



Application of a Communicative Approach in Teaching Regional Languages: Impact on the Maintenance and Development of Regional Languages in Tasikmalaya City

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Abstract

This research explores the teaching of regional languages using a communicative approach. Language instruction encompasses various aspects, including the nature and function of teaching materials, learning objectives, the selection and development of teaching aids, the creation of learning experiences, instructional media and resources, and evaluation models. The communicative approach in teaching regional languages emphasizes the importance of language as a tool for communication with diverse variations. The primary goal of language instruction is to cultivate proficient communication skills tailored to students' needs in real-life interactions. To achieve this objective, it is crucial to employ authentic discourse materials that enable students to engage in meaningful communicative situations, use language in relevant contexts, and explore various language varieties. Students' learning experiences should also be supported by suitable media and learning resources, including the use of teaching materials that allow students to interact directly with the language being learned. Learning assessments should encourage students to actively practice language skills and stimulate continuous communicative performance. The implementation of the communicative approach in teaching regional languages will lead to an understanding of language as a system for conveying messages with communicative functions. This approach promotes the use of diverse regional language varieties and shifts the focus from language form and structure. As a result, an environment for the use of regional languages can be established or preserved, even as a replacement for the diminishing use of regional languages within families undergoing changes. Thus, the communicative approach in teaching regional languages holds the potential to strengthen and preserve regional languages in the context of cultural diversity.

Keywords: Regional Language Teaching, Communicative Approach, Cultural Diversity

1. Introduction

In complex societies, we often witness two possible outcomes when two or more languages coexist in their usage. First, these languages can coexist harmoniously, maintaining equality and enriching cultural diversity. Second, one language tends to become dominant, becoming the majority language with high prestige, while other languages face the opposite situation, even facing the threat of extinction. In Indonesia, the second possibility often becomes a reality in the context of the coexistence of Indonesian and various regional languages (Soderberg, 2008; Gumilar, 2016; Sudaryanto et al., 2019).

Concern for the extinction of regional languages has been a serious issue for many parties. In response to this problem, UNESCO declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day at a conference in November 1999 and has celebrated it since 2000 (Turayeva 2022). This effort aims to appreciate and promote mother languages worldwide, especially those threatened with extinction. Language serves as a window into the culture of a society. As time progresses, we often witness two possible outcomes when two or more languages coexist within a region. First, both languages coexist in balance, have equality, and enrich the existing culture. Second, one language becomes more dominant, the majority language, and achieves high prestige, while the other language(s) feel threatened with extinction. Unfortunately, the second possibility is the reality in Indonesia concerning the coexistence of Indonesian and regional languages in many regions.

The extinction of languages has fundamental and concerning reasons. Language and culture have a very close and inseparable relationship. Language is the carrier of culture, and most elements of culture are expressed through language, not through other means. When we talk about language, we talk more about the culture contained in it. We will discuss efforts to slow the extinction of regional languages in Indonesia, especially in the Tasikmalaya City area,

through a communicative teaching approach. In this discussion will explore the language environment and its influence on language proficiency, examine the current use of regional languages in the City of Tasikmalaya, and explore various options for preserving regional languages. We will also investigate whether a communicative approach can be an effective solution for maintaining regional languages in this region.

The importance of preserving regional languages becomes increasingly clear in this context. Language is the window that allows us to understand, appreciate, and inherit diverse cultural riches. Therefore, efforts to save regional languages are not only about preserving the language itself but also about preserving the invaluable cultural identity. In this paper, we will delve deeper into the conditions of regional languages in Indonesia, examine ways to save them, and consider whether a communicative teaching approach can be an effective solution in preserving regional languages (Smeets, 2004; Sporleder, 2010; He, 2010). As part of cultural preservation efforts, this paper is also expected to serve as a reference for those who care about preserving local languages and cultures in formal education and teaching worldwide.

2. Theories and Concepts

In the effort to anticipate the extinction of regional languages in Indonesia, especially in the Tasikmalaya City region, several important steps can be taken. These steps are based on the concept of preserving regional languages and teaching them through a communicative approach.

2.1. Concept of Preserving Regional Languages

It is important to recognize that regional languages hold significant cultural value. Although Indonesian is used as the medium of instruction in schools, regional languages are also an integral part of Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage (Siregar, 2022). Therefore, efforts to preserve regional languages are needed as valuable cultural assets from various regions of Indonesia.

For example, at SMAN 1 Kota Tasikmalaya, there are subjects like Regional Languages that cover the Pekal and Javanese languages. The existence of these subjects is based on the dominance of the local population, which consists mostly of Pekal and Javanese transmigrants. However, there has been a slow shift towards the use of the Indonesian language in daily communication in the area. This condition threatens the extinction of the Pekal regional language in the region. Therefore, the school has taken the right steps in promoting and cultivating the regional languages present in Kota Tasikmalaya.

2.2. Teaching Regional Languages through a Communicative Approach

Current instruction of regional languages, both at high schools and universities, adopts a communicative approach. This approach aims to produce students or learners who have good communicative competence. Communicative competence, as described by Dell Hymes, includes a natural mastery of language that allows an individual to use and understand language effectively in social communication contexts. Teaching regional languages based on a communicative approach enables students or learners to develop the ability to use regional languages in everyday situations and within the context of language use. This is crucial for keeping regional languages relevant and preserving their sustainability. In this context, regional languages can be used as the medium of instruction in regional language subjects, while Indonesian is still held in high regard as the national language (Gumilar, 2016; Rashid et al., 2017).

The use of regional languages should be contextually appropriate. When students need to communicate in formal situations, using Indonesian may be more appropriate. However, to preserve regional languages, students should also use them in everyday conversations. This involves understanding when to code-switch, when to code-mix, with whom they are communicating, and how the environmental context also influences the use of regional languages. All of these efforts aim to maintain regional languages as an essential part of Indonesian culture. The communicative approach, as described by Dell Hymes, emphasizes the importance of contextually appropriate communication. This means that the use of regional languages should align with the situation and communication context. With this approach, students are expected to become effective communicators in using regional languages based on the education they receive in school.

3. Methodology

In the process of preserving regional languages through a communicative approach, this paper employs various relevant methods and approaches.

3.1. Methods

The method used in teaching regional languages through the communicative approach is the Quantum Learning method. This method is designed to capture students' attention, making learning engaging, and activate students through activities that involve the use of regional languages in speaking.

3.2. Approach

The approach employed in this paper is the communicative approach. This approach aims to preserve regional languages through instruction provided to students, starting from elementary school to high school. The goal of this approach is to prevent the extinction of regional languages, considering that regional languages are an essential part of cultural heritage that must be safeguarded.

3.3. Data Sources

The data used in this paper are derived from various sources, including readings and studies, reference materials, as well as direct observations related to the extinction of regional languages. This data will be focused on the languages in the Tasikmalaya City region, which is the area of focus for preserving regional languages through the communicative approach.

4. Results And Discussion

4.1. The Influence of Language Environment on the Proficiency of Regional Languages in Kota Tasikmalaya

In this section, we will discuss the language environment and its influence on language proficiency, which will help us understand the condition of regional languages in Kota Tasikmalaya. The language environment can be divided into two types: natural (informal) language environment and non-natural (formal) language environment. The informal language environment is primarily found outside the classroom, where language is used for daily communication. On the other hand, the formal language environment is mainly within the classroom, especially in language classes, where language is taught with formal rules.

These two types of language environments have different influences on children's language proficiency. There are two hypotheses that can explain this influence: the non-interface hypothesis and the interface hypothesis.

- 1) The non-interface hypothesis supports the idea that children acquire language through both formal and informal language environments. Language acquisition plays a primary role in a child's ability to produce discourse, while formal learning serves as a monitor. This monitor helps improve the accuracy of the language produced. This also means that direct grammar learning does not enhance language proficiency, and the influence of the informal language environment is more crucial in communication development.
- 2) The interface hypothesis argues that explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge are not entirely separate. Explicit linguistic knowledge can transform into implicit linguistic knowledge and vice versa. Both language environments, both formal and informal, play crucial roles in enhancing children's language proficiency.

In the context of preserving regional languages, it is essential to consider the influence of the informal language environment, where regional languages are used in daily communication. Introduction and understanding of regional languages through this environment can play a significant role in maintaining the sustainability of regional languages in Kota Tasikmalaya.

4.2. Language Use in Indonesia Today and Challenges of Language Shift in Regional Languages

Language use in Indonesia today includes three main languages: foreign languages (especially English), Indonesian, and regional languages. English is generally known through formal and non-formal educational institutions, ranging from kindergarten to high school levels. This language is used for various purposes, including education and the tourism sector in tourist destinations. Indonesian, as the official and national language, is used in all provinces of Indonesia (Liando and Tatipang, 2022; Marlina 2013). The functions of Indonesian include its use as the official language of the state, a means of communication in national relations, the medium of instruction in educational institutions, and a tool for cultural development and the dissemination of modern science and technology.

Meanwhile, regional languages serve several functions, including intra-ethnic communication, a means to show familiarity, and a means to demonstrate regional identity and pride. Ideally, regional languages are used within the family, among neighbors, in friendly gatherings, in customary settings, and in religious contexts. However, in reality, the use of regional languages has been contaminated by elements of the Indonesian language and has undergone a shift. Some examples of this shift are:

1. In family settings, many families in urban and rural areas prefer to use Indonesian in their daily communication with their children, even if they come from different economic and educational backgrounds.

2. In customary settings, some respondents admitted to no longer using regional languages purely in traditional ceremonies.
3. In religious contexts, some acknowledge the use of regional languages that are not pure, although observations show that discourse in religious contexts tends to be free from Indonesian language elements.

The phenomenon of language shift also occurs in other regional languages in Indonesia, such as Javanese and Lampungese. The use of Indonesian as a daily language is expanding among the population, while regional languages are being abandoned. Such language shifts pose a serious challenge to the preservation of regional languages. Efforts to preserve regional languages need to consider the factors driving language shift and design appropriate strategies to maintain the continuity of regional languages as an essential part of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

4.3. Teaching Regional Languages with a Communicative Approach

Teaching regional languages with a communicative approach prioritizes students' communicative abilities in using regional languages in everyday contexts. This approach is based on principles that involve various aspects, from understanding that language is a communication tool with many variations to teaching goals that emphasize the development of reliable communicative performance according to students' needs. In practice, this approach requires the use of teaching materials in the form of authentic discourse that provides students with experiences involved in meaningful communicative situations, using language in current contexts, and allowing them to utilize various language varieties.

The communicative approach also emphasizes the importance of using media and learning resources that support students' direct involvement in language learning, in line with their language demands, and varying in form and variety. Evaluation in teaching regional languages with this approach includes direct measurement of students' language proficiency, encouraging them to practice both orally and in writing, and continuously stimulating their communicative actualization in regional languages.

The application of the communicative approach is expected to change perceptions of regional languages, considering them as systems for conveying messages with communicative functions. Thus, various regional language variations will be respected in teaching, while the teaching orientation will emphasize communication function rather than just language form and structure. As a result, the teaching of regional languages will lead to students' ownership of communicative performance, based on their understanding of communicative competence.

Furthermore, the use of teaching materials in the form of authentic discourse that supports communicative performance will be accompanied by the selection of teaching media appropriate to the context of the regional language being taught. In evaluating learning, direct measurement of students' regional language proficiency will encourage them to continue practicing and actualizing their communicative abilities in the regional language. Ultimately, if regional languages are taught with a communicative approach, it is expected to create a new environment for the use of regional languages, which can complement or even replace the use of regional languages within families that are undergoing language shift. Thus, the communicative approach in teaching regional languages has the potential to strengthen and preserve regional languages in the context of cultural diversity.

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