

THE ROLE OF ACEH GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTING THE USE OF ACEHNESE AS A REGIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>Bahasa Aceh is a local language which has a unique history and characteristics that set it apart from other local languages in Indonesia. However, the everyday use of Acehnese language is increasingly influenced by Indonesian and other foreign languages. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the role of the Aceh government in preserving and promoting Acehnese as a valuable regional language. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method by collecting data through surveys, interviews, document studies, and participatory observations with government officials, cultural experts, and the public who use Acehnese language in their daily lives. The data was analysed by summarizing the survey results, interviews, document studies, and observations. The research findings indicate that the Aceh government has played a positive role in preserving and promoting Acehnese language by establishing regulations and rules in the Aceh province, providing Acehnese language training to the community to enhance their understanding and proficiency in Acehnese, and developing Acehnese culture using Acehnese language in arts and cultural activities.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>the use of local language, Aceh government, Acehnese language</i></p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 03/03/2024</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 05/03/2024</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 06/03/2024</p>

INTRODUCTION

Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia that is rich in diverse regional languages. According to (Wildan, 2010), there are at least nine regional languages found in the province of Aceh. Acehnese, as a regional language, plays a significant role in preserving the cultural identity and local wisdom of Aceh. The Acehnese language is used by the Acehnese community in the province of Aceh and has a long and unique history. This language has evolved since the era of the Aceh Sultanate in the 13th to the 19th century. The influence of the Arabic language is also strong in Acehnese because Aceh was one of the centers of Islamic culture

in the Nusantara during that period. Although the Acehese language has been used by the Acehese community for a long time, in recent years, its usage has been eroded by the influence of Indonesian and other foreign languages. This is due to various factors such as globalization, modernization, and the influence of mass media. In this context, it is important to preserve the sustainability of the Acehese language as a valuable and proud regional language. The Acehese language is not only a means of communication between individuals but also a means to preserve the cultural identity and history of the Acehese community. Many young generations in Aceh no longer use the Acehese language properly, putting the Acehese language at risk of extinction.

The importance of using regional languages in the context of development and preservation of local culture includes Preserving local culture: Regional languages are integral to local culture, carrying unique histories and traditions. The use of regional languages helps preserve the cultural identity and traditions of local communities. By utilizing regional languages, communities can strengthen their pride in their own culture and raise awareness about the significance of preserving local heritage. Enhancing social solidarity: Regional languages often serve as the language used within smaller social environments such as families, communities, and villages. The use of regional languages strengthens relationships among community members and fosters a sense of togetherness. Moreover, employing regional languages helps older individuals and those who are less proficient in Indonesian or foreign languages to actively participate in social and political aspects of their communities. Safeguarding language diversity: Indonesia possesses a rich and unique linguistic diversity. By using regional languages, communities can safeguard language diversity and prevent the loss of distinct regional languages. This is crucial in the context of preserving Indonesia's cultural diversity. Enriching vocabulary and expressions: Each language possesses its own vocabulary and expressions. The use of regional languages enriches the vocabulary and expressions utilized in daily life. This helps broaden the understanding and communication abilities of communities, addressing both practical and cultural needs.

Given the reasons for the importance of using regional languages, particularly in the context of Aceh, this research will focus on the role of the Aceh government in promoting the use of Acehese as a regional language. This research is crucial, considering the need to preserve Aceh's rich and unique cultural heritage. The Aceh government should play a significant role in preserving the Acehese language and promoting its usage in social, educational, and cultural settings. Therefore, this research is deemed essential to provide contributions and insights that can facilitate the comprehensive implementation of Acehese language usage.

Some of the theoretical foundations that can be used in this research regarding the role of the Aceh government in the use of Acehese as a regional language are as follows: First, Law No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, Coat of Arms, and National Anthem. This law contains articles related to the use of regional languages as official languages in the region and the use of Indonesian as the national language (Prameswari, 2017). Therefore, the role of the Aceh government in implementing this law is crucial in promoting and preserving the use of Acehese as a regional language. Another theory is the

Language Preservation Theory (Muin & Sulfasyah, 2018). This theory states that the use of regional languages as official languages and as the medium of instruction in educational settings can contribute to language preservation. Hence, the Aceh government needs to play a significant role in promoting the use of Acehnese in the education curriculum and mass media. Furthermore, the Cultural Identity Theory (Verulitasari & Cahyono, 2016) asserts that the use of regional languages can strengthen the cultural identity of local communities. Therefore, the role of the Aceh government in preserving and promoting the use of Acehnese can help reinforce the sense of pride among the Acehnese community in their culture. By utilizing these theoretical foundations, the research can delve into the specific role of the Aceh government in promoting and preserving the use of Acehnese as a regional language, taking into account legal frameworks, language preservation strategies, and the cultural significance of language use. Lastly, the Intercultural Communication Theory (Liliweri, 2019) is another relevant theory. This theory states that language is a crucial means of intercultural communication. The use of regional languages can help broaden understanding and enhance inter-individual and intercultural communication skills. Therefore, the role of the Aceh government in promoting the use of Acehnese can contribute to improving the communication abilities of the Acehnese community. With this theoretical foundation, research on the role of the Aceh government in the use of Acehnese as a regional language can provide a clearer understanding of the importance of preserving and promoting Acehnese as part of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research conducted by (Dhani & Abdullah, 2017) discusses the role of the Aceh Heritage Conservation Center (Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya or BPCB) in preserving historical sites in Banda Aceh from 1990 to 2015. The aim of this research is to uncover the role, policies, developments, and challenges faced by the BPCB Aceh in preserving historical sites in Banda Aceh. The data analysis reveals that since its establishment in 1990, the BPCB Aceh has been actively involved in the preservation efforts of historical sites in Banda Aceh. However, the development of preserving these historical sites faces several challenges, such as the lack of experts, supporting facilities, and funding, as well as the impact of conflicts and the tsunami that have destroyed some of the historical sites in Banda Aceh. The BPCB Aceh is responsible for the management of ten designated cultural heritage sites in Banda Aceh and assigns caretakers to maintain and preserve their integrity.

(Razali & Ibrahim, 2017) conducted a study on "The Learning of Acehnese Language in Junior High Schools in Banda Aceh" with the aim to describe the implementation of Acehnese language learning in junior high schools in Banda Aceh. The research findings indicate that Acehnese language learning is progressing well, but there are still several challenges in its implementation. The main obstacles are related to the Acehnese language teachers themselves. The Acehnese language teachers have limited knowledge in the field of Acehnese language as they are not specifically trained as Acehnese language teachers. Moreover, these teachers have not received proper education or training on Acehnese language

teaching. Furthermore, there is a lack of resources and learning facilities for Acehese language learning. Additionally, the schools also lack support in providing Acehese language reading materials for both teachers and students.

In the study conducted by (Komalasaki & Rusdiana, 2017), various efforts to preserve regional languages and the benefits derived from these efforts are discussed, the different conditions in various regions. This issue is related to the inheritance of cultural values within communities. If there is no cultural heritage that can be passed down to the community, especially if the language is extinct or near extinction, the community will lose its cultural roots. Language preservation efforts are important for maintaining the continuity and cultural richness of communities from various regions. Language maintenance and shift can be likened to two sides of a different coin. Language maintenance occurs when a community collectively agrees to continue using the language they have used previously, despite pressures to shift to another language. Both aspects coexist within the same situation. Language preservation can be achieved through education, which plays a crucial role in preparing future generations. Language preservation within the context of education can be carried out through both formal and informal strategies. In the study conducted by (Rabiah, 2018), the lack of proficiency in the regional language among parents is discussed, which leads to future generations losing their regional identity. To revitalize the regional language, concrete efforts are needed to ensure that future generations maintain their regional identity through proficiency in the regional language. (Sahril, 2018) depicts the situation of language shift among children in the Kuala Tanjung area. This research also examines whether the attitudes and roles of parents influence the use of the regional language. The research findings indicate a language shift among children in Kuala Tanjung based on the analysis of questionnaire data. The use of language within the family and in both formal and informal school settings show a dominance of the Indonesian language. Furthermore, several discussions have been paid regarding the use of regional language (Siregar, 2022) (Widianto, 2018) (Putri, 2018) (Ulfa, 2019) (Munawaroh et al., 2022) (Bhakti, 2020) (Fitrawahyudi & Kasmawati, 2019) (Puspitasari & Devi, 2019) (Chaesar, 2021) (Delmon, 2021) (Mulyawan, 2021) (Andriyanti, 2019) (Menggo & Suastra, 2020) (Dimova et al., 2020).

Based on the literature review described, it can be concluded that no detailed research has been found on the role of regional governments in the use of Acehese as a regional language. Therefore, this research will comprehensively investigate the topic in accordance with the formulated research questions. These literature studies provide valuable insights into the language policies and initiatives implemented by the Aceh government regarding the use of Acehese as a regional language. They explore various aspects such as language planning, multilingual education, and language promotion strategies specific to Aceh. These studies contribute to understanding the role of the Aceh government and its impact on the preservation and promotion of Acehese language use in different contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. Qualitative research is a type of study that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words obtained from individuals and observable behaviors (Maleong, 2012) (Setyawan, 2017). (Sudaryanto, 1993) presents three methods or strategic approaches in language handling, namely 1) data collection method, 2) data analysis method, and 3) data analysis results presentation method. The clarity and completeness of the data obtained in the initial stage of the research will affect the subsequent stages.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through several methods including: (a) Survey Method. This method is used to gather data on the usage of the Acehese language in Acehese society. Surveys are conducted using a questionnaire distributed to randomly selected respondents. The questionnaire contains questions about the daily usage of the Acehese language and the respondents' opinions on the importance of using the Acehese language. Furthermore, (b) Interview Method is used. This method is used to obtain more detailed information about the views of Acehese society regarding the usage of the Acehese language and the government's role in preserving the Acehese language. Interviews are conducted with Acehese people from various backgrounds, such as educators, community leaders, cultural figures, and others. To supplement the information, (c) Document Study Method is also used. This method is used to analyze the policies and government programs in Aceh related to the usage of the Acehese language as a regional language. The documents analyzed include regional regulations, government work programs, education policies, and others. Lastly, (d) Observation Method is employed. This method is used to observe the usage of the Acehese language in the daily lives of Acehese people. Observations can be conducted in various places such as markets, schools, places of worship, and so on.

Data Analysis Method

The collected data then analyzed through a process of summarizing the interview results, surveys, document studies, and observations, and then connected with relevant theories related to the usage of regional languages. The final stage of this research is the presentation of the analyzed data. In this study, the results of the data analysis will be presented informally using everyday language (Sudaryanto, 1993).

FINDINGS

The research findings indicate that the majority of respondents (80%) use the Acehese language in their daily lives. However, only a small percentage of respondents are proficient in reading and writing Acehese (25%). The respondents also expressed that the Acehese language holds significant value in preserving the cultural identity of Aceh (90%). The government of Aceh is perceived as not fully active in promoting and preserving the Acehese language. More than half of the respondents (60%) stated that the Aceh government should be more proactive in promoting the usage of Acehese as a regional language.

However, the majority of respondents (70%) agreed that the Aceh government has made some efforts to preserve the Acehese language, such as organizing Acehese language courses, cultural events showcasing Acehese language, and including Acehese as a subject in schools.

The discussion arising from the research findings emphasizes the importance of the government's role in promoting and preserving regional languages as part of the cultural heritage of a region. The government of Aceh can enhance their efforts in promoting the Acehese language by implementing more structured programs and involving various stakeholders, such as Acehese cultural communities and educational institutions. Additionally, the government of Aceh needs to pay attention to the quality of Acehese language education in schools. Serious efforts are required to improve students' abilities in reading and writing Acehese, so that Acehese can be used as the medium of instruction in education in Aceh.

In conclusion, the role of the Aceh government in preserving the Acehese language as a regional language is crucial. More serious and structured efforts from the Aceh government are needed to promote the usage of Acehese in daily life and enhance the quality of Acehese language education in Aceh. This will contribute to preserving the Acehese language as part of Aceh's cultural heritage and strengthening the cultural identity of Aceh in the future.

Some other findings related to the document study that the researcher has analyzed regarding the role of the Aceh government in preserving and promoting the Acehese language include:

Establishment of Rules and Regulations

The Aceh government has formulated rules and regulations concerning the usage of the Acehese language as a regional language. For instance, in Aceh, every official document must be written primarily in Acehese, including decision letters, regional regulations (qanun), and other official documents. The Aceh government has also mandated the inclusion of Acehese as a subject in schools across different levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions.

Acehnese Language Training

The Aceh government has been actively organizing various Acehese language activities for the public, including those from outside the Aceh region. These training programs aim to enhance understanding and proficiency in the Acehese language among the community. Not only that, government officials and public servants who directly interact with the public, such as police officers, healthcare workers, and teachers, also receive Acehese language training. The goal of these training sessions is to bridge the gap and improve communication skills in the regional language for students from outside Aceh. It is expected that with the ability to speak Acehese, there will be a culture of mutual respect and appreciation for Acehese local heritage, as the regional language is a part of ancestral heritage. Moreover, it will facilitate integration and communication with the local community.

Development of Acehese Culture through the Acehese Language

The Acehese language is an integral part of Acehese culture. Its usage not only serves as a means of daily communication but also as a medium to convey Acehese cultural

values and traditions from one generation to another. The Aceh government also endeavors to develop Acehese culture through the Acehese language. For instance, the government organizes arts and cultural activities that utilize the Acehese language as the medium of communication. Additionally, the Aceh government develops various promotional media that employ the Acehese language, such as posters, brochures, and videos. The government also promotes the use of the Acehese language in various cultural events, including art and literary performances, as well as cultural festivals. Furthermore, the Aceh government provides support to community organizations working to preserve the Acehese language and overall Acehese culture.

By actively promoting and supporting the use of the Acehese language in cultural activities and through various media, the Aceh government aims to preserve, revitalize, and promote Acehese culture. These efforts contribute to the recognition and appreciation of Acehese cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and identity among the Acehese community. The government's support for community organizations also strengthens collaboration and collective action in preserving and promoting the Acehese language and culture.

The use of Acehese language among community leaders

The Acehese language is also used in daily communication with family, friends, and colleagues. It is employed in various media outlets such as radio, television, and local newspapers in Aceh. The Acehese language has become an integral part of the identity and culture of the Acehese community. Therefore, many prominent figures in Acehese society use the Acehese language in different situations and occasions. Some cultural figures and intellectuals from Aceh also utilize the Acehese language in their literary works, such as poetry and prose. On several occasions, one notable figure who frequently employs the Acehese language is the Governor of Aceh. The Governor of Aceh often delivers speeches and participates in official meetings using the Acehese language as a sign of respect for Acehese culture and traditions.

DISCUSSION

The research findings underscore the dual nature of Acehese language usage among respondents – widely spoken in daily life (80%), yet lacking proficiency in reading and writing (25%). The cultural importance of the Acehese language is affirmed by 90% of respondents, emphasizing its role in preserving Aceh's identity. However, a perceived lack of government proactiveness prompts 60% of respondents to advocate for more active promotion. The ensuing discussion highlights the pivotal role of the Aceh government in safeguarding regional languages, urging more structured efforts and collaboration with stakeholders. Emphasis is placed on improving Acehese language education quality, fostering its use as a medium of instruction. Additional findings from document analysis reveal key governmental initiatives: 1. Establishment of Rules and Regulations. The Aceh government mandates Acehese in official documents, decision letters, and regional regulations, reinforcing legislative support. 2. Acehese Language Training; Active organization of training programs for public servants and outsiders aims to bridge communication gaps and foster mutual respect

for Acehese heritage. 3. Development of Acehese Culture through Language; The Aceh government integrates Acehese into cultural activities, media, and support for community organizations, fostering cultural appreciation and identity. In conclusion, while the Aceh government has made strides in preserving the Acehese language, intensified efforts are needed. Enhancing language proficiency, promoting cultural appreciation, and fostering collaboration with the community will collectively contribute to Acehese language preservation and the enduring cultural identity of Aceh.

CONCLUSION

The Aceh government has played a crucial role in advancing and preserving the Acehese language as a regional language. This has been achieved through various initiatives, such as providing access to education, training, and Acehese language resources to the community. The government has organized campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the importance of the language and ensuring its protection for future generations. They also encourage businesses and organizations to use Acehese as an official language, creating an environment where people feel comfortable speaking it in their daily lives, benefiting both residents and visitors. The government has implemented policies to ensure that the language is widely used and serves as a means of communication. This includes providing resources such as books, audio-visual materials, and workshops for teachers and students to learn how to use the language correctly. They also encourage local businesses to use Acehese in advertising and other forms of media. Through these efforts, the Aceh government helps ensure that the Acehese remains a part of their culture for future generations. Additionally, the government provides grants to organizations that support and promote the use of the language. These measures have allowed more people to learn, understand, and appreciate their native language better. The government also provides online resources for language learners. Acehese is predominantly used in the Aceh region and in various traditional and religious ceremonies, daily communication, as well as in media such as radio, television, and local newspapers. Acehese is also used by Acehese people who migrate to different regions in Indonesia and abroad, as well as in interactions with people from outside Aceh who are interested in Acehese culture.

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