

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN MAINTAINING THE MANDARESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Youth is the potential speaker in the future and plays a significant role in language maintenance and vitality. This study aims to investigate the role, attitude, and language skills of Mandarese youth in maintaining their local language. It applied quantitative research and involved five representatives from eighteen districts in Polewali Mandar regency. The results indicate that the youth's role in preserving Mandarese culture, including its language and ability to use it, is deteriorating. The average percentage of their proficiency in the Mandarese language is 48.5%, while the percentage for the actual role is 27.5%. However, given that the youth still have a positive attitude toward that language, which is approximately 78.75% on average, the effort to save Mandarese from the definitively endangered situation is possible.

Keywords: *Youth, Language Maintenance, Mandarese*

Introduction

In recent years, many studies on language preservation have been conducted by experts. National Geographic has released quite astonishing research results. They found that about 3500 languages, or half of the earth's existing language population, were endangered by 2100 (Moseley, 2010). In the same year, tirtoid also released a summary of their observations on local languages in Indonesia from the Summer Institute of Linguistics and Ethnologue: Language of the World which stated that 25 local languages are in danger of becoming endangered; while 13 other local languages have been declared extinct (Grimes, 1988; Dalby, 2002).

The problem of language extinction certainly has implications for various aspects of the life of the language-speaking community. Tondo (2009) states that the extinction of a language can mean the loss of a nation's cultural assets. In addition,

the loss of these assets will lead to the loss of other cultural assets. Language that is used as a medium of communication and intermediary from one generation to another certainly has such a big role (Lee & Al-Hawamdeh, 2002). It will help drown out the cultural values stored in that language and in the community of speakers of that language. And the various chaos that has occurred in Indonesia recently is also caused by the loss of integrity and the value of the nation's local wisdom. Debates that often lead to racism often occur mainly in a political year like 2018. This shows that the values in the motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* have experienced a slight shift. This is the impact of the erosion of local wisdom in various regions due to the failure of the inheritance process of the previous generation (Marhayani, 2016)

Barrena et.al (2007) argues that the younger generation is an important indicator in determining the 'health' of a language. When the younger generation began to switch from the local language, then use another language; then the local language can be classified as a potentially endangered language. The vernacular remains classified as an endangered language even though it is still spoken by the older generation in all aspects of their daily lives. So that various efforts to save and document endangered languages must start from the younger generation. The younger generation is certainly obliged to actively participate, and be followed by strategic policies from the government. This is done in the hope of changing the status of an endangered language to a more stable language of use.

Youth is a generation whose shoulders are burdened with various expectations, both from previous generations and later generations. They are expected to be the next generation of the nation and the future, the generation that must fill and carry out the relay of development in a sustainable manner. In addition, youth are individuals with a dynamic character, even turbulent and optimistic but sometimes do not have stable emotional control. This unstable emotional state makes them tend to find it difficult to face the challenges of the times in the form of social and cultural changes (Putra et.al, 2019)

One of the tough challenges was the effect of globalization on social media which was widely used by youth at that time. Because it is driven by a considerable desire to imitate and such intense exposure efforts, many young people from

Indonesia actually feel proud when adapting cultures from outside. In social media such as Facebook and Instagram, many younger generations are found using foreign languages such as English, Korean or other popular languages (Tankosic & Davchin, 2021). On the contrary, they are very rarely found using the vernacular. The younger generation also prefers to hear English or Korean songs than folk songs that use their local language. And there are many more cultural changes in the younger generation caused by their declining attitude towards the vernacular. Of course, this problem cannot be considered simple. The continued decline in the attitude of the younger generation without rescue efforts will threaten the values of local wisdom and the integrity of the nation (Darong et.al, 2021).

One of the languages predicted to be endangered is Mandarese, both by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Culture. This local language in West Sulawesi province is one of three local languages on the island of Sulawesi that are in a dangerous status (endangered) besides the Lolak language and the Ratahan language in North Sulawesi province. Adawiah and Srimusdikawati (2016) have also conducted research and found that the use of Mandar language by the younger generation with junior high school to university education levels in the family realm is only 27.5%. In other domains, the popularity of Mandar language will decline even more. This is because the realm of offices, schools, markets and other public places provides a great opportunity for the meeting of multiculturalism communities in the West Sulawesi region.

Meanwhile, previously, in 1986, a study by Muthalib (1986) revealed that the use of Mandar by teenagers was still quite large, namely 61%. So the researcher then made a comparison of previous studies, and it can be concluded that there has been a very significant decline in the use of Mandar language by the younger generation in the last 30 years. The difference between the findings of Muthalib (1986) and Adawiah & Musdikawati (2016) reached 33.5% or decreased by about 11% every 10 years. If the Mandar people do not make rescue efforts, then this local language can be estimated to become extinct in less than 30 years.

Seeing this social phenomenon, researchers are interested in conducting a study with the title " The Role of Youth in Maintaining the Mandarese Language ". This

research is expected to provide an overview to related parties about the role, views and language's ability of the youth of Polewali Mandar district in terms of maintaining Mandar as a local language which is their wealth and local wisdom. The research integrates youth studies and local language preservation. Therefore, the researcher hope that this research can provide theoretical use in the form of the availability of information, findings, concepts and new thoughts on these studies.

This research is also expected to provide practical use for various parties, especially the Polewali Mandar community. The researcher hopes that this research can provide an overview of the perception or attitude of youth towards the use and preservation of the Mandar language. In addition, this study can provide an overview of what efforts are being made by Polewali Mandar youth in maintaining their local language position. This research can also be a policy reference for the Polewali Mandar district government from the village level to the district government to make policies to save local languages. It is possible that the results of this study will also be a reference in determining policies by the provincial government and the central government. This policy includes how to optimize the role of youth through the draft regional regulations and set Mandarese a subject in schools. Until now, vernacular learning has only been an elective subject, and only a small percentage of schools choose regional languages as part of local content subjects. The majority of schools choose to learn foreign languages such as English.

Method

Based on the focus of the problem formulation studied, this research uses a quantitative approach. This is chosen and determined with consideration and logical thinking because the data needed to answer or explain the problem proposed is a series of numbers. This research was conducted in Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province. The district consists of 16 sub-districts namely Binuang, Polewali, Matakali, Anreapi, Wonomulyo, Tapango, Bulu, Mapilli, Matangga, Luyo, Tubi Taramanu, Campalagian, Balanipa, Tinambung, and Alu.

Data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires during May-July 2022. To select participants who will answer the questionnaire questions, researchers will use cluster sampling by randomly taking representatives of youth aged 16 to 30

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years from each sub-district. Polewali Mandar District has 16 sub-districts. Each sub-district will be represented by 5 participants with that criteria of age, so that the total sample of this study is 80 people. The questionnaire was distributed in the form of a google form.

The data analysis steps to be used are as follows:

1. Data collection, namely collecting the result of questionnaire answers through the google form application.
2. Data tabulation, namely a process of presenting data in table and charts and calculating the percentage for each questions. In this steps, the researchers utilized Ms. Excel to analyse the data effectively.
3. Data presentation includes a description of the presentation of the interview extract and a percentage table of the questionnaire fill results. The form of presentation of the results of this questionnaire will be analysed in the most mode or analysis.
4. Drawing conclusions, namely techniques where researchers must conclude answers to problem formulations by considering the results of instruments and processes during the study and connecting with related theories that are used as references.

Results

Here is the table which showing the percentage of actual role taken by the youth in preserving Mandarese as their local culture:

Table. 1 Actual Role of Youth in Preserving Mandarese

No	Items	Giving Actual Role (%)	
		Yes	No
1	As a representative of cultural activities	23.75	76.25
2	Getting involved in the decision-making of local language maintenance policies	21.25	78.75
3	Getting involved in social activities related to Mandarese culture	35	65
4	Giving ideas/opinions on Mandarese preservation	31.25	68.75

5	Teaching Mandarese in formal/non-formal education	55	45
6	Getting involved in social activities related to local language maintenance	30	70
7	Providing facilities for local language maintenance	13.75	86.25
8	Donating in social activities related to local language maintenance	10	90
Average		27.5	72.5

Eight questions are given about how the youth played a role in Mandarese culture preservation. Overall, the result shows that the percentage of their actual role is only 27,5%. Meanwhile, the ratio of their non-involvement is 72,5%. In detail, only 23,75% of youth have been a delegation for cultural activities of competition; 21, 25% of youth have declared their ideas/opinions in the policy-making process of Mandarese language maintenance; 13,75% of young people who have provided facilities for Mandarese local language preservation; and 10% of them who have donated some money in the language maintenance purposes. Other items, such as involving in social activities, giving ideas, and teaching Mandarese in formal/non-formal education, are around 30-55%.

From the questionnaire result, here is the ratio of Mandarese used in three domains:

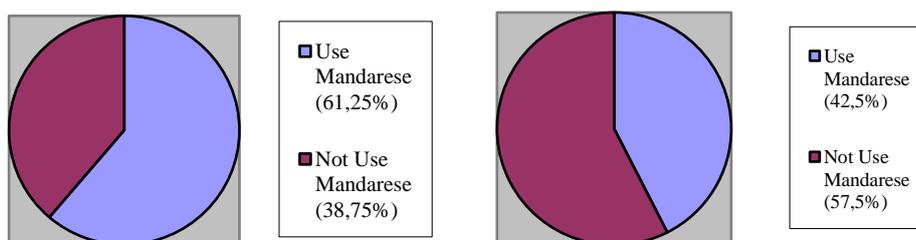


Figure 1. The ratio of Mandarese used in Home

Figure 2. The ratio of Mandarese used in School/Office

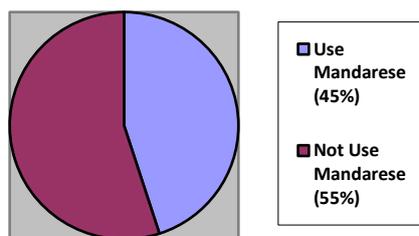


Figure 3. The ratio of Mandarese used in Market

The figures 1,2, and 3 above illustrate the percentage of Mandarese used by its young generation at home, school/office, and market settings. Firstly, almost 40% of the Mandarese young generation do not use their local language when conversing in the family domain around their house. Second, in official conditions, only 42,5% of the youth use Mandarese; meanwhile, other participants switch to Bahasa Indonesia as their second language. Lastly, 55% of youth prefer other languages for shopping in the market. In conclusion, around half of the participants no longer use Mandarese for casual/daily, official, and commercial purposes.

Here is the table showing the youth’s ability to use Mandarese:

Table 3. Percentage of Youth Proficiency in Mandarese Across Language Skills

No	Items	Youth’s Ability (%)	
		Yes	No
1	Code-switching of Mandarese and other languages	77.5	22.5
2	Using Mandarese language in reading skills with <i>lontaraq</i> letters	30	70
3	Using Mandarese language in writing skills with <i>lontaraq</i> letters	20	80
4	Listening Mandarese language comprehensively	61.25	38.75
5	Speaking Mandarese language	53.57	46.25
Average		48.5	51.5

The questionnaire items are also designed to measure the youth’s Mandarese language skills. Overall, the average of the youth’s capacity using Mandarese is 48,5%. Unfortunately, only one-fifth of participants admit knowing to write Mandarese

language with its letters; whereas 30% of youth state that they could read *lontaraq* letters in Mandarese texts. On the other hand, their listening skills to comprehend Mandarese is relatively stable. 61,25% of participants understand the meaning of Mandarese utterances, although only 53% may respond actively using Mandarese in conversation. Eventually, they also admit that code-switching is used by around 77,5% of youth as the strategy to move from or to Mandarese.

Here is the table showing the participants' attitude toward Mandarese:

Table 4. Percentage of Youth's Attitude toward Mandarese Local Language

No	Items	Youth's Attitude (%)	
		Yes	No
1	Be aware of Mandarese local language's situation	60	40
2	Be interested in learning Mandarese language	90	10
3	Needing Mandarese language for daily life	80	20
4	Be glad to use Mandarese with other Mandarese speaker when meeting outside of West Sulawesi	85	15
Average		78.75	21.25

The table above depicts that the youth still have a positive attitude toward maintaining their local language. The data also shows that they feel positive when using Mandarese in non-Mandarese areas. On the other hand, 60% of youth begin to be aware of Mandarese situation as the definitively endangered language.

Discussion

Youth and the future of a nation have a very close and inseparable relationship. To ensure a bright future for a nation, it takes youth with quality, integrity, and national insight. A large number of business people, politicians, and educators agree that to achieve success today and in the future youth who belong to learners need 21st Century Skills (Varghese & Musthafa, 2021). Youth becomes a very important asset for the survival of a nation in the future. Preparing the quality of youth today

will provide guarantees for the implementation of the quality of life of the nation in the future.

Youth must be prepared to always be prepared for global changes that can occur at any time (Tripathi & Secker, 2013). The need for skills that youth need for the future is an important part of the learning process of the present in educational institutions. The success of the education system depends on the process of transforming pedagogy and redesigning tasks in learning. Seeing all the potential of these youths, it can be concluded that they have a very big role in improving the quality of the nation's future, coupled with the number of Indonesian youth depicted through an expansive type population pyramid.

The role of the younger generation in development is very important, not only because youth is the largest layer of society but the most important thing is that without the potential and creativity of the younger generation, development will be able to lose its way (Boytemirova, 2020). In the context of language maintenance, the youth as the potential speakers in the future play significant role. Eventually, this part discusses the actual role, participation, attitude, and ability of the youth toward Mandarese as a local language in West Sulawesi.

Regarding the youth's contribution to the preservation of Mandarese culture, the data reveals that just 27,5% of their actual role is played. In the meantime, their non-engagement ratio is 72,5%, which is three times the percentage of involvement. In particular, only 23,75% of young people have participated in delegations for competitive cultural events; 21,25% have voiced their ideas or opinions during the policy-making process for the preservation of the Mandarese language; 13,75% have provided facilities for the preservation of the Mandarese local language; and 10% have made monetary donations for the language maintenance cause. Other things range from thirty to fifty percent. These include participating in social activities, offering advice, and instructing Mandarese in official and informal schooling.

Based on Law number 40 of 2009 concerning Youth mandates that local governments, namely governors/regents/mayors, must carry out youth services whose purpose is directed to development. The role of youth is also explained in the Law, namely in article 16 on the role of youth, which reads, "*Pemuda berperan aktif sebagai*

kekuatan moral, kontrol sosial, dan agen perubahan dalam segala aspek pembangunan nasional" (Youth play an active role as a moral force, social control, and agent of change in all aspects of national development). In society, the role of youth is indispensable as the successor of the noble values of the nation's culture, as a foundation and moral force, an agent of change for the better (Abdurashidovich & Botirovich, 2020).

The role of youth in this issue becomes more urgent since the status of Mandarese has been an endangered language following the study of National Geographic and LIPI. Endangered languages are an urgent situation when languages have a risk of losing speakers (Hill, 2002). It is predicted that about 3,586 languages, or half of all languages in the world, are spoken by only 0.2% of the world's population. That means they can be considered endangered languages. To classify the status of a language, many schemes have been proposed. However, the framework that UNESCO (Lee & Van, 2016) offers is the most comprehensive. Here is the classification:

Table. 2 Levels of Language Situation

Levels of Language Situation	Description
Safe	Language is spoken by all generations.
Unsafe	Most children speak the language, but may be restricted to a specific domain (for example, home).
Definitively endangered	Children no longer use language as a mother tongue at home.
Severely endangered	The language is spoken by grandparents and the older generation; While generations of parents can understand it, it rarely speaks to children or among themselves.
Critically endangered	The youngest speakers are grandparents and elders, and speak partial and rare languages.
Extinct	There are no speakers left.

The table above shows that the level of age that uses a particular language can affect the language situation. In addition, Acharyya & Mahanta (2019) stated that age and generation level are language indicators. A language whose status is safe and stable is one spoken by all generations. In this status, children are taught the language from an early age and are invited to use the language in all daily events, both formally and informally. When a language begins to show characteristics of vulnerable status, it is best to start maintaining it as quickly as possible. Children who do not speak the local language at home will certainly not pass on the language when they become parents; At that time, the language became "definitely endangered", and so on.

According to UNESCO's classification of the linguistic situation, Mandarese is currently considered to be in grave risk of extinction. First of all, in the family domain around their home, about 40% of the younger generation of Mandarese do not speak their native tongue. It indicates that the younger generation, or children, no longer speaks Mandarese at home as their mother tongue. Second, only 42,5% of young people in formal settings speak Mandarese; other participants move to Bahasa Indonesia as their second language. Finally, when it comes to market shopping, 55% of young people choose other languages. Habits and language choices will undoubtedly affect the language skills possessed by speakers (Alwasilah, 2006). A stable bilingual or multilingual condition is limited to dreams as long as shifts between languages continue to occur in society.

The youth's proficiency in Mandarese language is 48.5% overall. Regretfully, only 25% of participants acknowledge that they can write in the Mandarese language using its alphabet, although 30% of young people claim to be able to read the *lontaraq* characters found in Mandarese writings. However, their ability to understand Mandarese by listening is comparatively steady. While only 53% of participants are able to actively respond in Mandarese during a discussion, 61,25% of participants comprehend the meaning of Mandarese utterances.

The causes of language extinction can be divided into four main categories (Nettle & Romaine in Priya & Singh, 2018), i.e. natural disasters, famines, diseases, e.g. earthquakes in Malol, Papua New Guinea; war and genocide, e.g. Tasmania spread genocide by colonists; a policy of unity, for example, the establishment of a

national language to replace the position of local languages; and cultural/political/economic domination dominates, e.g. Sorbians. Hinton & Hale (in Phillipson & Skutnabb, 2012) adds that one factor that also has a significant influence on the language that is harmful is the attitude of the speakers of the language. Minority languages are sometimes associated with poverty, illiteracy and hardship, while dominant languages are associated with rapid progress. Local languages are associated with ancient styles, while foreign languages are a trend. Here is the table showing the participants' attitude toward Mandarese:

The average percentage in table 4 regarding the Youth's Attitude toward Mandarese Local Language depicts that the youth still have a positive attitude toward maintaining their local language. In detail, most of them are interested to learn Mandarese since they realize that they need this language for daily life. The data also shows that they feel positive when using Mandarese in non-Mandarese areas. On the other hand, 60% of youth begin to be aware of Mandarese situation as the definitively endangered language. Language shifting and preservation are two sides of the coin (Fishman in Zakaria et al., 2019). This phenomenon is two phenomena that coincide since communities of West Sulawesi have experienced other languages. Then, the unsafe and endangered status may occur when a society tends to use or abandon a specific language. Finally, the youth, as the next generation, play an urgent role in taking part in language maintenance.

Conclusion

People collectively determined to continue using the language already commonly used in language preservation. A language shift may occur when a society chooses a new language within the realm initially used in the old language. In this issue, the heritage of the local language to the next generation. If society commits to preserving their local language, they must guarantee that their youth should be capable and have a positive attitude toward their local language. The findings show that there is a degradation phenomenon in the actual role of youth in preserving Mandarese culture, including its language and their ability to use that language; the average percentage for the actual role is 27,5%, while the average percentage of their Mandarese language skill is 48,5%. However, the effort to save Mandarese from the

definitively endangered situation is possible since the youth still have a positive attitude toward that language, around 78,75% on average.

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