



Vitality of Tae' Language in Palopo, South Sulawesi

Rusdiansyah¹, Eri Kurniawan², Fidia Ditazam Malik³
rusdiansyah@iainpalopo.ac.id

¹Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia

²Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

³Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study discusses the vitality of the Tae' language in Palopo city, South Sulawesi. Vitality of Tae' language can be seen both from its use as a language of daily communication, the number of speakers, documentation, government policies related to the language, and the inclusion of the language in the school curriculum. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method, in which interviews and observations were employed. The subjects interviewed were government officials in Palopo city, as well as the people of Palopo. Findings reveal that the vitality of the Tae language in Palopo is vulnerable to extinction. This is characterized by two main indicators: (i) very low use of Tae' language even in the family domain which affects low language transmission as well and (ii) the absence of governmental policies in preserving and maintaining Tae' language as the identity of the Palopo people and the Indonesian.

Keyword: *extinction, identity, Tae' language, vitality*

Introduction

The extinction of a language will result in the loss of cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge that cannot be restored. Language is an ethnic identity; people who lose their

language have lost their identity (Bernard: 1992). Furthermore, the extinction of a language will reduce diversity, which has been recognized as a form of national heritage since it represents the cultural diversity and local genius. In addition, Crystal (2003) reveals that the main reason for maintaining language diversity is because no language can represent all wisdom in the world. Every language has limitations in expressing all forms and degrees in all human nature. In other words, every extinct language brings the source of knowledge about human wisdom to its extinction.

Tae' is an Austronesian language of Sulawesi and the mother tongue for the community in Tana Luwu. Tae' is generally used in communicating in everyday life. The language is part of a language family consisting of 12 languages (dialects) used by people in the Tana Luwu region. It has a function as a symbol of the Luwu people's self-identity and as a means of expressions Tae' speaking community civilization (Garing, 2016: 40). There are about 250.000 Tae' speakers in Tana Luwu (SIL Ethnologue: 2009). However, most speakers reside in the Southern Luwu Regency (Belopa). In Belopa, Tae' is used in everyday conversation by the community (Nur Hidayah: 2017).

Research on the preservation of the Tae' language is still relatively rare in both academic and non-academic contexts. The limited prior research comprehensively addressing the Tae' language and the challenges to its sustainability underscores the necessity of this study. Focusing on the Tae' language, which is part of the Austronesian language family in the Tana Luwu region, significantly contributes to developing an understanding of local languages facing the risk of extinction. By analyzing the factors influencing the decline in the number of speakers and the use of the Tae' language in various contexts, this research is expected to provide deep and relevant insights to support efforts to preserve the Tae' language and other local languages facing similar challenges.

Tanah Luwu is a region which is an area of former Kedatuan (Kingdom) Luwu. This Luwu Kedatuan region spreads from Luwu regency, Luwu Timur, Luwu Utara, Palopo, Siwa, Kolaka, and Lasusua. Nowadays, Tana Luwu only consists of four regions; three of which are regencies namely Luwu, Luwu Utara, Luwu Timur, and one municipality namely Palopo city.

Palopo is one of the regions of Kedatuan Luwu or the Kingdom of Luwu, and it is where the Palace of Luwu kingdom is located. Kedatuan Luwu is deemed as the oldest Islamic kingdom in South Sulawesi, for it is thought to have existed since the seventh century based on the I Lagaligo script, an ancient Bugis literary work/sacred book in the form of a mythical epic. It is considered as the most extended literary work in the world that has been recognized by UNESCO.

Much like other local languages in Indonesia, Tae' has been on the verge of extinction. According to Sunendar, the Head of the Development and Language Development Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture, there would be a possibility of the immediate extinction of 139 ethnics/regional languages in Indonesia (The Jakarta Post, 2016). The

extinction of the regional language is due to the diminishing number of speakers who use the language.

The survival of the Tae' language is crucial for the people of Tana Luwu including Palopo city that can be seen from the vitality of Tae' language. It is used as a benchmark in determining whether Tae' is still safe, vulnerable, threatened or even on the brink of extinction. Identifying the status of the language, the community and the government can take preventative or revitalizing actions if the Tae' language is indicated to be vulnerable to extinction.

According to Rapang (Kompasiana.com, 2016), a literacy activist at the Sureq Institute in Palopo, Tae' is now dead close to being dead and is on the verge of extinction owing to its seldom use by the younger generation. Parents no longer teach the language to their children since the children have been indoctrinated to use more modern languages such as Indonesian. In addition, Indonesian has been pervasively used as a medium in providing information to the people of Palopo, such as on information boards, appealing banners, or billboards that can be found in various places in Palopo city. In everyday life, throughout the region, the dominant languages used are Indonesian and Bugis.

There have been several studies on the Tae' language; however, there has not yet been a specific study discussing the overall vitality of the Tae' language in the city of Palopo. The existing studies have only examined the morphosyntax of the Tae' language (Idawati et al., 2016), pragmatic analysis (Magfirah Thayyib, 2014), ethnographic analysis discussing the messages and functions of Tae' language expressions (Harisah, 2014), as well as prepositions and conjunctions in the Tae' language (Jusmianti Garing, 2016) and Rusdiansyah (2017) in his research on local languages and education; vitality of Tae' language in school.

The goal of this research is to shed light on the critical importance of preserving the Tae' language, an Austronesian language spoken in the Tana Luwu. By understanding the cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge embedded in Tae', as well as recognizing its role as a symbol of ethnic identity and local civilization, this study aims to advocate for the preservation and revitalization of Tae' to prevent its potential extinction. Moreover, by highlighting the factors contributing to the language's vulnerability, such as its diminishing number of speakers and limited use in educational settings, the research aims to inform relevant stakeholders and prompt strategic actions to ensure the survival and flourishing of the Tae' language within the community.

Methodology

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The subjects interviewed were government officials in Palopo city and the people of Palopo.

An analysis of language vitality uses a concept formulated by UNESCO (2003)

about nine classification factors to assess language vitality, namely intergenerational language transmission, the number of absolute speakers, the proportion of speakers with the total population, trends in the domain of language use, responsiveness to new domains and media, materials for language education and literacy, language policies by government and institutions including official status and use, the attitude of the public speaking to their language and the number and quality of language documentation.

Furthermore, these factors were then classified again using the state of the language based on the assessment of language survival according to UNESCO, namely; 1) safe, 2) vulnerable, 3) threatened, 4) very threatened, 5) almost extinct, and 6) extinct.

Discussion

Based on the formulation of the problem of the vitality of Tae' in Palopo city, the results reveal that Tae' is in a vulnerable to extinction zone. The following is an explanation of the results of research related to the vitality of Tae' language in Palopo city based on the nine-factor classification by UNESCO:

a. Intergenerational language transmission

Intergenerational language transmission examines the continuity or inheritance of languages from generation to generation. With this, the language can be preserved. Effective intergenerational language transmission occurs in communication done by parents to their children. Communication by parents to their children by using a local language is an effective way to pass on language to the next generation. As parents communicate with the local language to their children, their children will use the language; as a result, the language will always be used in the family environment.

Based on the results of a study of the use of language in the family environment in Palopo city towards Tae' language, it was found the results related to the transmission of language performed by parents to their children.

Table: Tae' Transmission from parents to children

No.	Language Use Activity	Indonesian	Tae' language	Mix (Indonesian + Tae' language)
1	when calling a child	95.83%	-	4.17%
2	when instructing a child	91.67%	-	8.33%
3	when angry with children	83.33%	4.17%	12.5%
4	when advising children	91.67%	-	8.33%

The data in the table above shows the communication activities carried out by parents to their children in the context of Tae' language transmission. From the data above, it can be seen that the use of language used by parents when communicating with their children is more dominant in using Indonesian, which is 90,63%. The percentage figure is a very large number related to the use of language in communicating with their children. So, it can be concluded that the process of transmitting Tae' language from parents to their children is very small. This will have an impact on the absence of Tae' language inheritance to the next generation of children.

The respondents said that they did not teach Tae' to their children because the language was rarely used to communicate in families, especially in children's play environments, and even in schools. The environment around their children is more dominated by using of Indonesian. If this continues to occur extensively, then there will be language switching.

b. *Number of absolute speakers*

The number of absolute speakers in Tae' is the total number of Tae' speakers. According to Lewis (SIL Ethnologue: 2009), there are about 250,000 speakers of Tae' in Tana Luwu, and mostly in the area of the southern part Luwu (Belopa). In addition to Luwu district, the area for the distribution of speakers in Tana Luwu is also spread in Palopo city, North Luwu district, and East Luwu district. Since 2009 until now, there are no statistics on Tae' speakers anymore. The city/regency government or the provincial government has not conducted the latest data collection related to native Tae' language speakers.

c. *The proportion of speakers with a total population*

Tae' is the language used in Tana Luwu which consists of one city namely Palopo and three districts, namely Luwu district, North Luwu district, and East Luwu district. This research is located in Palopo city as the center of the Luwu kingdom or kingdom. Of the four regions of the spread of Tae' speakers, Luwu district (Belopa) is the region with the most Tae' speakers. In other areas, especially Palopo city, the speakers of Tae' language shrink in number. The proportion of the speakers with a total population in Palopo city remains unknown. This is because there is no population data related to the number of Tae' speakers in the Palopo city government.

However, if it is related to the proportion of Tae' language usage in Palopo city based on questionnaire filling by Tae language speakers in the family and surrounding environment, then the proportion of Tae' language use in Palopo city is 4,93%. In addition, the community also uses a mixture of Tae' and Indonesian languages 8,30%, and the dominant language used by respondents is Indonesian as much as 86,77%.

d. *Trends in the domain of language use*

This research is located in Palopo city, so the tendency in the use of Tae' language is only seen from those in Palopo city. This is because there are different trends in the domain of Tae' language usage in Palopo city with those in Luwu (Belopa) as the dominant region of Tae' speakers.

The domain of Tae' language use in Palopo city based on the results of field observations is only found in the family domain. Even for the family domain, Indonesian is also often used in communicating in families. For other domains, such as neighborhood, market, education/school, etc., the use of language is dominated by Indonesian. There is still a small number of the speakers who use a mixture of Indonesian and Tae' in trading contexts around the neighborhood.

e. Responsiveness to the new domain and media

The use of Tae' in Palopo city is only used in the form of oral conversation. In connection with the existence of a new domain or media in Palopo city, the language used in the domain or media only uses Indonesian. For the media in Palopo city, both the print media such as newspapers/newspapers, magazines, or banners or billboards as information media and electronic media such as radio and television, Tae' is not found. Tae' language is only used occasionally or appears in billboards for candidates for mayor or for those who run for politics. Tae' language that appears on the billboard is just a short slogan.

f. Material for language education and literacy

Tae' language as a *Lingua Franca* in Tana Luwu is only used verbally. So far, teaching materials about Tae' language for education have not yet existed, so there is nothing used in education in Tana Luwu specifically in Palopo city. Educational books specifically discussing Tae' language is a rarity.

g. Language policy by the government and institutions including official status and its use

Tae' language in Tana Luwu does not receive special attention from the local government. This can be seen in the absence of policies made by the government for the use of Tae' in the scope of education at the primary and secondary levels as the language of instruction. The policies that have been made by the provincial government regarding the regional languages included in the school curriculum are only directed to the Bugis language. Bugis language has become one of the subjects included in the school curriculum in South Sulawesi, including in Palopo city.

h. The attitude of the people speaking to their language

The attitude of the community towards the language is one indicator of the survival or shifting of a language. In relation to the attitude towards Tae' language by the people of Palopo, the attitude is divided into two, namely positive attitude and negative attitude. This positive attitude that will make language can be preserved, while the negative attitude of society towards language will make the language towards a critical threshold or even extinct.

Based on the data on the language attitudes of the Palopo city people towards Tae' in the

table 4.4 above, it was found that the positive attitude of the community was 63.46% of Tae', while the negative attitude of the community was 13.07%. The remaining 23.47% of the people behaved normally in Tae' language. From these data it can be seen that the positive attitude of the community towards Tae' language is very high that supports Tae' language preservation and defense.

i. Number and quality of language documentation

In connection with Tae' language documentation, it can be said to be very minimal. The documentation is only in the form of studies that discuss little morphology and grammar, or Tae' language expressions that present local wisdom. However, the research was only published in certain journals. But the number is also just a few studies. In addition, there is no list of words or vocabulary in the form of dictionaries or books about the Tae language. Although Tae' language is not well documented, Tae' verbally is still used by some native speakers. However, related to language documentation, Obiero (2010) argues that some languages are not or lacking in documentation, but the language is still alive. On the contrary, there are also languages that are well documented but begin to lose speakers. The following is a table of Tae' language's vitality conditions based on ratings language vitality UNESCO (2003):

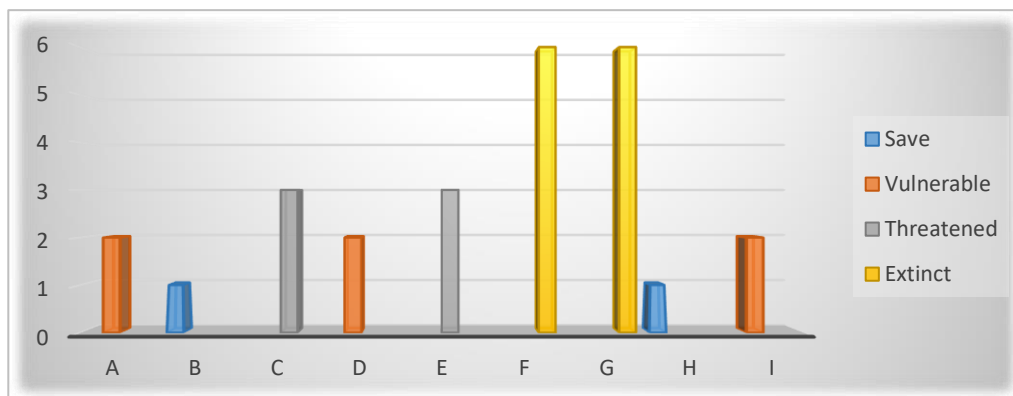
Table of Estimates of Tae' language Threat Level

No.	Factor	Indicator	Threat Condition / Level
1	Intergenerational language transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents rarely use Tae' language to children at home - Tae' transmission is not optimal. 	vulnerable
2	Number of absolute speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are ± 250,000 speakers (in 2009) scattered in Tana Luwu. - Speakers in the town of Palopo remain a small portion. - Dominant is in southern Luwu (Belopa). 	Secure
3	The proportion of speakers with a total population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proportion of Tae' language usage in Palopo city was 4.93% - The dominant language used by respondents is Indonesian as much as 86,77%. - The community also uses a mixture of Tae' and Indonesian language 8,30% 	Threatened

4	Trends in the domain of language use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tae' language is more widely used in the family domain, even though it is more dominated by Indonesian. 	vulnerable
5	Responsiveness to the new domain and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tae' language is not used in print or electronic media. - The use of language in religious ceremonies and activities, using a mixture of Tae', Indonesian, and Bugis languages. 	Threatened
6	Material for language education and literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no Tae' language teaching material in education. - The regional languages included in the curriculum are only Bugis languages. 	Extinct
7	Language policy by government and institutions including official status and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no policy regarding Tae' language usage. 	Extinct
8	The attitude of the people speaking to their language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are positive about Tae' language. 	Secure
9	Number and quality of language documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no documentation in the form of word lists or dictionaries. - The existing documents are only in the form of research journals related to Tae' grammar or morphology. 	vulnerable

From the table of estimation of the level of threat to the Tae' language above, the following diagram can also illustrate the vitality of Tae'.

Diagram: Threat Level of Tae' Language



- Explanation:
- A = Intergenerational language transmission
 - B = the number of absolute speakers
 - C = proportion of speakers with a total population
 - D = trends in the domain of language use
 - E = responsiveness to new domains and media
 - F = materials for language education and literacy
 - G = language policy by government and institutions, including official status and use
 - H = the attitude of the speakers to their language
 - I = number and quality of language documentation

Of the nine-factor categories, only two factors are classified as safe, while the others fall into the category of being vulnerable and threatened, some of them even fall into the category of extinction. Two factors that are classified as safe are factors related to the number of speakers and the positive attitude of the community towards Tae' language. However, as explained above, the number of speakers is not a guarantee of the survival of the language, if it is not balanced by the transmission of a strong language. Interestingly, the language attitude of the people of Palopo city which is positive towards Tae' language does not affect the use of community language in daily life. Despite their positive attitude towards Tae' language, the use of Tae' language among the society is minimal. Rahayu and Listiyorini (2009) revealed that language attitudes are directly related to the attitude of the speakers in choosing and defining language. Expectedly, the positive attitude of the people of Palopo city should have an impact on the use of Tae' language which is high and vice versa. As is true in Sundanese, where the language begins to be replaced in use by Indonesian and English (Indrayani. 2011). This shift occurs because the younger generation is negative in attitude towards Sundanese. The younger generation saw the option that Indonesian and English were socially and economically useful for them, so they were accustomed to using both languages and began to leave Sundanese. Language attitude emphasizes self-awareness in using the language as a communication tool. In addition, according to Li (2002), the negative attitude of students or the younger generation influences the transition of the language they use. This negative attitude arose when the school did not respect or underestimate the students' first language and culture,

so there was a rapid shift in students' language to the language used in the school. The results of the present research contradict Indrayani and Li's findings, namely, the use of Sundanese language was shifted by Indonesian because of the negative attitude of the young generation towards Sundanese. In the contexts of Tae' language, the people are positive in attitude to the language, but the use of Tae language is very low and replaced by Indonesian. Li's study, however, the students were negative in their view of their first language because the language was applied by the school, so their language quickly turned to the language used in school. This makes their first language begin to shift. Rusdiansyah (2018) in his research about the attitude of Buginese speaker in Bandung said that language attitude is very positive towards Buginese, but the facts in social life are different from the language attitude, because they are more dominant in using Indonesian than Buginese.

Then, it is related to other vitality factors in the vulnerable, threatened, and even extinct categories. Factors in the vulnerable zone are the transmission of intergenerational language, trends in the domain of language use, and the number and quality of language documentation. From the language usage data in the family environment, if it is associated with intergenerational language transmission, there is no good transmission of Tae' language usage. There has been a shift in the use of language, which is Tae' language as the everyday language of the people of Luwu, in this case, Palopo city, has been replaced by Indonesian. With the replacement of Tae' language as the everyday language of society, it also affected the shift of Luwu culture, because Tae' language was an identity and part of Luwu's culture. As expressed by Wickstro (2005) in '*Can Bilingualism Be Dynamically Stable?*', an important aspect of language or perhaps the most important is that it is one of the leading carriers of cultural identity. For members of certain language groups, the possibility of preserving their culture through the transmission of language to the next generation can be the most important. So that the condition of intergenerational transmission can guarantee the survival of language for generations.

Meanwhile, those in the dead zone are related to material for language education and literacy and language policy by the government and institutions including official status and use. One thing that is disheartening is Tae' language, being the identity of the Luwu community, in this case, Palopo city, does not get the attention it deserves from the government regarding in the form of a policy of using the language or about Tae' language material in education. What is more, no documentation in the form of Tae' language vocabulary is available. Thus, in general the vitality of Tae' language in Palopo city can be said to be vulnerable to extinction.

From the explanation above which is related to the vitality of the Tae' language shows the condition of the Tae' language which is on the verge of language shift. This of course also influences the life force of Tae' language which is vulnerable or the vitality of Tae' language is very low. Tae' vulnerability echoes Ewing's (2014) project on '*Language Endangerment in Indonesia*' which reveals that there are two most important symptoms of language shift and language vitality, namely, first is the quantity and quality of the domain or domain where the language is used and transmitted and the second, equally important, is the loss of the transmission process from one generation to the next.

Both symptoms have also occurred in Tae'. The dominance of the Indonesian language towards Tae' in the people of Palopo city has caused the Tae' language transmission process to be very low. If this continues, the Luwu community, in this case, Palopo city will lose one of its cultural identities, Tae' language. As Bernard (1992) stated in '*Preserving Language Diversity*', the dead of a language produces a loss of irreversible cultural, historical, and ecological knowledge.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, as measured by nine factors in assessing language according to UNESCO, it can be concluded that vitality of Tae' language of the people in Palopo city is vulnerable to extinction. This is because of the nine factors only two factors are at a safe level. Other factors that influence the survival of language are at the level of being vulnerable, threatened, and even some that are categorized as extinct. The most influential factor is the use of language in the domain closest to the use of Tae' language, namely the family and language transmission factors. Both factors fall into the category of vulnerable. This happens because the family domain has been dominated by Indonesian so that the process of intergenerational language transmission of Tae' speakers has been ineffective. With no such transmission, the next generation of Tae' speakers will cease to exist in the future. In addition, the absence of government policy in the defense of Tae' language for documenting languages such as the making of dictionaries or Tae' language books, or the use and learning of Tae' language in the school environment can have serious consequences which will cause Tae' language to be on the verge of extinction.

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