

Preservation of the Selwasa Language in Batu Putih Village

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Abstract

The preservation of the Selwasa language in Batu Putih Village, Wermaktian District, Tanimbar Islands Regency. This study seeks to elucidate the social phenomena of language maintenance in Batu Putih Village, Wermaktian District, Tanimbar Islands Regency. This research employs a qualitative methodology centred on language maintenance, assessed through language usage in the domains of family, neighbours, employment, religion, customs, and education. The methods employed for data collection included observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The research findings indicate that in Batu Putih Village, the predominant usage of the Selwasa language is evident in the domains of family and customs, with additional support from the domain of neighbours. Ambon Malay exhibits the lowest prevalence relative to the Selwasa language across the three domains. According to the speakers' ages, GL speakers constitute the biggest percentage, followed by GT, with GM having the lowest percentage. Conversely, farmers exhibit the largest percentage of Selwasa language usage compared to other professions. Consequently, it can be asserted that the Selwasa language remains well-preserved in Batu Putih Village.

Keywords: *Domain; Preservation; Selwasa Language*



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INTRODUCTION

At present, language is integral to all human activities on this globe. Humans must acquire proficiency in multiple languages to facilitate effective communication. The languages employed by humans for communication are highly diverse and numerous. The diversity and uniqueness of each language in its respective region generate significant interest among individuals in learning foreign languages through various methods. The diversity inherent in each language continues to captivate several scientists who investigate the complexities of languages and their evolutionary processes across time. Currently, the world comprises roughly 6,500 languages. Indonesia ranks as the second country with the highest number of languages, totalling 710, after Papua New Guinea.

Alongside the global linguistic variety, Indonesia possesses an exceptional abundance of languages. Maluku is an area characterised by significant linguistic diversity. Maluku is recognised as a culturally rich location, possessing about 130 languages still utilised by the indigenous populace. This diversity illustrates the distinctiveness of the linguistic traits in the Maluku region, shaped by historical, geographical, and socio-cultural influences.

The regional languages of Maluku are classified within the Austronesian and Papuan language families, illustrating the historical contacts among diverse ethnic groups in the area. Languages like Tanimbar, Kei, Buru, and Ambonese Malay exemplify the existing linguistic diversity (Adelaar & Himmelmann, 2005). Moreover, Ambonese Malay serves a crucial function as a lingua franca in Maluku, facilitating communication among speakers of various regional languages (Collins, 1980). Nevertheless, throughout time, the viability of regional languages in Maluku encounters considerable problems, particularly due to the predominance of Indonesian as the national language and the effects of globalisation, which modify societal communication patterns. Numerous regional languages are diminishing since the younger generation favours the usage of Indonesian in their daily interactions (Hammarström, Forkel, & Haspelmath, 2019). Consequently, initiatives to safeguard regional languages in Maluku are crucial for preserving the cultural legacy and identity of the indigenous populace.

The province of Maluku is one of the 38 provinces that make up Indonesia. The Maluku Province is one of Indonesia's provinces, comprising a total of 62 languages. According to information from the Maluku Language Agency, some languages have become extinct in the Maluku region, specifically the Kaiyeli, Piru, Moksela, Palumata, Hukumina, Hoti, and Loon languages. In the Maluku region of Indonesia, there are 117 regional languages, classified as follows: According to Lewier and Costa (2012), there are 100 languages that belong to the Austronesian language category, 16 non-Austronesian languages spoken in North Halmahera, and one non-Austronesian language spoken in Southwest Maluku, the Oirata language. Five languages have persisted in the Tanimbar Islands Regency: Yamdena, Fordata, Selaru, Makatian, and Selwasa. The Yamdena language is spoken on the eastern coast of Yamdena Island and in Latdalam Village on the western coast, as well as in Adaut Village on Selaru Island. The Fordata language is used on the northern coast of Yamdena Island and in villages on Seira Island. The Selaru language is prevalent on Selaru Island and in Latdalam Village on Yamdena Island. The Makatian language is exclusive to Makatian Village, while the Selwasa language is found on the western coast of Yamdena Island.

The Tanimbar Islands Regency is situated in the Maluku province. With a total area of 4,465.79 km², the regency is home to 122,337 people (2017) and is divided into 80 villages, 2 urban villages, and 10 sub-districts. Prior to February 23, 2019, this regency was designated as West Southeast Maluku Regency. Several sub-districts are situated to the west of Yamdena Island, including Wermaktian Sub-district, Wuarlabobar Sub-district, and three villages within the South Tanimbar Sub-district: Latdalam Village, Lermatang Village, and Mata Kus Village. The Wermaktian District comprises nine villages. Batu Putih Village is part of the Wermaktian District is home to eight additional villages: Kamatubun, Makatian, Marantutul, Rumah Salut, Themis, Welutu, Weratan, and Wermatang. settlements situated on Seira Island are populated by speakers of the Fordata language, also referred to as the Seira language. Three communities on the western side of Yamdena Island are populated by speakers of the Selwasa language: Batu Putih Village, Marantutul Village, and Wermatang Village. Makatian Village is the sole settlement with spThe Makatian language speakers reside on the western side of Yamdena Island Selwasa), each individual or group can discern the speaker's identity through the distinct dialects employed, as the three settlements possess unique dialectical variations

Initial findings by the researcher in early 2021 indicated that adolescents aged 11-19 predominantly communicate via BMA. Despite their interlocutors communicating in BSw, they comprehended and replied solely in BMA. Despite their ability to answer using BSw, their communication was limited to verbal expressions, resulting in GM being classified as a passive BSw speaker. Adult speakers aged 20-60 talked using BSW, while individuals aged 60 and above utilized BSW in their daily lives, as it was via them that BSW was imparted. Consequently, both the GT and GL versions were categorized as active BSw speakers. Language maintenance is essential in Batu Putih Village, as it serves as a transit point for the residents of Makatian Village and Seira Island. The researcher was motivated to investigate Language Maintenance in Batu Putih Village due to its status as one of the villages where the Selwasa language is spoken, alongside Marantutul Village and Wermatang Village. Batu Putih Village is bordered to the north by Makatian Village, where the Makatian language is spoken, and to the west by Seira Island, where the Fordata language is spoken (Luturmas, Berlianty, & Balik, 2022). Batu Putih Village serves as a transit location for individuals en route to the district headquarters, Saumlaki. Travelers and transients in Batu Putih Village predominantly originate from Makatian Village and Seira Island, encompassing Temin, Rumah Salut, Weratan, Kamatubun, and Welutu Villages. Consequently, it is indisputable that Batu Putih Village attracts numerous visitors for commerce, entrepreneurship, employment, and related activities. This study aimed to assess language maintenance in Batuputih village, analyzed through its application across different domains. What factors contribute to the continued existence of BSw, despite its proximity to Makatian-speaking towns to the north and Fordata-speaking areas to the west? What sustains BSw to this day, despite its use in only three villages?

METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative methodology to illustrate the social phenomenon about the preservation of the Selwasa language in Batu Putih Village. This method was chosen because it allows for a thorough study of language use in many areas of community life (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Moleong, 2017). Direct observation, in-depth interviews with Selwasa language speakers of all ages, questionnaires given to carefully chosen respondents, and writing down information about Selwasa language-related social and cultural activities were all used to collect the data. Interviews were performed with several stakeholders, including traditional leaders, religious authorities, educators, and the general populace, to acquire a more holistic perspective (Sugiyono, 2019). As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the data analysis was done using an interactive model with three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data collected from interviews and observations were classified according to the areas of language use, including family, customs, religion, job, and education. The triangulation method checks the reliability of data by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and written records to come to correct conclusions (Creswell, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research indicates that male speakers constitute 41% of the total, whilst female speakers represent 29%. Concerning the utilization of BMA, the predominant demographic of users comprises female speakers at 71%, succeeded by male speakers at 59%. According to the research findings, male speakers exhibit the highest percentage of BSw usage in the customary domain at 68%, followed by the family domain at 66%, the neighborhood domain at 43%, the work domain at 27%, the religious domain at 12.5%, and the education domain, which has the lowest percentage at 10%. Among female speakers, the family domain exhibits the largest percentage at 54%, succeeded by the customary domain at 49.5%, the neighborhood domain at 19.5%, the work domain at 19%, the religious domain at 11%, and the education domain at 8%. The data indicates that male speakers exhibit the largest percentage of BSw usage in the customary domain at 68%, whilst female speakers have the highest usage in the family domain at 54%.

The research indicates that, based on the speakers' ages, the group with the largest percentage of BSw usage is GL at 70%, followed by GT at 38%, while GM has the lowest percentage at 7%. The research data

indicates that the age group with the highest percentage of BSw usage is GL in the customary domain at 94%, followed by the family and neighborhood domains at 92%, the work domain at 62%, the religious domain at 44%, and the education domain at 39%. For speakers whose BSw usage percentage aligns with that of GL, the family domain is at 71%, followed by the customary domain at 69%, the neighborhood domain at 32%, the job domain at 21%, the religious domain at 6%, and the education domain at 5%. Conversely, the speakers exhibiting the minimal percentage of BSw utilization are GM in the familial domain at 15%, succeeded by the customary domain also at 15%, while the neighborhood, religious, and educational domains each register at 2%. The domain with the least percentage is the workplace, which stands at 0%.

The age group exhibiting the highest percentage of BSw usage by GL in the customary domain is 94%, succeeded by GT in the family domain at 71%, and GM in the family domain at 18%. The data indicates that the domain with the largest percentage of BSw usage is the customary and family domains, succeeded by the neighborhood domain. The results indicates that GM-aged speakers exhibit a tolerant attitude towards BSw, although they demonstrate a lack of worry regarding its utilization. The occupation with the largest percentage of BSw usage is farmers at 55%, followed by other occupations at 50%, teachers at 37%, entrepreneurs at 34%, jobless individuals at 15%, and students at the lowest number of 10%. The data indicates that the utilization of BSw remains prevalent within the Batu Putih village community, and there are ongoing efforts by the community to preserve BSw, despite the influence of BMA.

CONCLUSION

The studied data revealed a favorable disposition among the residents of Batu Putih Village towards the preservation of the Selwasa language, however the usage of BSw predominated in the customary domain, with the family domain being reinforced by the neighborhood domain. Consequently, local governments and religious institutions must prioritize collaboration to save the Selwasa language for future preservation. This research requires further investigation as it has not yet determined the internal or external variables influencing the maintenance or jeopardization of the Selwasa language, along with the numerous supporting elements involved.

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