



**BURU LANGUAGE CONSERVATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE MULOK  
LEARNING IN BURU REGENCY**

*(Konservasi Bahasa Buru melalui Pembelajaran Mulok Berkelanjutan di Kabupaten Buru)*

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**Abstract**

*The sad phenomenon regarding the current shift in the Buru regional language is a very dominant factor threatening the extinction of its people's identity. Of the total population of 132,100 people in Buru district, only about 14,000 know the Buru language, and only about 5,000 people are able and active in communicating using the Buru language. This study aims to examine the condition of regional dialects in Indonesia, especially on the island of Buru, which has experienced a shift that has an impact on extinction, what are the factors that affect the destruction of the Buru regional language, and what are the first steps to prevent the extinction. This study applied a qualitative approach with phenomenology design to describe the phenomena that occur in connection with the shift in regional languages on the island of Buru. The results found that the language shift phenomenon and the threat of extinction of the Buru language in Buru district are increasing day by day due to the dominance of the Indonesian language and the development of information technology, and the lack of public and government awareness in preserving local languages as their identity.*

**Keywords:** *Buru language, conservation, Mulok*

**Abstrak**

*Penomena miris tentang pergeseran bahasa daerah Buru saat ini merupakan faktor yang sangat dominan mengancam punahnya identitas masyarakatnya. Dari jumlah penduduk kabupaten Buru sebanyak 132.100 jiwa, hanya sekitar 14.000 yang mengetahui bahasa Buru dan hanya sekitar 5.000 masyarakat yang mampu dan aktif berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Buru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tentang kondisi bahasa-bahasa daerah di Indonesia khususnya di pulau Buru yang mengalami pergeseran yang berdampak pada kepunahan, apa saja faktor yang mempengaruhi kepunahan bahasa daerah Buru, dan bagaimanakah langkah awal pencegahan kepunahan itu. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain phenomenology untuk mendiskripsikan fenomena yang terjadi berkaitan dengan pergeseran bahasa daerah di pulau Buru. disimpulkan bahwa penomena language shift dan ancaman kepunahan bahasa Buru di kabupaten Buru semakin hari semakin meningkat jumlahnya disebabkan oleh dominasi bahasa Indonesia dan perkembangan teknologi informasi, dan kurangnya kesadaran masyarakat dan pemerintah dalam melestarikan bahasa daerah sebagai identitas mereka.*

**Kata kunci:** *Bahasa Buru, konservasi, Mulok*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that is known as a country that has various ethnicities and cultures. This diversity also results in the existence of regional language variants that exist in multiple regions in Indonesia (Hamied, 2012; Hoon, 2013). It is what makes Indonesia more unique than other countries in the world as a pluralistic identity.

Language is the identity of a nation, as well as regional languages in Indonesia (Wibawa, 2007). Although, in fact, local languages are not the unifying language of the government, like Indonesian (Development, 2016). However, regional languages also play the same important role as Indonesian itself (Primadesi, 2012; Pontoh, 2013). For example, when we talk to people from other indigenous and non-indigenous tribes in Indonesia. To be able to speak well and harmoniously with them, we are required to master the local language they have so that the conversation will be easy to understand and there will be a sense of confidence when communicating with them and also the meaning of the conversation being discussed can be conveyed and understood well. This is following the definition of language itself as a meaningful sound system used for communication by community groups (Kridalaksana, 1985).

As a means of communication between community groups, of course, regional languages also have an essential role as the identity of a diverse community group (Sudarsana, 2017). This identity should be preserved and preserved for the nation to avoid misidentify or identity-shift between them and the personalities of other nations or groups.

Based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), there are 11 languages out of 71 regional languages that have been declared extinct. Most of the language extinctions occurred in Papua. The extinction was caused by a shift in language

and culture and modernization, especially with the rapid development of the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, which reduced the use of regional languages in everyday life and reduced the number of speakers of these languages. In addition, in *Ethnologue: the language of the world* (2005), it is stated that in Indonesia there are 742 languages, 737 of which are stated to be still exotic or still used by speakers. Meanwhile, two languages act as a mother tongue (mother tongue). Meanwhile, the other three languages have become extinct. Some of the extant languages are predicted to be on the verge of collapse or threatened with extinction due to the decline in speakers because only a handful of native speakers, but some are dominant. It cannot be denied that the influence of Indonesian as the national language in everyday life, especially those that are often used in officials (formal) activities such as in the government and education sector, frequently causes the frequency of use of regional languages to decrease. In addition, the condition of a multi-ethnic Indonesian society with a diversity of languages and cultures can result in a shift in local languages.

Multi-ethnic community conditions followed by inter-ethnic contact, including language contact, can lead to various linguistic phenomena, such as bilingualism or even multilingualism and interculturalism that often occur in minority language groups (Bin Tahir, 2016 & 2017). This language contact can also result in language shift, even extinction, namely changes in a person's language choice for daily communication, especially as a result of migration, acculturation, or language change, namely changes in language throughout a period (Kridalaksana, 1993).

The phenomenon that occurs as described above is a compelling reason to be studied by linguists because this phenomenon leads to a condition of language extinction because basically, the extinction of a language does not only have

an impact on the linguistic dimension but also has an effect on the cultural dimensions of the language-speaking community (Tondo, 2009; Sobarna, 2010). This is because through language, it is possible to know the people's perspective on something, and through language, it can also be seen as the rules, traditions, and beliefs of an ethnic group (Dixon, 1997).

The sad phenomenon regarding the current shift in the regional language of Buru is a very dominant factor threatening the extinction of the identity of its people (Bin-Tahir, 2016). Of the total population of Buru district of 132,100 people, only about 14,000 know the language of Buru, and only about 5,000 people are able and active to communicate using the Buru language (BPS-Buru, 2018). This is, of course, caused by various factors that must be investigated and observed to find the right solution to preserve and highlight regional cultural identities and assets.

This article attempts to examine the condition of regional languages in Indonesia, especially on the island of Buru, which has experienced a shift that has an impact on extinction, what are the factors that affect the disappearance of the Buru regional language, and what are the first steps to prevent the destruction. In addition, this article will also provide input to several related parties in the Buru Regency on how to deal with regional language extinction through the nationalization of the local language itself, both formally and non-formally and informally through policy and education regulations.

Based on the background of the problem that has been described in the introduction above, the problem formulation of this article can be formulated as follows:

1. What is the condition of the Buru language in the Buru Regency?
2. What are the factors that influence the shift in Buru language in Buru Regency?

3. What is the strategy for the conservation of Buru language from the threat of extinction?

## **METHOD**

This article employed a qualitative approach with phenomenology design to describe the phenomena that have occurred related to the shift in regional languages on the island of Buru. The object of study in this article is the people of Buru Island in the Namlea sub-district, totaling 21 informants who were observed and interviewed using a purposive technique with the criteria that the participants observed and interviewed were the original inhabitants of the island of Buru who knew and mastered the Buru language.

The instrument used in this article is an observation and interview guide to explore the phenomenon of regional language shift in Buru district, which consists of the domain of the use of the Buru language and the causes of the lack of use of the Buru language which can threaten the Buru language to extinction. The data collected were analyzed using a three-stage model consisting of data presentation, reduction, and verification or conclusion and presented descriptively.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A language is an abstract tool used to communicate between individuals and individuals, individuals with groups, or groups with groups within a society. Language according to its own meaning in Law No. 24 of 2009 that the language and the state symbol are a means of unifying, the identity and form of the nation's existence which is a symbol of the sovereignty and honor of the state as mandated in the 1945 constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Besides, the meaning of regional languages is emphasized in article 1, paragraph 5 of the Law. Law No. 24 of 2009 that local languages are the languages used from generation to generation by Indonesian

citizens in the regions and the territory of the Republic of Indonesia.

The language of Buru as the regional language and identity of the people of the island of Buru is currently only a symbol of regionalism and pride for its inhabitants. This is evidenced by the reduction in speakers of the Buru regional language, of which from a total population of 161,828, there are only 14,000 speakers of the Buru language (Jayanti et al., 2014). When observing and interviewing respondents, the researcher never heard that either the respondent or the respondent and the people around him used the local language Buru. This can result in the extinction of the local language itself.

Based on the results of observations on the condition of the Buru regional language by observing the user informants in daily social interactions, both at the home, environment, school/university, office, and several conditions, it can be described as follows:

Table 1: the Use of Buru Local Language Condition

No	Domain	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	The use of Buru language in the home	-	-	√
2	The use of Buru language in the social environment	-	-	√
3	The use of Buru language in the school/university	-	-	√
4	The use of Buru language in	-	-	√

	the office			
5	The use of Buru language in the family gathering	-	√	-
6	The use of Buru language in formal ceremonies	-	√	-

Source: Observation data analysis (2019)

The table above shows that the use of the Buru language by 21 informants shows that they have never used the Buru language in social interactions, both in the family environment, school/campus, office, except during family gatherings and formal occasions only. This shows the lack of use of the Buru language in daily communication, which can lead to its extinction.

The current condition shows that the regional language seems to be divided by its own speakers, causing a shift in the regional language of Buru to Malay-Ambonese language, which has an impact on its extinction. Based on the results of interviews with several respondents (ZW, ISO, TS, and KT) stated that they use Indonesian more often (both official and Ambonese Malay) compared to the existing regional languages due to technological advances through online media and soap operas that are broadcast on TV, that's what causes them to be more inclined to imitate and follow the language of soap operas in their daily interactions rather than using their own language. This phenomenon has led to the neglect of the use of regional languages for so long and the shift of the Buru regional language with other languages.

Some respondents (YR, SZ, RB, AA, and TS) stated that the shift in their regional languages was caused by the dominance of the use of the national language, namely Indonesian, both in schools, recitation

places, campuses, even their interest in public and political dialogue which aired on TvOne and MetroTV.

This is in accordance with the opinion of several experts who emphasize the factors that influence the shift in regional languages. This extinction was caused by several factors, namely:

1. Due to language interference that occurred in a very long time frame, it resulted in language shift and language extinction (Widianto, 2015).
2. Due to the political factors. The policy on the use of the national language, which was previously known as the politics of the national language, has more or less affected the marginalization of regional languages (Budiono, 2009).
3. Local languages are only used as the language of instruction in education as stated in Law No. 20, 2003, article 33 paragraph 2, namely that regional languages can be used as the language of instruction in the early stages of education if it is needed in the delivery of specific knowledge and skills.
4. Grimes (2000) suggests that the symptoms are a drastic decrease in the number of active speakers, the reduced use of language, neglect and elimination of mother tongue by young speakers, efforts to maintain ethnic identity without a mother tongue, speakers of the last generation are no longer proficient in using their mother tongue, meaning that there is remaining passive mastery (understanding without speaking), examples of the increasing extinction of the dialects of one creole language and code language.

5. Darwis (1985) states that the social environment is plural (ethnic). The task field is relatively unstable, and parents are of different ethnicities.

Several factors mentioned above, if a solution is not anticipated and immediately sought, it will have an impact on the continued extinction of the Buru language and have an impact on the extinction of one regional language in Indonesia. Therefore, the effort that must be made to overcome this problem is to conserve the Buru language through Mulok learning in schools, institutions, and universities. This effort is carried out by 1) in the field of education, it is necessary to add the Buru language as a Mulok subject in all schools in Buru district, starting from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, high school levels. In addition, it can also be added to general basic courses at universities on the island of Buru, namely Iqra Buru University. 2) the active role of parents in introducing regional languages in the family environment through early recognition of regional languages in the context of daily conversation. 3) speakers of regional languages must maintain their loyalty and identity towards their regional languages. 4) choose a productive social environment that is actively speaking the local language. 5) there needs to be a high level of public awareness of the importance of regional languages as an effort to preserve culture, and 6) there is a need for government policies in regulating and regulating the preservation of the Buru language in all sectors, especially in the fields of formal, non-formal and informal education.

Basically, this conservation effort does not guarantee that it can solve the problem accurately on the problem of the extinction of the regional language, but with the existence of conservation through this education, it can prevent its extinction, at least on an ongoing basis for this problem. So that the Buru language on the island of

Buru can continue to be preserved and more dominate the community's identity as a cultured and identified society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the number of language shift and the threat of extinction of the Buru language in Buru district is increasing day by day due to the dominance of the Indonesian language and the development of information technology, and the lack of public and government awareness in preserving local languages as their identity. The factors that have been described above can be used as reference materials that really need to be considered and solutions sought by the government and society because the local language is a cultural asset of the people of the island of Buru. With the conservation of the Buru language through Mulok learning in schools to overcome the extinction of the regional language and automatically, the local assets will be maintained and sustainable.

Therefore, several things can be recommended, namely that each individual in community must realize the importance of preserving regional languages as a cultural asset, encouraging young people to remain loyal and love regional languages, the active role of the government to socialize regional languages as a form of regional civilization identity, family as a container for points—the beginning of the preservation of local languages in the lives of family members. Besides, government support in formulating policies or regional regulations regarding the conservation and empowerment of the Buru language in the fields of formal and non-formal education as well as social society as a solution to the preservation of regional languages is very urgent to overcome the expansion and extinction of the Buru language.

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