hundreds of regional languages spoken across its archipelago. These regional languages serve as vital cultural assets that embody the history, values, and identity of their respective ethnic communities. However, in today's rapidly changing sociocultural landscape, these languages are at risk of diminishing or even extinction, particularly in bilingual or multilingual societies where dominant languages overshadow minority tongues. Factors such as interethnic marriages, urban migration, education policies, and technological exposure all contribute to language shift and erosion (Irawan, Ahyar, & Mahsa, 2024). Thus, the preservation of regional languages is not only a linguistic concern but also a matter of safeguarding national cultural heritage.

One of the regional languages that continues to be actively spoken outside its original geographical region is Javanese. Javanese is not only the largest regional language in Indonesia by number of speakers, but also a crucial symbol of Javanese identity and tradition. In South Sulawesi, particularly in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, Javanese is used by migrant communities who have settled there for generations. The continued use of Javanese by these migrants reflects an effort to retain their cultural roots despite being surrounded by other dominant ethnic groups such as the Bugis. In this area, Javanese is used not only within family circles but also in community interactions, ceremonies, and daily life, illustrating how language can serve as a marker of cultural continuity in diaspora contexts (Retnaningtyas, 2022).

The intergenerational transmission of regional languages such as Javanese is central to their survival. When children continue to acquire and use their ancestral language within their homes and communities, the process of language maintenance is sustained. Conversely, when families prioritize national or more dominant languages, the potential for language shift increases. Regional languages are more than just modes of communication; they are vessels of worldview, traditional knowledge, and community identity (Rahim, Chandra, & Suryadi, 2023). For this reason, the preservation of these languages must be seen as a deliberate and collective effort that involves families, schools, communities, and policymakers.

In the field of sociolinguistics, language maintenance is often studied in conjunction with language shift. Sociolinguistics explores the interplay between language and society, investigating how social structures, cultural dynamics, and historical changes shape language use (Chaer & Agustina, 2010). Language maintenance refers to the efforts made by individuals or communities to retain their native language, often as an expression of cultural pride and identity. These efforts are typically seen in environments where minority languages coexist with more dominant languages, making the role of language attitude particularly critical (Muslihah, Dewi, & Puspitasari, 2018). A positive attitude toward one's native language can serve as a protective factor against language loss, especially when reinforced by community practices and institutional support.

In multilingual societies, language shift becomes an imminent risk when speakers begin to favor a more dominant language, often due to perceived socio-economic benefits or assimilation pressures. According to Chaer and Leonie Agustina (2010), language attitudes—whether positive or negative—significantly influence whether a language will be maintained or abandoned. Moreover, language and culture are deeply intertwined. Language is either viewed as a component of culture (subordinate) or as a parallel system (coordinate), with both being essential in regulating social norms and expressions (Suandi, 2014). When language is lost, a portion of cultural knowledge and identity often disappears with it.

This study adopts the theoretical framework of Sumarsono (2011), who asserts that language maintenance and shift are two inseparable aspects of sociolinguistic reality—like two sides of the same coin. Language maintenance happens when a community deliberately upholds the use of its mother tongue in daily life due to strong cultural awareness, positive attitudes, and supportive external environments such as family dynamics, educational practices, and inclusive language policies. On the other hand, language shift occurs when individuals or groups gradually abandon their native language in favor of a more socially or economically advantageous one. The process is influenced by both internal factors (such as identity and language loyalty) and external factors (such as peer pressure, education systems, and governmental regulations). According to Sumarsono, successful language maintenance requires a sustained commitment from individuals and communities, while language shift is more likely in unsupportive or assimilation-driven settings.

In the context of Pangkajene Village, the linguistic landscape is shaped by diverse ethnicities and languages. Although Javanese continues to be spoken among the migrant community, the widespread use of Bugis and Indonesian presents a challenge to its sustainability. The multilingual environment creates a dynamic situation where language use is often determined by context, interlocutor, and purpose. Thus, it becomes crucial to investigate the degree to which the Javanese language is being maintained in this setting. This study aims to explore whether Javanese in Pangkajene Village is still actively used across generations, or whether it is gradually shifting under the influence of other dominant languages. By examining these sociolinguistic dynamics, the research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of language maintenance among migrant communities, with a specific focus on the preservation of Javanese as a regional and cultural identity in South Sulawesi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Shift and Maintenance

Language shift refers to the process where a speech community gradually abandons its native language in favor of another, usually more dominant, language. This often occurs in multilingual settings or as a consequence of migration, where speakers adopt the language of the dominant local population to achieve social integration and effective communication (Chaer & Agustina, 2011). Arezky (2022) argues that migration and the need for adaptation lead individuals to use the local language more frequently, causing a decline in the use of their mother tongue. Weinreich (1953), as cited in Arifansyah, Rosmiwati, and Khasanah (2024), points out that socio-economic factors, interaction with dominant language speakers, and environmental pressures contribute significantly to this linguistic shift. The process is further intensified by globalization, technological change, and high levels of population mobility (Bhakti, 2020).

On the other hand, language maintenance is the effort to preserve the use of a native or first language (B1), especially in bilingual or multilingual environments, where there is a risk of replacement by a second language (B2). Key to this effort is a positive attitude among speakers, as well as a sense of cultural pride and identity linked to their language (Chaer & Leonie Agustina, 2010). Other contributing factors include community loyalty, the role of the family, and broader social awareness. According to Sari and Riswanto (2019), in Indonesia, language maintenance plays a vital role in preserving cultural and linguistic diversity in the face of increasing globalization. Sumarsono (2011) argues that language maintenance and language shift are interconnected, with bilingualism often acting as a transitional phase. If not addressed through conscious preservation efforts, bilingualism may eventually lead to the dominance of a majority language and the extinction of a minority language. This is particularly relevant in communities such as Pangkajene, where the Javanese language is under pressure from more dominant local languages like Bugis.

Forms of Javanese Language Preservation

Efforts to preserve the Javanese language among migrant communities involve multiple social domains primarily the family, neighborhood, and the wider public sphere. Each domain plays a critical role in ensuring the continuity and vitality of the language.

Family Domain

The family is the first and most influential environment where language is acquired. In Javanese migrant families, parents act as primary language models, using Javanese in everyday interactions and teaching its language levels (ngoko, madya, krama) to children. Mahmuda, Laksono, and Mulyono (2023) note that traditional cultural practices and etiquette embedded in the language help reinforce its use and strengthen children's identity as Javanese speakers. Despite the external dominance of Indonesian and Bugis, families create an internal linguistic environment that supports intergenerational transmission.

Public Domain

In the broader community, especially in Bugis-majority regions, the use of Javanese faces greater challenges. Nonetheless, migrant communities take proactive steps to preserve their language by forming Javanese cultural groups and using the language during social events, religious activities, and online platforms. Asyrah, Saleh, and Abbas (2022) highlight that the creation of internal social spaces allows for consistent use of Javanese and helps reinforce group identity amidst external linguistic dominance.

Neighborhood Domain

The neighborhood is another important sphere for maintaining language use, particularly in informal settings. Javanese is often used in daily communication with fellow migrants and during community activities such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). Additionally, code-switching and the incorporation of Javanese vocabulary in interactions with Bugis neighbors serve as subtle forms of linguistic resistance and cultural affirmation (Asyrah et al., 2022).

Factors Influencing Language Maintenance

Language maintenance is influenced by several interrelated factors, which determine the strength and continuity of a community's linguistic practices. Alimin and Fajri (2020) identify four main components:

Family Factors

The family plays a pivotal role in transmitting language across generations. When parents consistently use their mother tongue at home, children are more likely to internalize and retain the language naturally.

Socialization Factors

Language use in communal spaces such as schools, markets, and religious gatherings reinforces its social value and collective identity. The more a language is used publicly, the greater its chances of survival within the community.

Cultural Activity Factors

Participation in traditional arts, rituals, and local customs sustains language use in culturally meaningful contexts. These practices not only provide real-life

opportunities for language use but also embed linguistic elements in collective memory.

Motivational Factors

The conscious motivation of individuals or groups to preserve their language is essential. This includes the desire to teach the language to younger generations and to maintain a sense of cultural pride. Without strong internal motivation, even institutional support may not be sufficient to sustain a minority language.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative design, which aims to provide a detailed and factual description of phenomena based on actual data (Sahir, 2021). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it seeks to explore the lived experiences and language practices of Javanese migrants through words, expressions, and observable behaviors rather than numerical data (Sugiyono, 2019). The study was conducted in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District, an area characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity. The research sample consists of native Javanese speakers aged 20–60 years who have migrated and settled in the village. Participants were selected purposively to ensure that they had sufficient language exposure and experience with language use in both private and public domains.

Instrument and Procedures

Data collection in this study employed three qualitative techniques: observation, interviews, and free involved listening (simak bebas libat cakap). Direct observations were carried out in natural settings to examine how the Javanese language was used in daily interactions within the community. This technique provided rich contextual and behavioral data on language use across various domains, including the family, neighborhood, and public spaces. In addition, both formal and informal interviews were conducted with selected informants to gain deeper insights into their perspectives, attitudes, and efforts toward maintaining the Javanese language. The interview questions explored topics such as language use in different settings, intergenerational transmission, and the challenges faced in preserving linguistic and cultural identity. The third technique, free involved listening, allowed the researcher to observe spontaneous conversations without intervening or influencing the dialogue. This method was particularly useful in capturing authentic linguistic data and natural speech patterns. Throughout the research process, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument, in line with the principles of qualitative naturalistic inquiry (Nursapiah, 2020). Emphasis was placed on the process rather than outcomes, with the primary goal of uncovering the meaning behind participants lived experiences and language practices.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model (in Sugiyono, 2019), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and organized raw data to focus on relevant and meaningful information that aligned with the research objectives. This step ensured that only significant data were retained for further analysis. The second stage, data display, involved presenting the organized data in a structured and systematic manner—such as through matrices or thematic categories—to facilitate easier interpretation and comparison. Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher interpreted the data to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and significant findings. These conclusions were then continuously verified against the data to ensure accuracy and validity. This analytical method supports inductive reasoning, allowing insights to emerge naturally from the data and providing a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and language practices related to the maintenance of the Javanese language in a multilingual environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Language maintenance, as outlined in the literature, refers to the sustained use of a particular language in the face of pressure from other dominant languages. It is strongly tied to speakers' attitudes and deliberate efforts to preserve their linguistic heritage. According to Hoffman and Fauzi (in Suandi, 2014), when a speech community begins to lose its language and adopts vocabulary or structures from another language, a language shift occurs. This study investigates Javanese language maintenance within the Javanese diaspora in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District, focusing on three specific domains: the family, the neighborhood, and the public sphere. These domains encompass communicative interactions such as those between spouses and parents with children, exchanges among neighbors of the same ethnicity, and public interactions in markets or social settings. The following findings are based on qualitative data collected through observation, interviews, and listening techniques.

Forms of Javanese Language Preservation in the Migrant Community of Pangkajene Village

Family Domain

In the family setting, Javanese is still actively maintained as the primary means of communication among family members. Interactions between husband and wife, as well as between parents and children, frequently occur in Javanese particularly the *ngoko* (informal) register. This suggests that the language has been preserved and continues to thrive within the domestic sphere.

Example 1 – Husband and Wife:

- Husband: "Mak, teko endi?" (Mah, dari mana?)
- Wife: "Teko pasar, Pak." (Dari pasar, Pak.)

This exchange illustrates the use of informal Javanese (*ngoko*) vocabulary: *teko* (come), *endi* (where), and the familial terms *Mak* and *Pak*. Despite living in a predominantly Bugis-speaking area, the family continues to use Javanese comfortably and consistently. This shows a conscious effort to uphold cultural identity and ensure language transmission across generations. Example 2 – Parent and Child:

- Mother: "Arep neng endi, le/ndok?" (Mau ke mana, Nak?)
- Child: "Arep neng omahe koncoku, Bu." (Mau ke rumah temanku, Bu.)

This parent-child interaction also demonstrates the preservation of *ngoko* Javanese in everyday conversation. The use of terms like *arep* (want to), *neng* (to), and *omahe koncoku* (my friend's house) highlights natural language use. The informal terms of address, *le* (son) and *ndok* (daughter), further emphasize familial closeness and emotional connection. These expressions confirm that Javanese remains the dominant language in the household.

Factors Influencing Javanese Language Maintenance

The analysis reveals four major factors contributing to the maintenance of the Javanese language within the diaspora community: family, socialization, activities, and individual desire.

Family Factors

The family plays a critical role in language transmission. Javanese is consistently used in interactions between spouses and between parents and children, particularly when giving advice, expressing emotions, or disciplining children. This frequent usage in various emotional and functional contexts supports language continuity at home. The comfort and cultural pride associated with speaking Javanese strengthen its survival, making the family the primary domain of language preservation.

Socialization Factors

Outside the household, Javanese is still actively used in interactions with neighbors of the same ethnic background. Data show that adults frequently use Javanese in informal social exchanges such as greetings, casual chats, and requests for help. However, the younger generation, especially teenagers and children, tends to use Indonesian or Bugis when socializing with local residents. This indicates that while ethnic solidarity supports language maintenance among adults, broader social interaction poses a challenge for continued intergenerational transmission.

Activity Factors

Although not centered on formal cultural events, Javanese is consistently used in everyday informal activities such as borrowing or returning items and casual neighborhood communication. These practices strengthen group solidarity and help establish a "minority linguistic community" where the ancestral language is preserved through routine interactions. Such seemingly minor activities play an essential role in sustaining the use of Javanese.

Desire and Awareness Factors

The most influential factor in language maintenance appears to be the community's awareness and pride in their linguistic heritage. Respondents express a strong emotional attachment to Javanese, viewing it not only as a communication tool but as a core part of their identity. Parents prefer using Javanese with their children because it feels natural and effective in conveying values and emotions. This intrinsic motivation rooted in cultural pride and the desire to pass on the language serves as a powerful force in ensuring its survival, even in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

Based on the research results, the maintenance of Javanese language in the migrant community in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District, shows that the Javanese community in the area is still actively maintaining their regional language in various areas of life, especially in the family and neighborhood spheres, and is limited to the public sphere. In the family sphere, the use of Javanese, especially the ngoko variety, is very dominant in daily interactions between husband and wife, parents and children, and between siblings. Javanese not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a medium for passing on cultural values and ethnic identity. In the neighborhood sphere, the use of Javanese is still quite active among adults when interacting with fellow migrants of the same tribe, but tends to decline among children and teenagers who prefer Indonesian or Bugis due to the influence of a more heterogeneous social environment. Meanwhile, in the public sphere, the use of Javanese is more limited and is only used in certain contexts, such as community events or interactions between fellow Javanese migrants. This finding shows that despite efforts to maintain the language, symptoms of shift are beginning to be seen in the younger generation. This is in accordance with the theory Hoffmann dan Fauzi (Suandi, 2014) that the inability to maintain a language can lead to language shift. Therefore, there needs to be a strategy for preserving the Javanese language that involves the role of the family, cultural activities, and community support so that the existence of the Javanese language is maintained in a multilingual society.

CONCLUSION

P-ISSN: 2406-9558; E-ISSN: 2406-9566

This study concludes that the Javanese language is still being actively maintained by the migrant community in Pangkajene Village, Maritengngae District, particularly across three key domains: the family, the neighborhood, and the public sphere. Among these, the family domain serves as the most influential environment for language maintenance. Javanese remains the primary medium of communication between parents and children, as well as among other family members. The frequent use of the *ngoko* variety reflects not only linguistic familiarity but also emotional closeness and a strong sense of cultural identity. Within this domain, language transmission occurs naturally and consistently, reinforcing Javanese as a living heritage among younger generations. In the neighborhood domain, the use of Javanese persists, particularly in informal interactions among neighbors who share the same ethnic background. Although the intensity of language use is lower than in the family setting, Javanese remains a preferred choice for communication when social proximity and mutual understanding are present.

Conversely, in the public domain, there is a noticeable decline in the use of Javanese. The presence of multiple ethnic groups and the dominant use of Indonesian in formal institutions such as schools, workplaces, and public services have limited the use of Javanese to specific situations, such as cultural gatherings or conversations among fellow Javanese speakers. This shift highlights the challenges of maintaining minority languages in multilingual environments, where social integration often requires the use of a national or majority language. Despite these challenges, the findings show that Javanese maintenance is still ongoing, particularly in private and semi-private domains. The language's continued use is driven by a sense of ethnic pride, emotional attachment, and cultural responsibility among the diaspora community.

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