

# **An ecolinguistic analysis of folksongs in endangered Pagu language**

Dalan M. Perangin-Angin, Sanata Dharma University

Novita Dewi, Sanata Dharma University

*This study examines Pagu an almost extinct language of North Halmahera, Indonesia, by studying its literary wealth in the form of folksongs. Three Pagu songs are analyzed with an ecolinguistic perspective. This descriptive analytic study results in three findings. First, ecolinguistic analysis shows the emotional closeness of the Pagu community with their natural surroundings although sometimes nature is also considered to hinder humans' journey. Second, the three folksongs contain cultural values and customs that show the identity of the Pagu people to be continually held. Lastly, the songs are influenced by Tobelo language which is more widely used. In conclusion, maintaining interaction between language users and caring for such cultural treasure as folksongs can prevent the extinction of the Pagu language while maintaining Pagu cultural and natural sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *ecolinguistics, folksongs, identity, Non-Austronesian language*

## **1 Introduction**

It is not an overstatement to say that the loss of language diversity is the loss of peace, because monolingualism does not ensure understanding. Instead, recognition of minority groups' rights to preserve their languages may help foster harmony and peace. Indeed, there are at least four imperative reasons to prevent language loss, i.e. human concerns, loss of knowledge, scientific understanding of human language, and human rights. Native language is a very important cultural element that plays a major role in every growth and process of cultural, intellectual, and psychological development and wellbeing of its speaker. A language can easily become extinct because its speakers diminish; and after a long time it loses its speakers; then finally the language disappears (Lauder 2011; Lauder 2018). Located in the southeastern part of Asia, Indonesia is an archipelagic country comprising of nearly 18,000 islands with 1,340 ethnic groups and nearly 700 regional languages – some of them are endangered. Language maintenance is the concern of the Indonesian government since some local languages are at risk of falling out of use. One of the endangered languages in Indonesia is the Pagu language in North Halmahera (Perangin-Angin 2018). This language is spoken by the Pagu ethnic community, which is one of nine ethnic groups in the North Halmahera Regency, which amounts to around 5,200 people. Pagu belongs to the West-Papuan phylum of Papuan language Family (known also Non-Austronesian) spoken in the North Halmahera regency (Voorhoeve 1983: 19). The Pagu tribe lives in thirteen villages spreading over five sub-districts with different populations, tribes, and languages. The scattered settlements on the one hand is a mixing factor of culture and language which means it is also a cultural unifier; but, on the other hand, it is a weakening factor in terms of language and culture maintenance.

One way to shape the dignity of the nation is to expand the horizons of language and culture thereof. There are local cultural values in local languages that will be lost if there is no attempt to save them. Making audio or video recordings from people who can still speak the local language with the aim of documenting and archiving them is one way to defend a

language from extinction (Hinton 2011). Therefore, efforts to save the Pagu language can begin by examining local literary works such as folklore, proverbs, and folksongs.

As one type of literary work, folksongs are sedimentation of people's contemplation on life. Such things as success, failure, love, hate, peace, war, forgiveness, and revenge are all uncovered imaginatively and creatively by folk culture. Folksongs are one of the important cultural elements to study because of the social and spiritual values contained in them. Similar studies on the use of songs have been done to preserve local languages in various parts of the world such as on Jersey Island (Johnson 2015), Spain (Rosowsky 2015), and Ethiopia (Chala Teresa & Dagim Raga 2018), to name a few only.

In folksongs one can find some values of truth (morality), and traditional views that are usually in the form of metaphors (parables) being passed down across generations. The lyrics in regional songs are full of noble values besides their linguistic and artistic richness. Therefore, folksongs can function as moral teachers who must be defended in an increasingly materialistic international community. That saving language means saving culture is shown by the works of Grant on ethnomusicology (Grant 2012; Grant 2017). Grant (2017) proposes a greater interdisciplinary collaboration in language and music revitalization. Prior to it, examining *Ca tru`* a centuries-long traditional music in northern Vietnam, Grant (2012) situates endangered music within efforts in language maintenance for both cultural endeavors sustain each other. Grant writes:

*The vitality of both languages and music genres interplay in complex ways with the social and cultural constructs and attitudes that surround them, and the impact of socio-economic and political circumstances on both can be considerable. In short, music and language are two intangible manifestations and expressions of culture, both often transmitted orally, and both grappling with challenges to vitality and viability resulting from similar forces within the local and global environment. (2012: 33 – 34)*

As for folksongs in Pagu, judging from their development until now, they are not sung much, hence under serious threat. This is partly because the Pagu language itself has also declined in terms of usage (Perangin-Angin 2013). The language environment (language ecology) does not support the vitality of Pagu. In addition, there are also social changes and other negative factors such as the reluctance of young people to use local languages because of their weak competitiveness. This study will discuss the retention of the Pagu language by caring for the literary wealth, i.e. folksongs in the language in order to save it from extinction. By taking care of the existing songs in Pagu, people take part in maintaining the language. Pagu will become extinct if it is not immediately saved. Folksongs that have been collected will be examined using theory in ecolinguistics as an approach.

## **2 Language maintenance**

According to Multamia Lauder (2011), if a language is known to be endangered, efforts are needed to preserve and document it even though the language has limited functions, such as being a sacred language, i.e. the language used in rituals. Hundreds of languages in Indonesia with their local culture will gradually vanish if there is no effort, in various ways, to care for and preserve them (Sunarto et al. 2018). Furthermore, local languages and cultures also contain a variety of local wisdom. Most tribal people who are close to the forest have treasured wisdom

in terms of preserving the forest, herbal medicines, farming methods, natural coloring, and so on. By learning and preserving diverse local knowledge, numerous local languages are automatically preserved.

Lauder uses the term “empowerment” to give understanding to the wider community of the importance of language retention efforts as one of the ancestral heritage (Lauder 2011: 4). Similarly, the term “language maintenance” according to Leanne Hinton is used to designate an effort to encourage and strengthen language that is still used by young speakers, but has begun to show its decline (Hinton 2011: 291). This ancestral heritage also shows a tribal identity that has traditionally had an impact on the ownership of the natural resources where they reside (Hisyam et al. 2012).

The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) conducted a seminal research on endangered non-Austronesian languages in eastern Indonesia throughout 2011-2014. It was found that the Pagu language was one of the endangered languages due to the lack of speakers (Perangin-Angin 2013; Hisyam et al. 2012). There are at least four reasons that exacerbate the extinction of Pagu. First, Pagu language does not have authority despite the Indonesian government’s call and regulation for teaching Pagu as local contents at school. Secondly, the use of Indonesian as the national language remains predominant. Thirdly, the presence of multinational companies invites foreigners to communicate either using English or Indonesian. Lastly, the society appears unaware that the loss of language will also risk the disappearance of culture and knowledge of the ancestors. Communication using Pagu between speakers of different languages in remote villages in Pagu area is not easy. They find it easier to use the Ternate Malay as a lingua franca or Indonesian to communicate with residents in neighboring villages with diverse ethnic groups and mother tongues (Perangin-Angin 2013; Tondo 2019). As stated in the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the government respects and maintains regional languages as part of the national culture. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system also mandates the use of regional languages as the language of instruction since early education. Local governments, likewise, have the obligation to develop, foster, and protect regional languages and literature, as stipulated in Article 42, Law No. 24 of 2009. The law states the policy that every citizen should respect cultural and linguistic diversity so as to maintain regional languages and literature throughout the country. The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture clearly underlines the instruction to develop local language and culture. Although the maintenance of regional languages has a very strong legal basis, there are still many local languages that have not been protected from extinction.

By way of comparison, revitalization of Maori and Hawaiian languages, for example, is carried out through informal channels, namely practicing the language at home between parents and their children (Albury 2016; Hinton 2011). A free kindergarten school was even established by parents who wanted Hawaiian to be the language that children spoken at home in addition to English used at school (Hisyam et al. 2013; Ohara 2016). The Hawaiian language revitalization acquires a full attention, thanks to the community initiatives as to decide on models and practices that are appropriate to local socio-cultural and historical conditions (Brenzinger & Heinrich 2013; Cowell 2012).

Another example is the formal channels used in preserving the Vanuatu language. After more than twenty years of independence, the Republic of Vanuatu has realized many changes, especially those caused by globalization (McCormick 2016; Vari-Bogiri 2005). The indigenous people of Vanuatu have very detailed knowledge about the local environment that has supported their lives from generation to generation which is entirely stored in their language.

Government agencies and NGOs in Vanuatu are supported by UNESCO and foreign agencies to produce local language and cultural documentation and publish it as scientific work for education, religion and secular purposes. The Vanuatu government's commitment to maintaining local languages is proven by the establishment of a natural environment conservation area in Espiritu Santo (Guérin 2008). The Department of Health certifies traditional herbal and local foods and culinary (McCarter & Gavin 2011).

This current study aims to learn from, among others, the success story of the 25-year effort of Kaurna language revitalization (Amery 2018). This ethnic language of the Adelaide Plains, South Australia had been almost defunct as a result of colonization, depopulation, and forced relocation of the indigenous people (Amery 2016; Amery 2018). Amery writes that the revitalization of Kaurna is accelerated by greater awareness and identity pride of the users once the language is re-introduced by way of song writing, public speeches, personal and place naming, and Kaurna language teaching. Thanks to internet technology that more people can gain access to Kaurna language teaching materials and related educational and cultural contents with which Kaurna can now re-emerge as an auxiliary language (Amery 2018).

Looking at the above examples of language retention, the same thing has been done to save the Pagu language in North Halmahera from extinction (Hisyam, et al. 2012; Hisyam, et al. 2012). Although attempts to preserve the Pagu language were supported by a strong traditional leadership, socio-political reasons often weaken the good effort. First, Pagu settlements are scattered so that majority-minority relations sometimes hinder the Pagu people to speak their local language. Second, Pagu is marginalized by the strong pressure of the Ternate Malay and Indonesian. Third, based on its sociolinguistic classification, the Pagu language currently occupies the level of "endangered language" (Lauder 2011; Lauder 2018; & Perangin-Angin 2018). No children learn the mother tongue; and the youngest speakers who have the best language skills are young adults in their 20s (Hisyam et al. 2013). It would seem that the younger generation can still hear Pagu, but they cannot speak Pagu.

Given the linguistic situation above, it is necessary to carry out continuous studies so that the Pagu language can still live out. This study would argue that by examining how Pagu is used closely to the lives of its users by means of folksongs, the endangered language can surely be protected from extinction.

### **3 Ecolinguistics**

Since early 1970s, ecolinguistic experts such as Fill & Mühlhäusler (2004), Nash & Mühlhäusler (2014) have confirmed that languages, like environment, will become extinct over time if not treated properly. The study of Nash & Mühlhäusler (2014), for example, shows that the Pitkern-Norf'k language in Norfolk Island is increasingly eroded because a number of lexical and grammatical aspects are highly dependent on its environmental conditions that change very rapidly. An understanding of the place (ecological aspects) is closely intertwined with its verbalization. According to the two researchers, if the conditions of the place or ecology change, the language to discuss the phenomenon will automatically change, only to become extinct later. Having mapped out the genesis of ecolinguistics and conceptualized the ecology of language, Steffensen & Fill (2014) further propose a framework to activate the synergy between ecology and language, namely, opposing natural resources exploitation, empowering the marginalized social groups, and ensuring the language-culture peaceful coexistence within the multicultural communities.

Meanwhile, in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live-by*, Stibbe (2015) argues that we are crammed with various narratives called “Story-we-live-by” or a story that passes through the minds of many cross-cultural individuals who are unwittingly impartial on the environment. Stibbe aptly gives an example of monetary-versus-ecology scenario. If holiday season increases, trading activities are considered good; conversely, if it goes down, it is said that the economy is sluggish. In fact, from an ecological perspective, exploring nature is much more appreciated than culinary tourism. It is better to stay at home with family and friends than giving away gifts that help deteriorate this ailing world. Ecolinguistic analysis argues against the equation of progress with economic gain at the expense of environmental decay.

The ultimate goal of ecolinguistics is to develop linguistic theory by looking at humans not only as part of society, but also as part of a larger ecosystem on which life depends. In addition, ecolinguistics also shows how linguistics can be used to tackle ecological problems that are increasingly serious, from climate change and biodiversity loss to environmental injustice.

Endangered language documentation is the core business of ecolinguistics. For revitalization efforts to be successful, it is essential to adopt interdisciplinary approach whilst involving the language-culture enthusiasts and people from diverse walks of life to partake. Considering the multidimensional aspects of language usage, saving the dying out language like Pagu is best approached by ecolinguistics. Stibbe writes:

*All kinds of disciplines are broadening themselves to engage with the reality of the ecological dependence of humanity, from ecological economics to ecofeminism, ecopsychology, ecopoetics, ecocriticism, ecosociology, social ecology, and political ecology, and it is within this general ‘ecological turn’ that ecolinguistics finds itself. (2012: 1)*

Thus, ecolinguistics examines the role of language in an interaction that sustains the lives of humans, other species, and the physical environment. Ecolinguistics can therefore be defined as an interdisciplinary study that connects linguistics and ecology to examine the interdependence of language and interpretation of the environment in which we live. It is the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of ecolinguistics as a promising field of inquiry in language and communication studies (Chen 2016) that complements efforts in saving endangered language.

#### **4 Methodology**

This descriptive-qualitative study utilizes data sources from existing, though limited, research on the Pagu language. Part of the data was taken from a study entitled “Retaining of Endangered Languages and Cultures in Eastern Indonesia” of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in 2011-2014, conducted by one of the authors of this article. The primary data collected include three regional songs. The secondary data consists of scientific journal articles, books, and various news reports that are relevant to this research. The collected data is grouped and interpreted with ecological analysis of discourse (Stibbe 2015) and an ecolinguistic framework that seeks to maintain the peaceful coexistence between language and culture (Steffensen & Fill 2014). Similar works on the ecolinguistic analysis of contemporary Western pop song lyrics (Ghorbanpour 2016) and the ecosophical reading of Anatolian mystic poetry

and folksongs (Parlak 2011) are also useful. The Ecocriticism trajectories applied in both studies help inform the current study, especially in obtaining, presenting, and analyzing the data.

## 5 Findings and discussion

### 5.1 Lamenting the loss of love and tradition

Although nature theme is rarely seen in love songs, analysis in ecolinguistics can show the extent to which the first song under discussion has the potential to enrich the ecological balance. To begin with, here are the lyrics of the song numbered according to the lines and accompanied with free English translations.

Folksong 1: entitled **Sayange nanga sejara** *'Love, our story'*

- (1) *wange doka dina ka ya-iye-iye*  
'the sun there landwards is already high'
- (2) *wange madumu ngohi to-majobo to-tagi-tagi de to-lioka-wa*  
'When the sun sets I will go away, walk away and will not comeback'
- (3) *Meme no-momi upa no-sakai*  
'Mamma after you wake up you don't need to cook'
- (4) *ngohi ma nena dodagi sononga to-tagi-tagi de to-lioka-wa*  
'I want to have a journey alone, go away and will not come back'
- (5) *sayange nanga sejara*  
'Love, our story'
- (6) *nanga sejara ma waktu ngone ina-sosinoto.*  
'our story when the two of us were still together'
- (7) *mangale ngona de ta-pikiri susa*  
'because of you I think about it so hard'
- (8) *sigadono genano-si-garigari kodosioko o nyawa manga-ngohaka*  
'until you cried, o sorry someone's child'

This song tells of someone who said goodbye to leave his family and sweetheart to wander. The traveler had left early in the morning before the whole family woke up, especially the mother who was always preparing food. He advised that his mother and his girlfriend should not expect his return in the afternoon because he left not to return.

- (9) *wange doka dina ka ya-iye-iye*  
sun there land.side only 3NHS-high-high

‘the sun there landwards is already high’

(10) *wange madumu ngohi to-majobo to-tagitagi de to-lioka-wa*  
sun sink 1S 1SS-go.out 1SS-go-go and 1SS-go.back-NEG  
‘When the sun set I will go away, walk away and will not comeback’

(11) *Meme no-momi upa no-sakai*  
mother 2SS-wake.up NEG 2SS-cook  
‘Mamma after you wake up you don’t need to cook’

(12) *ngohi ma nena dodagi sononga to-tagitagi*  
1S RNL this have.a.walk alone 1SS-go-go  
*de to-lioka-wa*  
and 1SS-comeback-NEG  
‘I want to have a journey alone, go away and will not come back’

Line (1) and (2) in the song repeated as (9) and (10) respectively above (accompanied with linguistic gloss) show Pagu rural lifestyle whereby people start working or conduct other activities in the morning. In the evening, they usually return home. Another habit is bringing their own lunch that has been prepared by the mother in the morning as shown in (11) that is repeated from (3). If a commuter should return home at any time of the day, food is available. In this song, it is told that the ritual of eating together does not occur because the traveler does not return as indicated by (12) which is repeated from (4). Each language is the key that can unlock such local knowledge as secrets of traditional medicine, local wisdom about the weather and climate, spiritual and historical values, myths and legends, etc. Daily habits or customs are also stored in local languages. Such values are what Stibbe (2015) calls “stories-we-live-by” to preserve.

Nowadays, daily habits that bring families together as shown in this song are increasingly rare when modernization begins to replace the rural lifestyle. Moreover, people do not have to get up early and go to the kitchen to cook their meals; they can easily buy various kinds of food and snacks at any time. From ecolinguistics perspectives, the disappearance of stories about village life or remote areas is lamentable. Especially in modernized settlements, fast food replaces the activities of rural mothers who have to wake up in the morning to prepare family breakfast.

The Pagu folksong *Sayange Nanga Sejara*, on the contrary, affirms the harmonization of nature and culture of a society often reflected in their language as argued by Mühlhäusler (2003). The social role of the mother who does the cooking for the family is hard to ignore. She is diligent and thrifty as to assure that family breakfast is ready on the table. Narratives on anti-consumerism like this must be shared and lived on continuously. This song thus aligns with a beneficial, eco-friendly story in terms of Stibbe’s conception of the “stories-we-live-by”.

It is not clear why the two lovebirds in this song can no longer unite. Behind this sad story of a breakup, there is not much exposure to the landscape and environment that is typical of the Pagu land except for the depiction of rural life aforementioned.

- (13) *nanga sejala ma waktu ngone ina-sosinoto*  
 1PIN.POSS story RNL when 1PIN 1PIN-be.two  
 ‘our story when the two of us were still together’
- (14) *mangale ngona de ta-pikiri susa*  
 because 2SS and 1SS.NHO-think difficult  
 ‘because of you I think about it so hard’
- (15) *sigadono gena no-si-garigari kodosioko o nyawa*  
 until that 2SS-CAUS-cry sorry NRRNM person  
*manga-ngohaka*  
 3PL.POSS-child  
 ‘until you cried, o sorry someone’s child’

Data Lyric (13) to (15) above are repeated twice. Here, the separation of these two lovers is a difficult thing for them. Although this folksong is like an ordinary love song, it can be seen that the narrator-traveler has left behind a lot more valuable things in life, namely girlfriend, mother, and daily habits in the land of Pagu. Emotional attachment to the land of birth, culture, and customs inherent in it, in the view of ecolinguistics, are invaluable treasures to protect from extinction. Such a story has to be told for both cultural and environmental sustainability. To compare, Amery (2016: 519) attributed “pride” and “connections with the land and their linguistic and cultural heritage” to the success of Kaurna language revitalization. Suffice it to say for now that this Pagu folksong does have the potential to enrich the ecological balance by means of preserving a story about someone’s pain of abandoning Pagu rural life and all cherished things attached to it.

## 5.2 Ode to the land of birth

A more distinctive narrative to nature is present in the second Pagu folksong discussed. “Maluku Miodora” is a song with the theme of patriotism and unity in the Moluccas. Although there are several sub-ethnic groups, there is only one tribe in the islands. As narrated in this song, people in the island of Moluccas live a miserable life due to the communal conflicts. Here forests and beaches are not the cause of misery. Instead, they appreciate this enchantment of nature. They still love Maluku despite the ethnic and religious clashes that sometimes wreck the island. The lyrics of the song are as follows.

Folksong 2: entitled *Maluku Mio-dora* ‘Maluku that we love’

- (16) *Maluku, Maluku mio-dora*  
 Maluku Maluku 1PEX-love  
 ‘Maluku Maluku that we love’
- (17) *bongana o gasi madea i-lepe.*  
 forest NRRNM beach inside 3NHS-a.lot  
 ‘it has a lot of forests and beaches’



- (18) *Maluku, Maluku*      *marubu Maluku*      *i-dadi*      *ka*      *o*      *suku*      *moi*  
 Maluku Maluku      vary      Maluku      3NHS-become      only      NRRM      tribe      one  
 ‘Maluku Maluku is diverse Maluku yet it is a single tribe’
- (19) *ngaro*      *ka*      *i-susa*      *to*      *ngomi*      *mia-sabari*  
 although      only      3NHS-difficult      PSM      1PEX.POSS      1PEX.POSS-news  
 ‘although our situation is difficult’

The interaction between humans and environment becomes the subject of study in ecolinguistics. Toponyms or place names, especially those derived from topographic features, are important cultural and environmental artifacts that belong to a nation and its language (Nash 2015). The name *Maluku* (Moluccas) has been recorded since historical times of contact between the local residents and the travelers from West Asia, China, and European explorers in the spice trade (Amal 2016, Pattikayhatu 2012, Ririmasse 2017). A number of scientific and popular literatures verify the different meanings of the word *Maluku* even in the language of North Halmahera itself. In Galela, for example, *ma* means ‘once’ and *luku* is a preposition ‘in’; while in Tobelo, the word *loko*, which is also known in Ternate, is synonymous with ‘mountain’ (Amal 2016: 5). Meanwhile in the popular discourse, the word *Maluku* comes from the Arabic *jazirah al mamluk* which means ‘island of the kings’ that the Arab traders conferred when they landed in the spice-rich islands. Quoting P.H. van der Kemp, Adnan Amal mentions the various origins of the name *Maluku* which are respectively associated with various social, economic, and political interests. He then systematically elaborates the origin of the name in accordance with (i) history, (ii) trade and shipping, and (iii) government administration in the islands (Amal 2016: 8). The lyrics of the song *Maluku Miodora* are loaded with toponyms. The word *Maluku* in this song appears thirteen times as where lyric (16) above is repeated twice and (18) three times.

In this folksong with a strong nationalistic tone, the forest and the beach become an important backdrop for the islands of Maluku. The repetitions of the lyrics highlight the importance of Maluku for this ethnic group. An understanding of the Earth as a life force is shown through a metaphor that compares forests (land) with beaches (sea) as the basic pattern of life. To compare, the rural and nomadic inhabitants of Anatolia still maintain and value their connection to nature by seeing Mother Earth as the protector, not a rival to conquer as seen by the Anatolian urban settlers (Parlak 201: 177). For the Moluccans, similarly, the dense vegetation and beautiful beaches are sources of bliss. Surrounded by the sea, Maluku islands are not only beautiful but also one of Indonesia’s fertile and spice-rich regions. Here, evaluation of nature as a protector of life in the light of ecolinguistics is a positive and meaningful narrative. Evaluation is defined as “a story in the minds of people about whether an area of life is good or bad” (Stibbe 2015: 84). It is evident that the song gives Maluku a good evaluation, hence the right story to tell for generations to come while preserving the Pagu language.

Lyric (16), (17) and (18) also provide further evaluation as well as appreciation that Maluku is an irreplaceable land. The transition *ngaro* ‘although’ in (19) gives more emphasis on how they love Maluku the land of birth. It is easy to equate the love for the birth place with the appraisal to every aspect of life connected to it including language. Here we see another “story-we-live-by” that enthusiasts in language ecology attempt to nurture (Stibbe 2015).

### 5.3 Nature as a friend or foe

The last song examined belongs to Pagu people who converted to Christianity. The lyrics of the song contain hymn and praise to the Creator as follows.

Folksong 3: entitled *Aba Jou* ‘Lord Father’

- (20) *Aba Jou Ni-pareta sininga ma deaka*  
father lord your-order heart RNL inside  
‘Lord Father your words are inside our hearts’
- (21) *Jou to-ni-suba to-ni-sialene Aba Jou*  
Lord 1SS-2SO-worship 1SS-2SO-prais father lord  
‘Lord I worship you and praise you Father Lord’
- (22) *o hongan-ika maka to-tagi o yeku-iye maka to-sau*  
NRNM forest-DAS though 2SS-go NRNM mountain-upward though 1SS-climb  
‘even to the jungle I go and to the mountain I climb’
- (23) *to-ma-siap-uwa maka to-tagi o moku-moku i-sese-sese*  
1SS-REFL-ready-NEG though 1SS-go NRNM wave-wave 3NHS-break-break  
‘I wasn’t ready but I had to go even though the waves were breaking’
- (24) *mangale, mangale ta-asa Ni-romanga*  
because because 1SS.NHO.bring your-name  
‘because o because I carry your name’

This hymn of praise to God is presumably meant for evangelical motivation and promotion of personal piety. It is worthy of note that the Pagu Christians are minority among the predominantly Muslims in North Halmahera. North Halmahera is the center of Islamic power in political and economic spheres since the reign of the Ternate Sultanate in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century AD (Van Fraassen 1980). Archaeological evidence shows that the territories in North Halmahera, like Tobelo, Galela, Moro and Kao had a historical relationship with Ternate in political and economic terms (Handoko 2017: 96). The influence of Tobelo or Modole is clearly seen in the song above. Modole is the name of a tribe whose territory is closest to that of the Pagu tribe. Shown in the song lyrics are two words that come from the Tobelo/ Modole language, i.e. *honganika* and *romanga*. In Pagu itself the two words are *bonganika* which means ‘forest’ and *lomanga* which means ‘name’.

We are told that the ‘I’ persona in this Christian song cuts through the forest and climbs the mountain for the mission. Living close to nature, Pagu people are known for their “spirit of indigenous peoples”, that is, they persistently aspire to protect nature. Lyric (22), (23) and (24) show that nature (forests, mountains, and waves) are God’s co-creation that the persona would likely (en)counter along the way throughout the mission. Despite Pagu people’s intimacy to nature, road trip and sea journey maybe difficult at times. Lyric (24) in addition shows that in spite of the unwillingness, the ‘I’ character marches on with no fear because of God’s providence. It can also be inferred here that it is not the physical journey through the forest, mountain, and sea that brings about unwillingness; the character’s reluctance is presumably

due to the mental burden of spreading the Words of God in foreign (religio-extraterritorial) lands.

However, when compared to the two folksongs discussed previously, the folksong *Aba Jou* is the most human-oriented in that nature is destined to be the subordinate partaker worthy of blame. The use of the conjunction ‘though’ shows that nature can be an obstruction to one’s journey. Nature may not always support human activities. The four-time-repetition of each stanza emphasizes the anthropocentric frame as to imply that nature can sometimes become humans’ adversary. The forest maybe too thick and dark to penetrate; the mountain is too high and rocky to climb; and the winds and waves are too furious to calm. Ecolinguistic lens critically refutes the view that people are Masters over Nature. Mühlhäusler writes:

*There is a tendency in most languages I have worked with to equate the notion of ‘environment’ with what sustains human life and what pleases humans. Most discourses are anthropocentric; most discourses are focused on local concerns and issues covering no more than a human life span. Most discourses also assume the desirability of the survival of humanity in spite of the highly dubious record humans have had on the rest of life on earth. After all, humans depend on plants and animals but not vice versa. (2020: 15)*

Given that this song is not immune to the discursively anthropocentric tendency, it is the least eco-friendly story of all three songs examined in terms of Stibbe’s conception. The song’s environmental element, however, remains important. All together, the existence of Pagu’s forest, mountain, and sea is documented and duly preserved in this folksong. The revitalization of the Pagu language today is thus always relevant to the indigenous community movement. The movement was promoted following the issuance of the Constitutional Court No. 35/PUU-X/2012 which states that indigenous peoples have the rights to manage their customary forests. As it is, any story that reminds human beings about nature as their peaceful co-creation should be continually told and lived-by.

#### 5.4 On language influence

Folksongs in Pagu mostly come from the songs in the Tobelo language which is the biggest ethnic language in North Halmahera, i.e. the language with the biggest number of speakers (roughly 15,000) and the most largest area in Halmahera (Voorhoeve 1983). Because of a high percentage of lexical similarities between Tobelo and Pagu, Voorhoeve (1988) classifies both as two dialects. However more recent studies on the structures on Tobelo (Holton 2003) and Pagu (Wimbish 1991; Perangin-Angin 2018) suggest that they are two distinct languages from the same language stock.

Since Tobelo is the biggest regional language in the island, its songs have its own privilege among the regional people, that is, they become the ‘trademark’ of the island and everybody inter-ethnically sings them in different occasions and places. Consequently, when sung by other ethnics of the island, the ‘original version’ is often retained. Among the three songs sung by our Pagu informants there are clearly and consistently few words that are pronounced in Tobelo ‘way’. The table below shows the retained Tobelo words.

Table 1: The retained Tobelo words

| Folksong title                     | Tobelo words    | Pagu words     | Meaning    |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| (1)<br><i>Sayange Nanga Sejara</i> | <i>Ngohi</i>    | <i>ngoi</i>    | ‘I’        |
|                                    | <i>Upa</i>      | <i>uwa</i>     | ‘Don’t’    |
|                                    | <i>Ngohaka</i>  | <i>ngoaka</i>  | ‘child’    |
|                                    | <i>Sigadono</i> | <i>siadono</i> | ‘until’    |
| (2)<br><i>Maluku Miodora</i>       | <i>Ngaro</i>    | <i>ngalo</i>   | ‘although’ |
| (3)<br><i>Aba Jou</i>              | <i>Romanga</i>  | <i>lomanga</i> | ‘name’     |

The difference between the Tobelo and Pagu words are very minimum as exemplified by those words. The following are the phonological differences among them: (i) the absence of /h/ and /g/ in the Pagu words such *ngoi*, *ngoaka*, and *siadono* (ii) the use of voiced labio-velar approximant /w/ instead of voiceless bilabial stop /p/ such as in *uwa*, and (iii) alveolar lateral approximant /l/ rather than alveolar trill /r/ like in *ngalo* and *lomanga*.

However, among the words in the lyrics there is an inconsistency of pronunciation of the word meaning ‘forest’ in Folksong 2 and Folksong 3. In folksong 2 the word is *bongana* with the /b/ initial which is a Pagu word. In folksong 3 by contrast the word is pronounced in Tobelo namely *hongan* with the /h/ initial. We assume folksong 2 has been familiarized more among the Pagu community than Folksong 3.

From the lyrics we can also see the influence of the Malay language. The following are borrowed Malay words found in the lyrics: *sayange* ‘love’, *sejara* ‘history’, *pikiri* ‘think’ and *susa* ‘difficult’. Malay language has functioned as the lingua franca among the multiethnic groups in the regions for a long time at least since the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Nowel 2018). It is thus not surprising that the local languages including Tobelo and Pagu borrow many words from it.

## 6 Conclusions

This article has analyzed three Pagu folksongs using ecolinguistics with maintenance of endangered language in mind. It concludes three main things. First, the three songs have local cultural and traditional values that show the identity of the Pagu ethnic group, although it is rarely known among the general public. This is because Pagu is rarely used by the Pagu community, especially by the younger generation. Based on this fact, the reintroduction of these three folksongs to the Pagu community is very important. Secondly, ecolinguistics analysis shows the closeness of the Pagu community to its natural surroundings although sometimes nature can also obstruct humans’ journey. Third, in terms of its distribution, the three songs are heavily influenced by other regional languages in North Halmahera such as Tobelo and Modole. These languages are used by more people and affect the Pagu language. As long as there are users and intensive interactions occur between the users, the Pagu language preservation can still be done. Reintroduction of local culture such as folksongs is one way to increase the use of Pagu so that its extinction can be prevented. This revitalization will encourage the awareness of the Pagu indigenous people to strengthen their identities in order to obtain and utilize their rights. Mastering the mother tongue is part of the efforts to strengthen Pagu identity. Thus, understanding Pagu culture, customs, and traditions is significant to enhance the Pagu language revitalization.

## Abbreviations

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1PEX      | first person plural exclusive            |
| 1PEX.POSS | first person plural exclusive possessive |
| 1PIN      | first person plural inclusive            |
| 1PIN.POSS | first person plural inclusive possessive |
| 1S        | first person pronoun                     |
| 1SS       | first singular person subject            |
| 2SO       | second singular person object            |
| 2SS       | second singular person subject           |
| 3NHS      | third person non-human subject           |
| 3PL.POSS  | third person plural possessive           |
| CAUS      | causative                                |
| DAS       | direction away from the speaker          |
| NEG       | negative                                 |
| NHO       | non-human object                         |
| NRNM      | non-related noun marker                  |
| PSM       | possessor marker                         |
| REFL      | reflexive                                |
| RNL       | related noun linker                      |

## References

- Amery, Robert. 2016. The Kurna diaspora and its homecoming: Understanding the loss and re-emergence of the Kurna language of the Adelaide Plains, South Australia. In Austin, Peter K. & Koch, Harold (eds.) *Language, land & song: Studies in honour of Luise Hercus*, 505–522. London: EL Publishing.  
<http://www.elpublishing.org/book/language-land-and-song>
- Amery, Robert. 2018. Revitalization of Kurna. In Hinton, Leanne & Huss, Leena, & Roche, Gerald (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*, 330–341. New York and London: Routledge.
- Albury, Nathan John. 2016. Defining Māori language revitalisation: A project in folk linguistics. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 287–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12183>
- Amal, Muhamad Adnan. 2016. *Kepulauan rempah-rempah* [Spice Islands]. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Brenzinger, Matthias, & Heinrich, Patrick. 2013. The return of Hawaiian: Language networks of the revival movement. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 14(2). 300–316.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2013.812943>
- Chala Teresa, Geremew, & Dagim Raga, Hunduma. 2018. Oromo oral literature for environmental conservation: A study of selected folksongs in East and West Hararghe Zones. *Humanities* 7(4). 94.
- Chen, Sibio. 2016. Language and ecology: A content analysis of ecolinguistics as an emerging research field. *Ampersand* 3. 108–116.

- Cowell, Andrew. 2012. The Hawaiian model of language revitalization: Problems of extension to mainland native America. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2012(218).167193.<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2012-0063>
- Fill, Alwin & Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2004. *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Guérin, Valérie. 2008. Writing an endangered language. *Language Documentation & Conservation* 2(1). 47–67.
- Ghorbanpour, Amir. 2016. Ecolyrics in pop music: A review of two nature songs. *Language & Ecology: Journal of the International Ecolinguistics Association* 10. <http://ecolinguistics-association.org/journal>
- Grant, Catherine. 2012. Rethinking safeguarding: Objections and responses to protecting and promoting endangered musical heritage. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 21(1). 31–51. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17411912.2012.641733>
- Grant, Catherine. 2017. A case for greater interdisciplinary collaboration in language and music revitalization. In Hinton, Leanne & Huss, Leena, & Roche, Gerald (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization* (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*. 236–244. New York and London: Routledge.
- Handoko, Wuri. 2017. Ekspansi kekuasaan Islam Kesultanan Ternate di Pesisir Timur Halmahera Utara [The Expansion of Islamic power of Ternate Sultanate in the East Coastal of North Halmahera]. *Kapata Arkeologi* 13(1). 95–108. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/191052501.pdf>
- Hinton, Leanne. 2011. Language revitalization and language pedagogy: New teaching and learning strategies. *Language and Education* 25(4). 307–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.577220>
- Hisyam, Muhamad & Suganda, Azis & Usman & Perangin-Angin, Dalan. 2013. *Pemertahanan Bahasa Pagu* [Pagu Language Maintenance]. Jakarta: LIPI.
- Hisyam, Muhamad & Purwoko, Dwi & Usman & Perangin-Angin, Dalan. 2012. *Bahasa Pagu: Vitalitas dan Pemertahanannya* [Pagu Language: Vitality and Retention]. Jakarta: PMB–LIPI.
- Holton, Gary. 2003. *Tobelo*. Muenchen: Lincom Europa.
- Johnson, Henry. 2015. Musical ownership and popfolk on Jersey: Sustaining tradition through intervention, technology and creative practice. *Journal of World Popular Music* 2(1). 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jwpm.v2i1.27169>
- Lauder, Multamia Retno Mayekti Tawangsih. 2011. Pengelolaan dan pemberdayaan bahasa yang berpotensi terancam punah [Management and empowerment of potentially endangered languages]. *Prosiding Seminar Pengembangan Dan Perlindungan Bahasa-Kebudayaan Etnik Minoritas Untuk Penguatan Bangsa*, Vol 5.
- Lauder, Multamia Retno Mayekti Tawangsih. 2018. Obstacles to creating an inventory of languages in Indonesia: A dialectology perspective. In *Language Diversity in the Pacific*. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853598685-007>

- McCarter, Joe & Gavin, Michael C. 2011. Perceptions of the value of traditional ecological knowledge to formal school curricula: Opportunities and challenges from Malekula Island, Vanuatu. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 7(1). 38. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1746-4269-7-38>
- McCormick, Alexandra. 2016. Vanuatu education policy post-2015: “Alternative”, decolonising processes for “development.” *International Education Journal* 15(3). 16–29.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2003. *Language of Environment, Environment of Language*. London: Battlebridge.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2020. Quo vadis ecolinguistics? *Ecolinguística: Revista Brasileira de Ecologia e Linguagem* 6(1). 5 – 23.
- Nash, Joshua. 2015. Placenames and ecolinguistics: Some considerations for toponymists. *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 40(1/2).99 – 103. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/24722041?seq=5#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/24722041?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents)
- Nash, Joshua & Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2014. Linking language and the environment: the case of Norfolk and Norfolk Island. *Language Sciences* 41A. 26–33
- Nowell, Charles Edward. 2018. *Magellan’s Voyage around the World: Three Contemporary Accounts*. Auckland: Pickle Partners Publishing.
- Ohara, Yumiko. 2016. Re-inventing Hawaiian identity conception of ethnicity and language in the language revitalisation movement. *Internationales Asienforum*, 47(1–2). 57–80.
- Parlak, Zafer. 2011. Nature in Anatolian mystic poetry and folk songs. In *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*. 172–187. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Pattikayhatu, John A. 2012. Bandar niaga di perairan Maluku dan perdagangan rempah-rempah [Commercial port in the Moluccas territorial water and spice trade]. *Kapata Arkeologi* 8(1). 1–8.
- Perangin-Angin, Dalan. 2013. Meninjau struktur peribahasa Pagu: Sebuah bahasa di Indonesia Timur yang terancam punah [Reviewing the proverbial structure of the Pagu: An endangered language in Eastern Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 15(3). 447–474.
- Perangin-Angin, Dalan. 2018. *A descriptive grammar of the Pagu language*. The University of Hong Kong. (Doctoral dissertaion.)
- Ririmasse, Marlon N. 2017. Sebelum jalur rempah: Awal interaksi niaga lintas batas di Maluku dalam perspektif arkeologi [Before the spice route: The beginning of inter-border trade interaction in Maluku in the archaeological perspective]. *Kapata Arkeologi* 13(1). 47–54. <https://doi.org/10.24832/kapata.v13i1.388>
- Rosowsky, Andrey. 2015. Heavenly verses: The role of devotional song in minority language maintenance. *The Music of Endangered Languages* 92–99.
- Steffensen, Sune Vork & Fill, Alwin (eds.) 2014. Ecolinguistics: The ecology of language and the ecology of science. *Language Science* 41. A.

- Stibbe, Arran. 2015. Ecolinguistic discourse analysis. In *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi013>
- Stibbe, Arran. 2012. Ecolinguistics and globalization. In *The Handbook of Language and Globalization*, 413–418. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sunarto, Emanuel & Mukarto, Franciscus Xaverius & Bismoko, Johannes & Dewi, Novita. 2018. Trilingual textualization to deliver Indonesian local cultures to high school students. *Language and Language Teaching Journal* 21(1). 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2018.210109>
- Tondo, Fanny Henry. 2019. Language and religion: The use of language in Christian liturgy on some border areas of Indonesia. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 20(3). 347–359.
- Van Fraassen, Christiaan Frans. 1980. Types of socio-political structure in North-Halmaheran history. In Masinambow, Eduard Karel Markus (ed.) *Halmahera dan Raja Ampat Konsep dan Strategi Penelitian* [Halmahera and Raja Ampat Research Concept and Strategy], 87–149. Jakarta: Leknas – LIPI.
- Vari-Bogiri, Hannah. 2005. A sociolinguistic survey of Araki: A dying language of Vanuatu. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 26(1). 52–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710508668398>
- Voorhoeve, Clemens Lambertus. 1983. The non-Austronesian languages in the North Moluccas. In Masinambow, Eduard Karel Markus. *Halmahera dan Raja Ampat sebagai kesatuan majemuk* [Halmahera and Raja Ampat unity in diversity] Vol 2. No 2. 13–39. Jakarta: PPT – LIPI.
- Voorhoeve, Clemens Lambertus. 1988. The languages of the Northern Halmaheran stock. *Papers in New Guinea Linguistics*, no. 26., 181–209. (Pacific Linguistics A-76). Canberra: Australian National University.
- Wimbish, Sandra Gay. 1991. *An Introduction to Pagu through the Analysis of Narrative Discourse*. Arlington: University of Texas at Arlington. (MA thesis.)

Dalan M. Perangin-Angin  
[dalanperanginangin@gmail.com](mailto:dalanperanginangin@gmail.com)  
 Department of English Letters,  
 Faculty of Letters,  
 Sanata Dharma University  
 STM Pembangunan, Mrican, CT Depok, Sleman  
 Yogyakarta 55281  
 Indonesia

Novita Dewi  
[novitadewi@usd.ac.id](mailto:novitadewi@usd.ac.id)  
 Graduate Program in English Language Studies,  
 Sanata Dharma University  
 Affandi St., Mrican, CT Depok, Sleman  
 Yogyakarta 55281  
 Indonesia



In SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics [online]. 2020, vol. 17, no. 5 [cit. 2020-12-01]. Available on web page [http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL47/pdf\\_doc/10.pdf](http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL47/pdf_doc/10.pdf). ISSN 1336-782X