



BAHASA TANSI: Language Loyalty of Its Speakers

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the degree of language loyalty of *bahasa Tansi* speakers in Sawahlunto, West Sumatra, through a sociolinguistic analysis focusing on lexical differences, language loyalty, and language attitudes. This quantitative and descriptive qualitative research examined whether *bahasa Tansi* speakers are loyal in using the language or not. Data were collected using the 206 of Swadesh list words, questionnaires, interviews, and recorded conversations. The findings revealed that *bahasa Tansi* has 73.78% phonetic differences compared to Minangkabau, suggesting significant language divergence. Additionally, the study highlighted a strong sense of language loyalty and positive attitudes among speakers, indicating *bahasa Tansi's* robust sociolinguistic presence. Consequently, *bahasa Tansi* is classified as a creole with unique linguistic and cultural attributes, contributing to the linguistic diversity of West Sumatra.

Key Words: Bahasa Tansi, Language Attitude, Language Loyalty, Creole.

A. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in human communication, enabling the exchange of information across various settings such as homes, workplaces, and educational environments (Siahaan, 2008). Chomsky (2002) underscores that language is an intrinsic human trait, deeply embedded in the mind and uniquely characteristic of our species. This ability sets humans apart from other animals and is essential for social interaction and business transactions, where language facilitates communication and understanding.

According to Ramoo (2021), a pidgin language is a grammatically simplified communication method. It typically arises when two or more groups are forced to create a communication system due to the lack of a common language. When groups gather for trade, it is typical for them to not be regarded as whole languages. There is no speech community from which Pidgins is native. Its limited core vocabulary is made up of sounds and words from other languages. There is a situation in which the community or group no longer sees the need to speak in pidgin, but they nevertheless do so and even

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include it into their everyday interactions. Koyfman (2017) argues that a pidgin has enough of distinctive features evolved to have its own unique grammar by the time it becomes a creole, it can refer to a pidgin that is spoken by native speakers or by speakers of a second generation who will formalize and strengthen the bridge into a strong structure with a fully formed grammar and syntax.

A multitude of circumstances, including as trade, colonization, and slavery, might lead to the development of pidgins and creoles, and this is what happened in Sawahlunto, specifically in areas that use *bahasa Tansi*. In Sawahlunto, West Sumatra, the evolution of *bahasa Tansi* is a result of the historical and cultural influences in the region. The Dutch, who established Sawahlunto as a coal mining town in the late 1800s, brought in diverse ethnic groups, leading to the creation of *bahasa Tansi* as a means of communication among workers. This language has since evolved and is used in daily interactions, reflecting the town's unique multiethnic heritage. According to the results of previous study by Pambudi (2019) shown that *bahasa Tansi* is considered as a creole.

Research on *bahasa Tansi* has primarily focused on its development and usage, but there has been limited exploration of the language loyalty and attitudes of its speakers. Language loyalty refers to the preference for using a particular language in daily life, while language attitude pertains to individuals' views and feelings about a language. While language maintenance refers to preserving and using a language continuously, a community is preserving its language if they teach the young generation the language. It's similar to ensuring that the language doesn't vanish with time. Language maintenance is related to the action of the speakers in picturing how their loyalty towards the language by keep using the language and pass it on to the young generations. Understanding these aspects is crucial for language preservation and preventing language loss.

This study aims to examine the language loyalty and attitudes of *bahasa Tansi* speakers in Sawahlunto. It will use various instruments, including 206 of Swadesh list words, questionnaires, interviews, and recorded conversations, to gather comprehensive data. By investigating these aspects, the research seeks to deepen the understanding of the linguistic environment in Sawahlunto and the influence of cultural and historical factors on language use. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of maintaining linguistic diversity and the potential consequences of language loss, particularly for *bahasa Tansi*. This study aims to contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics and provide insights into language preservation efforts in West Sumatra.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research was a mix quantitative and descriptive qualitative research, because this research was focused on presenting and describing the degree of language loyalty of the speakers of *bahasa Tansi*. This type of method was chosen, considers the purposes of the research and even though the type of the data being analyzed was non-numerical data, the researcher used basic

mathematic formula and interpretation to describe the conclusion. The quantitative method was useful to identify the percentage of lexical differences, questionnaire results, and recorded conversation results, while the descriptive qualitative method was useful in describing the questionnaire results in the form of each question with the research questions, and describing interview results as support data for questionnaire data. With the use of questionnaires which were distributed to 10 respondents, interviews 2 informants who were chosen from the respondents, recorded conversation which is ten minutes long, and 206 of Swadesh list words, this method was made it possible to gather rich and detailed data from the field. Therefore, it's sensible for this research to use this approach since it enabled a thorough and precise description of the phenomenon under study, improving our comprehension of the topic.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

According to the data analysis, the research finds out that only 23.78% lexical differences between *bahasa Tansi* and Minangkabaunese, while in phonetic and phonemic level shows quite the opposite with 73.78% differences. Furthermore, the research finds out that *bahasa Tansi* speakers have high positive language attitude toward the language, shown by 87.11% of the questionnaire response in aspects of language attitude, supported by interview results which mention that *bahasa Tansi* speakers are proud and happy to identify themselves as the speaker of *bahasa Tansi*. Additionally, there are some perspectives that determine the degree of language loyalty of *bahasa Tansi* speakers. The first one is from questionnaire results in aspects of language loyalty which show 80.76% high of loyalty. This provides quantitative evidence of the degree of language loyalty exhibited by *bahasa Tansi* speakers, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of language use, identity, and cultural preservation within the community. It implies that the language is highly valued and significant in the community, and that people actively participate in activities that uphold and strengthen its use in day-to-day interactions.

Secondly, the interview result support the percentage of the questionnaire data, it demonstrated the speakers' high language loyalty. The data show a solid attachment the speakers have to the language by mentioning how they are approve the existence of the language in society by provided information about some areas in Sawahlunto that use *bahasa Tansi* as their language in daily conversations, such as in Sikalang, Karanganyar, Durian, Kampung Surian, and Sapan. The speakers also describing their ways in maintain the language such as how frequent they use the language in several contexts like in daily conversations and in some social events; held a *bahasa Tansi* competition every year as the main event in Sawahlunto's birthday; and how they keep passed the language on to younger generations despite the many influences of linguistic globalization on today's young generation.

Moreover, the results from recorded conversations data provide more information, which confirms that 78.59% the speakers use *bahasa Tansi* lexical in everyday basis conversations. This is proving a low use of code-mixing with Minangkabaunese. The consistent application of *bahasa Tansi* lexical indicates a strong bond with the language and a dedication to its survival in the community. The data enhances our understanding of language loyalty by emphasizing the significant lexical usage of *bahasa Tansi* and the minimal adaption of Minangkabaunese, presents concrete evidence of the speakers' commitment to maintaining their cultural identity and linguistic heritage through language.

2. Discussion

The first finding shows 23.78% lexical differences between *bahasa Tansi* and Minangkabaunese, and 73.78% differences in phonetic and phonemic level. According to theory stated by Guiter (as cited in Mahsun, 2017), below are the criteria for differences in lexical level and phonetic level:

- Differences in lexical level:
 - 81% and above: language differences
 - 51% - 80%: dialect difference
 - 31% - 50%: sub dialect difference
 - 21% - 30%: speech difference
 - Below 20%: no difference
- Differences in phonological level:
 - 17% and above: language differences
 - 12% - 16%: dialect difference
 - 8% - 11%: sub dialect difference
 - 4% - 7%: speech difference
 - 0% - 3%: no differences

According to the theory above, from the lexical differences finding, it can be said that *bahasa Tansi* is considered as a speech difference with 23.78% differences. However, from the phonetic and phonemic level there are 73.7% differences, which mean that *bahasa Tansi* can considered as a different language. Furthermore, based on the data, *bahasa Tansi* speakers and Minangkabaunese cannot fully understand each other from the phonetic and phonemic perspective which shows low of mutual intelligibility and strengthen the position of *bahasa Tansi* as more than just a speech difference. As Crystal (2001) states that lexical differences contribute to the richness and distinctiveness of a language's identity within a society by reflecting certain cultural values and societal norms. The numbers above clearly reflect how the distinctiveness in *bahasa Tansi* in aspects of lexical.

Additionally, the second finding shown strong language attitude of the speakers with 87.11% positive language attitude based on questionnaire results, and supported by interview results. This can describes that high positive

language attitude on *bahasa Tansi* speakers means that the language has one characteristic of a standard language, according to Smackman's statements in his book "*The definition of the standard language. A survey in seven countries.*" (2012).

Moreover, the next finding from questionnaire results in aspects of language loyalty show 80.76% loyalty of the speakers, which supported by interview results and recorded conversations data with 21.41% use of code-mixing and borrowing from Minangkabaunese. Language loyalty of the speakers shown from how they maintain their language, such as by keep using their language in different occasions; value their language by hold a *bahasa Tansi* competition ever year; and pass it on to the young generations, according to interview data. These findings mostly confirm *bahasa Tansi* as a different language, especially looking from high phonetic and phonemic differences and high positive language attitude. However, in terms of grammatical structure, *bahasa Tansi* doesn't meet the criteria as a different language. Furthermore, *bahasa Tansi* has not gone through the standardization process from the government and not yet fully meeting the criteria for a standard language. As defined by Wardhaugh (2006), standardization is the process through which a language has undergone some form of regulation, typically, that process includes the creation of dictionaries, grammar publications, spelling books, and perhaps even literature. And related to this theory, Ramlan (2018) mentioned some features of language which are standardized:

- Grammar: The rules determining how words are formed and joined into sentences in a language;
- Spelling: The process of correctly creating words out of individual letters;
- Word: A single, meaningful linguistic unit that can be written or spoken;
- Pronunciation: The way a word or sound is spoken in a particular language; and
- System of writing: The format used for books, letters of various kinds, articles, posters, ads, announcements, notices, and other types of scientific writing.

Therefore, based on this study which focused on language loyalty of its speakers, *bahasa Tansi* for now can be categorized as creole Tansi. Creole languages are generally the outcome of linguistic contact between speakers of other languages, producing unique linguistic structures that represent the community's communication and cultural need, this match with history of *bahasa Tansi* which occurred from colonialism event among the mining workers and create a pidgin, which now has developed to become a creole. As mentioned by Owon et al. (2022) characteristics of creole which match with *bahasa Tansi* as follow:

- Creole was born from pidgin.
- Pidgins that already have native speakers
- Formed from diverse communities who speak pidgin which is passed down to their children and grandchildren as a mother tongue which is always used to communicate, the language is called creole.

Furthermore, Romaine notes that lexical variation can indicate the degree of language vitality and resilience within a community, highlighting the adaptability and creativity of speakers in maintaining linguistic heritage. The lexical characteristics observed in *bahasa Tansi*, marked by a blend of borrowed and adapted words reflecting diverse linguistic influences, are indicative of creole-like features. Moreover, Mühlhäusler argues that the emergence of new languages like creoles illustrates the inherent creativity and flexibility of language in response to diverse sociocultural environments and communication needs, which further underscores the dynamic and adaptive nature of *bahasa Tansi's* lexical composition.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The research findings point to a strong sense of language loyalty and positive language attitude among *bahasa Tansi* speakers, supported by the comprehensive data analysis from questionnaire, interviews, and recorded conversations which demonstrate a significant usage of *bahasa Tansi* with minimal code-mixing, reflecting the speakers' dedication to the language's continuity. According to the findings on phonetic differences and high language attitude, it can be considered that *bahasa Tansi* is a new language. However, in terms of grammatical structure, *bahasa Tansi* doesn't meet the criteria as a different language, and has not yet through a standardization process from the government. Thus, in view of the language loyalty of the speakers, *bahasa Tansi* for now can be categorized as creole Tansi that has a fairly strong position in society.

Additionally, this research will be beneficial as a reference to investigate the complex relationships between language loyalty and the cultural context in *bahasa Tansi*. The study's findings will provide ideas for future research and useful applications in linguistic and cultural situations. This knowledge also can contribute to the preservation and promotion of *bahasa Tansi* within its cultural context, fostering linguistic diversity and cultural identity. Thus, this study is suggested to do.

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