

Needs Assessment for Buru Language Training

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Abstract

One of the indigenous communities on Buru Island, Maluku, East Indonesia, that uses the Buru language as its native language of communication is now extinct. The Buru language, which is part of the Austronesian language, is spoken by approximately 45,000 people on the island of Buru, with a current population of 136,757. At least, there are some factors that cause the Buru language to decline: *First*, the language's vital entity has declined and is in critical extinction. *Second*, the conversation that takes place in the family is not entirely in the Buru language but in Indonesian. *Finally*, there are limited human resources. The way to respond to this is to implement Buru language training. This training activity will begin with an analysis of training needs. The aim is to identify gaps in the use of the Buru language as well as the competencies needed to improve its usage. Therefore, this study will use the Delphi method in the analysis phase of training needs. In its implementation, Indigenous Buru leaders, Buru language teachers, and the Buru cultural community were used as samples to ask their opinions by answering questionnaires. The results show that there is the need for a training program to preserve the Buru language, which should focus on improving the language proficiency of the Buru people and can be carried out online. The program should emphasize the practical use of the language in everyday life, creative learning methods, and specialized language teachers.

Keywords: Training Needs Assessment, Buru Language, Indigenous Community

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Introduction

The education of indigenous peoples can be described as an educational process that is based on the existence of local wisdom or customary knowledge in the respective distribution of indigenous territories. The uniqueness and peculiarity of the existence of those activities are able to sustain the existence of indigenous society. Garcia-Olp et al. (2022) believes that education for indigenous communities is the center of cultural preservation and the development of skills and expertise needed to be an essential part of the twenty-first century. In his study on the contextual education of indigenous peoples in Indonesia, Bintoro (2021) stated that there are at least four models of indigenous education: integrative, conservative, complementary, and transformative. *The first model* is integrated formal education through subjects. It's seen in local loading subjects, which are usually taught only once a week. *The second model* is outside the national education system. Because it does not incorporate the national education system into its educational model, it is called a conservative model. *Thirdly*, a service-based education model that complements formal education with indigenous education. *The last* is the education model transformative. This model is almost identical to the conservative model, but it opens up opportunities for its pupils to move on to formal education. The right to education for indigenous peoples in Indonesia is governed by a number of regulations, such as the right to education (Christianto et al.2022; Kholiq et al., 2022). Then, there is the right to existence and indigenous education. Kemdikbud, through the Directorate of Faith in One God and Tradition, recorded at least 2004 indigenous communities in Indonesia in 2013. This data is not total data but is based on numbers that have been successfully identified. Later, the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Nusantara, or AMAN, also noted that there were about 15 million souls gathering or joining in AMAN. In order to fulfill the right to education for indigenous peoples, the Government of Indonesia, through various policies such as the special education services (PLK), the local curriculum that covers the native language, and the current policy for revitalizing native languages in Merdeka curriculum in 2022 (Pulhehe, 2024). Both special services education (PLK) and inclusive education are provided to indigents with reference to national standards of education. However, the proposed implementation of special service education is not optimal because it does not have the necessary technical guidelines or is not used in the field (Head of Puslitjak Dikbud in Biantoro, 2019; Sugih, 2021).

Biantoro et al. (2019), in their study on the contextual education of indigenous peoples in Indonesia, noted two different points of view regarding the existence and implementation of education for indigenous peoples. *First*, indigenous education is understood as education with common principles in the general society that is based on the national curriculum and national standards of education by applying through the formal, non-formal, or informal educational path. Examples of programs developed are distance education through branch schools and the Center for Learning Activities of the Society, or PKBM. *Secondly*, the education of indigenous communities is an education that adapts to the environment and is based on the principles of national standard education that is contextual in accordance with the character of the indigenous communities. Examples of this second type of implication are usually done by non-governmental organizations that operate in the field of education. To harmonize the education of indigenous peoples in accordance with the ultimatum of global tribal communities and also in conformity with the mandate of the law, there is a need for a model or primary guidance as the primary reference for the conduct of the educational community that is appropriate and targeted (Omulo, 2023).

The Government of Indonesia has introduced changes to the policy on the education of indigenous peoples through Permendikbudristek No. 13 of 2022. Objectives 1 and 3 of this policy focus on expanding access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education while preserving and promoting the culture, languages, and literature of these groups. The policy aims to develop a model for the conservation and revitalization of regional languages with the objective of preserving and developing the region's language heritage for future generations (Siregar et al., 2023). The program targets 13 provinces in Indonesia and involves students from primary and high school. The ultimate goal is to revive regional languages, create a significant number of young local speakers, and promote language diversity. The indigenous people of Buru, Maluku Province, own the Buru language, which has become a target language for revitalization. The language is classified as Model C and is characterized as being in decline, critical, and endangered. The Buru language, which is part of the Austronesian language, is spoken by approximately 45,000 people on the island of Buru, with a current population of 136,757 people (Grimes, 1991; BPS Buru regency, 2020). Some researchers estimate that there are several factors that cause the Buru language to decline, some of which are: *first*, the language's vital entity has declined, is threatened with extinction, or is critical. *Second*, the Buru language is spoken by only a few people and is widespread. The latest data on the decline in the number of Buru speakers currently ranges from 5,000 to 132,100 active Buru communities. *Thirdly*, the conversation that takes place in the family is not entirely in the Buru language but in Indonesian (Erniati, 2022). *Fourthly*, there are advances in information technology and a lack of public and government awareness about preserving local languages as their identity in both formal and non-formal environments (Misrita et al., 2023; Lubis et al., 2023). *Finally*, there are limited human resources (Chew et al., 2022; Hadiwijaya et al., 2022). Due to some of the problems found above, there is a need for a training program that supports the young generation to improve their competence in using Buru. The way to respond to this is to implement Buru language training. This training activity will begin with an analysis of training needs. The aim is to identify gaps in the use of the Buru language as well as the competencies needed to improve its usage.

Method

This study uses the Delphi method in the analysis phase of training needs (Harteis, 2022). In its implementation, three indigenous Buru leaders such as vice of Buru leaders from Leisela, one Hinolong and one Soa, three Buru language teachers, and two representatives of the Buru cultural communities were used as samples to ask their opinions by answering questionnaires. The data collection with the questionnaire is done through a question-answer that uses G-form with some codes such as R1 refers to the vice of Buru leader's answer, R2 refers to the Soa's answer, and R3 refers to Hinolong's answer. Besides, the answers from Buru language teachers are coded such as R4 refers to the first teacher, R5 refers to the second teacher, and R6 refers to the third teacher. While the representatives of Buru cultural communities are referred to R7 and R8 for both representatives. The researcher still put the questionnaire into the data collection section. It aims to ensure that field data is not biased. Some perspectives from other communities on research issues are also needed in order to make it easier for researchers to see and analyze the possibilities that occur in Buru indigenous communities. This is also in line with Muhammad Ali's statement (2014) that information collected through questionnaires is more objective than through interviews. This is because the respondents are free to respond, and the mental attitude of the research participants and their relationship to the survey are not affected. There are more than sixteen questions. The question has three aspects. *The first* aspect is about the fundamental knowledge of the indigenous people of Buru. *The second* aspect is about the main causes of the Buru language. *Lastly*, the third

aspect is about the preservation of Buru languages through training programs. The dissemination of the questionnaire will be done several times, and every time the dissemination is done, each respondent is willing to evaluate and revise the given responses. The results of the need analysis will be used to determine the design of the Buru language training program.

Result and Discussion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of the program needs obtained from the research subject: the respondents included Buru customary leaders, Buru language teachers, and representatives of the Buru cultural community. The results are described as follows:

The Fundamental Knowledge of the Indigenous People of Buru

In this aspect, there are five questions, such as: *1. I know the customs of the Buru customary community, which consists of 8 types according to the Regulations of the district of Buru Year 2019, consisting of: Buru language, ritual, customary clothing, cultural art, special food, Dulan or Sedekah, Huma Koin and Baileo, and Lestari various forms of bondage.* The result shows that on this question, among the customary practitioners, three customary figures stated that they only knew some customary language, such as the local language (Buru), customary ceremonies, huma coin, and lestari. While Buru language teachers answered this question, they only knew Buru language, cultural art, customary ceremonies, Huma coins, and lestari. Lastly, among cultural activists, there were cultural arts, lestari, and customary clothing. In addition to the answers of the customary figures, only a few elements were mentioned because, according to them, the art of culture already encompasses all the elements that have not been mentioned. *2. The entire element of the Ancient Tradition, consisting of: Hunting Language, Ancestral Ceremony, Traditional Cloth, Cultural Art, Special Food, Dulan or Sedekah, Baileo, and Lestari, is still preserved in every ancient tradition to this day.* To this question, the Buru leaders answer that what is still preserved to this day is only language, customary ceremonies, and cultural art. According to the two Buru leaders, Lestari is usually used when there is a customary ritual, while Buru is used in daily activities at home and when there are customary meetings or other customary activities (Iye, 2022). According to Buru language teachers, Buru language, customary ceremonies, traditional food, and cultural arts are the components of customary art. They are still being carried out under the customary guidance of Buru people (Hidayah, 2020). Last, among cultural and community activists, they replied that Buru languages, lestari, customary clothing, and the art of culture are still preserved. According to R7, customary clothes are typically worn during ceremonies and cultural art performances. *3. The preservation of customs involves only the customs elders of the community in every Buru district.*

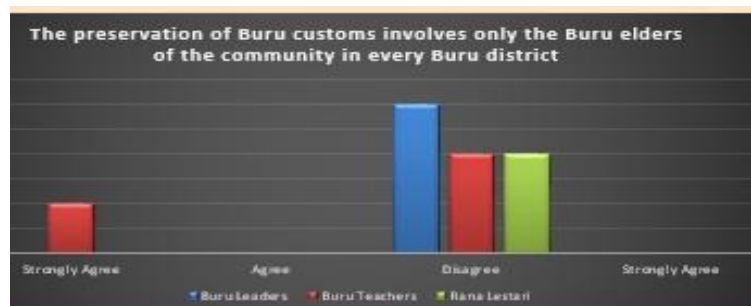


Figure 1. The result of respondents

As it shows on figure 1, the majority of respondents disagree with this question. On this question, only one Buru language teacher (R4) agreed, while the Buru leaders and other Buru language teachers as well as representatives of the cultural community disagreed with this question. According to them, this will only narrow the preservation of the custom itself. 4. *The development of customary customs includes customary ceremonies, cultural arts, dulan or sedekah, and special meals held every year.* On this question, the Buru language teachers agreed that there was a need to develop Buru customs every year. Meanwhile, five respondents, consisting of Buru cultural activists and Buru leaders, said they disagreed that the development of Buru custom is carried out every year because it will be difficult for them to arrange the agenda. 5. *The empowerment of Buru customs involves Buru and non-Buru communities.*

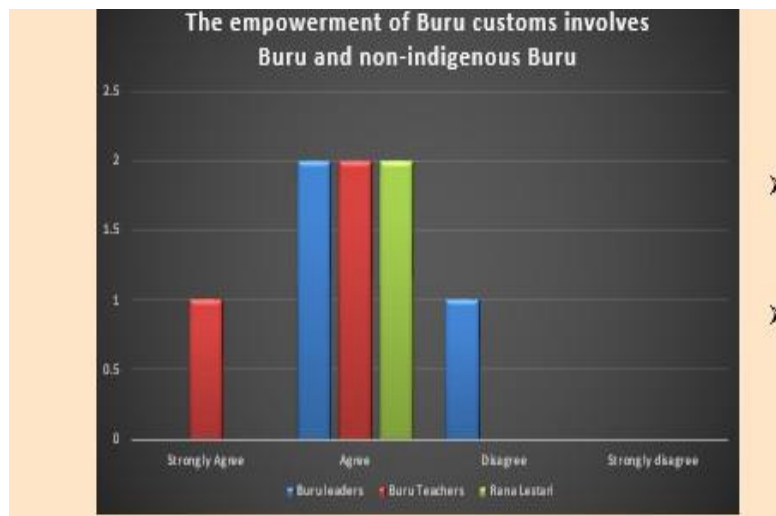


Figure 2. The result of respondents

As the figure shows, it consists of a variety of answers from the respondents. One of the Buru language teachers (R4) expressed strong agreement that Buru customs authorization should involve both Indigenous and non-indigenous Buru communities. Furthermore, the rest of Buru teachers, Rana Lestari from the representatives of Buru cultural community as well as two Buru leaders agree that the empowerment of Buru customs involve Buru and non-indigenous Buru. According to them, involving the entire community is a form of preserving culture as well as customary custom. In other words, the Buru leaders (R1) and (R3) said that it was necessary to involve non-indigenous Buru society because the non-indigenous Buru communities need to adjust to the culture of Buru's customary communities when dealing with Buru.

The Main Causes of the Buru Language

In this aspect, there are five questions, such as: 1. *What do you think is the most fundamental factor in the use of Buru language now threatened with extinction?* This question was formed to get the comprehensive knowledge of the respondents about their perspective on the main causes of the Buru language. It might be the lack of speakers or another issue that they find in their environment that is the cause of the usage of the Buru language. The result shows that the most important factor influencing the criticism of the Buru language occurred in the family. Because the family is not accustomed to speaking Buru at home, they mostly use Indonesian rather than Buru. The next cause is the dominant immigrant society from outside Buru. They live with their own culture, so the Buru language, as the identity of indigenous

Buru, is rarely used as a language of daily communication. Then, the local government has not made Buru a compulsory subject in schools, and there is no curriculum for Buru language teaching in schools (Handayani, 2021). 2. *Is Buru always used at school or at home?* This question was formed to collect information from the respondents on how intensified the Buru language was spoken. The result shows that many respondents chose to use the Buru language at home rather than in school. This answer was supported by five respondents. In the meantime, the vice of Buru leaders, as one of the customary leaders said that the Buru language is never used at home or in school. This is also proved by what has been found by Erniati (2022). In other words, this answer is also supported by the answer from one of the Buru cultural activists, who stated that they never use Buru language except at home, and only a few areas are still thick with local culture. Finally, the respondent, one of the teachers (R4), replied that the language is rarely used at home or in school. 3. *Is there a Buru's language lesson at school?* This question aims to verify the usage of Buru lessons at school. At this question all the respondents answered that there were no Buru courses in the school.

4. *What must be done to prevent the criticism of Buru Language?* Based on this question, the respondents answered some important elements in the prevention of the extinction of Buru, namely, the local government should create a Buru language curriculum that can be applied in schools. Then, to establish Buru as a compulsory area language subject in schools (Rahabav et al., 2021). 5. *Has the Buru revitalization program been the best solution in saving the Buru language?* This question was formed to verify whether the program, namely revitalization of the mother tongue, which also includes Buru, has been run effectively or has been implemented as its targeted national program. So, the respondents answered varyingly, with one (R4) affirming that the revitalization program for Buru has been the best solution for saving Buru languages. Then, some respondents (R1) and (R7) answered this program as one of them to save Buru. Next, R8, R2, R5, and R6 replied that the program of Buru revitalization language was already implemented but had not been maximized. Lastly, the answer of the respondent (R3) states that they do not know whether this is already the best option for saving the Buru language from extinction. Additionally, in response to the two Buru language teachers, namely (R5) and (R6), this is based on the number of participants in the revitalization program. For example, in following the Buru language revitalization program, each school only sends its 10 representatives to follow the program. So, the learning process at the school is targeted only at the 10 participants, not the whole students. In short, some respondents viewed the Buru language revitalization program as a potential solution, while others believed it was already implemented but not fully utilized, and some were uncertain about its effectiveness.

The Preservation of Buru Languages Through Training Programs

In this aspect, there are five questions, such as: 1. *Is it necessary to have a Buru language training program to improve Buru's language proficiency?* This question aims to collect the respondents' perspectives on how important the Buru training program is as a way to preserve the Buru language. Some of the respondents provided their answers in the form of quotes. Here are their answers: R8 stated: "Yes, we can start by providing capacity-building to the teachers, teaching methods to the teachers, and quick language dictionaries as references to the learning materials." R1 suggested: "We can provide facilities to language teachers, improve through examination and discussion, and improve the capacity of language teaching staff." R4 proposed: "We can provide more creative methods of learning Buru language, develop Buru learning skills, and apply practical practice in everyday life to make it more effective and enjoyable." R2 recommended: "It is necessary to learn from school,

have a cultural appearance of language on stage in various moments of activity, and facilitate local language teachers to follow a training course on learning methods." R3 suggested: "We can provide training to language teachers, apply the language in the family, and require the attention of the government." R7 stated: "We need an example because there is an improvement in knowledge of Buru language with training. We can conduct basic Buru language training and make a Buru dictionary that is given in schools." R5 proposed: "We need to increase the capacity of teachers, set a language day in one week, and obtain a speaking dictionary as a reference." R6 emphasized the need for "teachers, technical guidance to language teachers, and a quick dictionary." Based on their answer, it might be concluded that Buru language training is needed. They believe that the training will increase some components, such as teacher capacity in areas such as teaching methods, creative learning, and practical. Then, it can create a Buru language dictionary. Finally, it might boost the language in families as a means of daily communication.

2. *Can the Buru language training program be carried out online or through online learning media?* This question aims to provide an appropriate need for how the training will run if it is possible to run both online via Zoom or using online learning media like LMS. All respondents answered that the Buru language training program can be implemented through online learning. This is due to the advancement of the times and technology, so with the implementation of training through the online learning media will make it easier for participants from any distance and location they are.

3. *In your opinion, apart from reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, what kind of Buru language skills are required in the training program?* During a survey, respondents were asked about the required competence for language learning. The answers varied as follows: R8 suggested that everyday conversation and communication should be strengthened. R1 believed that field practice competence or daily dialogue were necessary. R4 recommends creative learning by giving students freedom of expression. R2 emphasized the importance of daily dialogue and communication within the family. R3 suggested the use of daily language that is practical. R7 recommends language practice using a hunting dictionary. R5 believed in using art performances in the language of study, such as songs, poems, speeches, and folk stories, to enhance learning. R6 suggested that the basic practice of speaking quickly would be beneficial. Based on their responses, the majority of suggestions highlight some components, such as strengthening everyday conversation and communication, focusing on field practice competence, and daily dialogue. Then, field practice, creative learning, family dialogue, practical language use by creating poems or speeches, and folk stories, and art performances like traditional dance are recommended for enhancing learning.

4. *Do you think that a Buru language training program using an online learning system will help improve your Buru language skills?* From this question, some respondents asserted that Buru language training using online learning systems would help if there were media availability and implementation in the city of Namlea.

5. *If there is an education curriculum for indigenous peoples, what program would you like to suggest in this training that is dedicated to Buru Indigenous Peoples.* This question aims to gather information about the essential program they might suggest be included in this training as well as to design the indigenous education curriculum. Some respondents shared their suggestions and input on this question, which are as follows: R8 suggested that every customary activity should use the language of the hurricane, and there should be a parade or government law that obliges citizens to communicate using this language. Additionally, symbols of the area or street names should also use the tongue of the hurricane. R1 suggested making media in the speaking language, creating people's stories in the language, and providing training in the form of dialogue language. R4 recommended including Buru as a local load subject. R2 proposed developing basic languages, practicing speaking rapidly, and creating language rapidly through songs and poetry. R3 suggested training specialized

language teachers. R7 recommended increasing the capacity of teachers and providing Buru language tools. R5 proposed a Buru Cultural Conservation Program. R6 suggested using a culture of Buru in the development of a Buru language. Based on their suggestions, the program mostly consists of, *first*, using the Buru language in customary activities. *Second*, create learning media in Buru. *Third*, including Buru as a compulsory subject. *Fourth*, developing basic languages, training specialized language teachers, and increasing teacher capacity. *Lastly*, providing Buru language tools and implementing a Buru Cultural Conservation Program.

Conclusion

The Buru customary community has eight types of customs, including Buru language, ritual, customary clothing, cultural art, special food, *dulan* or *sedekah*, *huma koin* and *baileo*, and *lestari* bondage. These customs are still practiced under the guidance of the Buru people, with preservation involving elders in every district. Furthermore, the empowerment of Buru customs should involve both Buru and non-indigenous Buru communities. The development of customary customs includes customary ceremonies, cultural arts, *dulan* or *sedekah*, and traditional food should not be held every year. The empowerment of Buru customs involves both customary and non-Buru communities, as preserving culture and customs is essential.

The use and preservation of the Buru language, which is currently threatened with extinction. The lack of conversation in the family, the evolution of times, the existence of a dominant society non-indigenous Buru, and no Buru language curriculum in schools are the factors most influencing the criticism of Buru language. To prevent the extinction of Buru, respondents suggest creating a Buru language curriculum that can be applied in schools and establishing Buru as a compulsory area language subject. Respondents have varying opinions on the effectiveness of the Buru revitalization program, and some believe that the program has not been maximized. There is a need for a training program to preserve the Buru language. The training program should focus on improving the language proficiency of the Buru people and can be carried out online. The program should emphasize the practical use of the language in everyday life, creative learning methods, and specialized language teachers. Additionally, incorporating the language into customary activities, media, and education curriculums for indigenous peoples are also highly recommended.

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