

## **Revealing the Kafoa Language Vitality through the Basic Cultural Vocabulary Mastery: Implications for Language Education**

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*Received: 29 September 2022*

*Reviewed: 2 September 2023-1 December 2023*

*Accepted: 21 December 2023*

*Published: 31 December 2023*

### **Abstract**

The Kafoa language is one of the indigenous languages in Indonesia so that needs to preserve it to be in existed category and reveal it as language assets in Indonesia and local culture identity. Revealing the Kafoa Language vitality can be conducted through many perspectives, one of them is through the use of basic cultural vocabulary mastery by native speakers. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the Kafoa language vitality through the basic cultural vocabulary mastery by the native speakers in Bawah Sub-Village, Probur Utara Village, Southwest Alor District, Alor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The study was a qualitative applying case study method. Data were the answer of 40 native speakers of the Kafoa language as respondents. In collecting data, questionnaire and interview guidance is used as instruments which involves the 451 basic cultural vocabularies in nine domains of body parts; pronouns, greetings, and

references; kinship; village and community life; house and its parts; equipment and tools; foods and beverages; plants and trees; and animals. The data were then analysed through Miles and Huberman steps of data analysis. The study result showed that 190 (42%) vocabularies are still mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language, while 261(58%) vocabularies are not longer mastered. It indicates that the tendency to master the basic cultural vocabulary by native speakers of the Kafoa language tends to decrease so that its vitality is getting low. To maintain the vitality or life power of the Kafoa language, a policy from the Government is needed and teaching it in the schools is considered.

**Keywords:** Language vitality; basic cultural vocabulary; native speakers

## Introduction

Language vitality can be understood as the ability of a language to carry out its functions to achieve communication goals (Candrasari & Nurmaida, 2018) so that it becomes a benchmark for language preservation through its use in the daily communication of speakers in the social sphere (Kovanova, 2019). Indigenous languages as local cultural identities and products cannot be separated from their native's daily life (Munandar & Newton, 2021; Demuro & Gurney, 2018). All of these cultural products are conveyed through the language used by the natives (Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2020; Chaer, 2008) and are passed down from generation to generation. In efforts to maintain the indigenous languages, language vitality is closely related to the preservation and protection of languages (Perrault et al., 2017). Both are necessary and urgent to be implemented because several indigenous languages are endangered or have experienced to a decline in status (Muchena & Jakaza, 2022; Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). Therefore, research the indigenous language vitality is very necessary to be conducted so that the language vitality level can be obtained and the strategies for preserving it can be designed.

The measurement of language vitality focuses on several conditions, including international, national, provincial, educational, developing, threatened, shifting, endangered, almost extinct and passive, and extinct (Lewis et al., 2016). To understand the sustainability of culture, identity, and local knowledge, it is necessary to study the vitality of indigenous languages. Overall, the urgency of indigenous language vitality studies lies in maintaining cultural diversity, linguistic ecosystems, and local knowledge (Low et al., 2022). Without efforts to preserve the indigenous languages, there is a risk of losing a rich and valuable aspect of human identity and world diversity (Catoto, 2022).

Many studies have been conducted on the indigenous language vitality in Indonesia. Wagiati et al. (2017) at her study focused on the vitality of Sundanese in Bandung Regency and F. Wibowo (2016) focused on the vitality of the Bengkulu language. The both experts studied indigenous languages vitality. Wagiati found that Sundanese language in Bandung is still safe supported by the high amount of Sundanese people mastered their language, while Wibowo mentioned that Bengkulu language in Bengkulu is also safe due to the native speakers of Bengkulu language always use it in their daily communication.

Particularly in East Nusa Tenggara, Holton (2006) and Inayatussalihah (2019) have studied about the extinction of Ndebang language in Alor Regency. They mostly found that the Ndebang language is at a critical stage (critically endangered) because the use of its language has decreased and limited. Meanwhile, Ninuk et al. (2005) have also studied Hamap language to identify the Hamap people identity in Alor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

Furthermore, Stephen & Hattori (2006) have studied the Kafoa language through the Alor people. In their studied they found that the language used by speakers in the area was identified as Kafoa, although some Alor people named it Jafoo. They estimated that at most 1000 speakers of

the Kafoa language, its extinction is categorized as endangered language (Crystal, 2002). Research on the Kafoa language and culture has also been carried out by Humaedi (2013) who stated that efforts to preserve regional language and culture can only be carried out if there is cooperation from various parties, as well as stated by Fritz & Sandu (2020) that the Kafoa language is marginalized by other languages and sophisticated technology. Apart from that, Santosa (2012) has also revealed the cultural wisdom and social functions in Kafoa's oral literature in Alor Island, East Nusa Tenggara. He found that the wisdom included cultural functions and values in Kafoa's oral literature is a medium of oral communication for the local community.

Based on the previous studies, it is clearly understood that no one experts reached the basic cultural vocabulary of a language used by its native speakers that still use in their daily life to determine a language vitality. The mastery of basic cultural vocabulary in various areas of life can reflect the level of use and vitality of a language through its speakers use (Rogers & Campbell, 2015). The language used by the community is closely related to the daily life of the native speakers (Candrasari, 2017; Maricar & Duwila, 2017) so that it is important to explore a language vitality through the mastery of the basic cultural vocabulary used by its native speakers. Due to the reasons, this study focuses on revealing the vitality of Kafoa language through the basic cultural vocabulary used by its native speakers. In this context, the researchers explore the basic cultural vocabulary which is mastered and not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language. The exploration is carried out in nine domains of basic cultural vocabulary, namely (a) body parts, (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, (c) kinship, (d) village and community life, (e) house and its parts, (f) equipment and tools, (g) foods and beverages, (h) plants and trees, and (i) animals.

## Literature review

### Language vitality and preservation efforts

Language vitality refers to the overall health, strength, and potential for continued use and dissemination of a language within a community (Chen, 2023; Rowley & Cormier, 2023). It is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a wide range of factors that affect the status of a language, from the number of its speakers to its social and cultural significance (Zhou, 2023). Understanding language vitality is essential for assessing the risk of language endangerment and extinction and implementing strategies to preserve and revitalize at-risk languages (Lloyd-Smith et al., 2023).

Numerous things contribute to language vitality, including the number of speakers, intergenerational transmission, language domains, language attitudes, language prestige, speaker motivation, language policies, and cultural factors (Mishra & Rahman, 2023; Nguyen, 2019). The total number of speakers of a language is a fundamental indicator of its vitality. Languages with larger speaker populations are generally vital because they have a better chance of being passed down to future generations (Vari & Tamburelli, 2023). For a language to remain vital, it must be actively transmitted from one generation to the next (Zhang et al., 2023). If speakers have a strong emotional connection to their language and see its importance for their cultural identity, they are more likely to engage with it actively (Benu et al., 2023). Government policies can also support or hinder language vitality. Policies promoting bilingual education, providing language program resources, and encouraging the use of indigenous languages in official contexts can contribute to language vitality. The role of the language in cultural practices, rituals, storytelling, and traditional knowledge transmission also influences the language vitality. Languages integrated to a community's cultural identity are more likely to remain vital (Mbatha et al., 2023). Based on the

several dimensions, linguists and researchers often categorize languages into different levels of vitality, such as, (1) safe, (2) vulnerable, (3) experiencing decline, (4) endangered, (5) critical, and (6) extinct (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2021). Understanding language vitality is crucial for formulating strategies to preserve and revitalize languages and appreciating the rich diversity of languages that contribute to our global cultural heritage (Kraisame, 2018).

Some experts also stated that language vitality can be grouped into six statuses, namely: safe, stable but endangered, declining experienced, endangered, critical, and extinct ((Kincade (1991), Wurm (2003), (Sugono et al., 2017)). A language is safe if everyone in that ethnic group still uses it. A language is in a stable condition (but it is in danger of extinction) when the number of speakers (children and older people) used are few. A language is experiencing a decline when some of the speakers, both children and older people, use it and some other children do not use it. A language is endangered if the speakers aged 20 years old and above used are few and the other elders do not use it in the family sphere. A language is critical when the speakers aged 40 years and above are very few. A language is in a state of extinction when its speakers are no longer there. Therefore, a language can be said to have high vitality if the speakers of the language are still in large numbers and its variations are still widely used. These statuses become one of the language characteristics that will continue a language can be used and passed down from generation to generation.

In line with this, based on the number of speakers and how they care and given attention to a language, Krauss (1992) has categorized language vitality into three categories, namely (1) moribund languages, (2) endangered languages, and (3) safe languages. Moribund languages are languages that children no longer use as their mother tongue; children are still studying endangered languages but will be abandoned in the future; safe languages are languages with many speakers, and government or related parties still provide strong support.

Furthermore, Ibrahim (2011) then considered that a language is in a dying condition (named category 1) when it is no longer mastered by speakers under 50 years old, while the number of speakers who are in 50 years old and above are few. It is only recorded in traditional texts. A language is endangered if it is only used by speakers aged 25 years and above, while speakers under 25 years old have no longer used it actively. A language is safe if its native speakers are still studying the language as their mother tongue from the old age to the young in various spheres: family, social relations, and various official and traditional events.

The study of language vitality is closely related to language extinction caused by language shifts and natural disasters (Grimes, 2001). So far, around 139 indigenous languages in Indonesia are endangered (Zuraya, 2016). Parents do not use their mother tongue when talking with their children and families because they think that the second language used is more profitable from an economic, cultural, and educational point of views. They think that their mother tongue does not guarantee their life and future because they have a low social position (Candrasari & Nurmaida, 2018). Language extinction can also be influenced by external factors (political, economic, religious, cultural, or educational coercions) and internal factors (such as the speakers' negative attitude toward their language). As result, the language is indicated by the speakers' ignorance of the development and preservation of their indigenous language so that their language vitality becomes weak (Candrasari, 2017; Suandi, 2014). Later on, the speakers no longer feel proud to use their language as an identity and they feel ashamed to use their language. If speakers of a language switch to another, they begin to leave their mother tongue so that their indigenous language will become decrease gradually. If the language documentation is not carried out, the remaining speakers will no longer recognize their mother tongue (Lauerdorf, 2021).

In addition, the study of language vitality is also closely related to language maintenance. Language maintenance is about the changes and stability of language use and the psychological, social, and cultural processes of the other parties in multilingual societies (Doreleijers & Swanenberg, 2023; Sumarsono, 2013). The power of the majority language toward the minority languages is one of the quite interesting issues in examining the language shift and maintenance. In line language maintenance, language shift also occurs due to language contact when the speakers communicate (Bhakti, 2020). However, the powerless of speakers in a minority language to defend their native language in majority language competition has occurred dominantly, including in Indonesia, where the society is multiethnic and multilingual.

Belew (2018) studied about discourses of speaker hood in Iyasa which focused on linguistic identity and authenticity in an endangered language. The study helps workers to produce better documentation, improves revitalization prospects, and enhances language development efforts. Moreover, T'Arhesi (2021) found that documenting and learning endangered languages is very important so that vocabulary can be known to the people. Prentza & Kaltsa (2020) showed that the Vlach Aromanian language is endangered. For this, it is necessary to conduct (a) language documentation per bilingual group to explore the transfer of majority languages into heritage languages and (b) initiation to raise awareness in the community about language diversity that is largely unnoticed by native speakers. The needs and benefits of bilingualism are often associated with high-status and endangered languages.

Efforts to preserve and revitalize endangered languages are essential to maintain linguistic and cultural diversity (Kibrik, 2021). Such efforts may include documentation, language revitalization, cultural initiatives, bilingual education, media and technology, collaboration with various stakeholders, and policy changes. Efforts to preserve the vitality of languages often require collaboration between linguists, educators, community members, and governments to ensure that endangered languages can thrive and continue to enrich the global cultural heritage (Gwerevende & Mthombeni, 2023).

As essential effort to preserve the Kafoa language considering the expert's views of language vitality, the researchers refer to explore and reveal the Kafoa language vitality through Ibrahim's categorization who has divided the native speakers into two groups, namely (a) the speakers aged 25 years old and above, and (b) the speakers under 25 years old. The both categorization make them simple in determining the Kafoa language vitality.

### Cultural vocabulary mastery of native speaker

Cultural vocabulary is an essential part of the language that helps convey the intricacies of a culture's identity, worldview, and way of life so that it enables effective communication within the cultural context and facilitates a deeper understanding of cultural nuances (Saiu, 2022). Cultural vocabulary is crucial in effective cross-cultural communication and understanding (Summers, 2022). It allows individuals to communicate authentically and sensitively, respecting the unique perspectives and values of the culture they are engaging with (Yekelchuk, 2022). Therefore, cultural vocabulary can be understood as words, expressions, and terms that are closely tied to a specific culture and reflect its values, traditions, practices, history, and unique concepts.

Cultural vocabulary refers to specific aspects of a group or community of life, culture, and traditions. Cultural vocabulary reflects a culture's unique ways of seeing and expressing itself and can provide insight into how language reflects aspects of that culture (Rahayu & Munawarah, 2021). As result, Swadesh vocabulary refers to a list of basic words used in comparative analyses of different languages that are considered to represent universal concepts that tend to be present in



all languages (Rusady & Munawarah, 2021; Mikhailova, 2019). The main purpose of this list is to track linguistic changes and language evolution over time (Sulistyono & Fernandez, 2019), while in linguistic evolution, the Swadesh vocabulary list also reflects how different languages describe basic concepts such as numbers, body parts, and family relationships (Dağdeviren-Kırmızı & İnan, 2022; Swadesh, 2017).

To explore the mastery of basic cultural vocabulary by the native speakers of Kafoa language, Swadesh on basic cultural vocabulary are used as a foothold. It is popularly used to study and to look at a language lexicon and dialectological aspects for the extinct languages. Therefore, the researchers in this case uses Swadesh's vocabulary in exploring the mastery of basic cultural vocabulary by the native speakers of Kafoa language in nine domains of basic cultural vocabulary, namely the domains of (a) body parts, (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, (c) kinship, (d) village and community life, (e) houses and their parts, (f) tools and equipment, (g) food and drink, (h) yard plants and trees, and (i) animals

## Research method

### Method and site

The study is a qualitative in case of the Kafoa language vitality. Sugiyono (2008) mentioned that case study is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher explores in depth program, event, activity, process, or one, or more individuals. In this case, the researchers explore the Kafoa language vitality in depth particular community who use the Kafoa language in Bawah Sub-village, Probur Utara Village, Southwest Alor District, Alor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

### Data and resource

Data of the research were the answers of respondents due to the questionnaire consisting of the basic cultural vocabulary in Kafoa language. The basic cultural vocabulary referred to the Swadesh vocabulary as questions which were asked to the respondents. The questions were from nine domains of body parts; pronouns, greetings, and references; kinship; village and community life; house and its parts; equipment and tools; foods and beverages; plants and trees; and animals.

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected native speakers of Kafoa language purposively. The researcher distributed questionnaire to 40 respondents who lived in research site proven by their identity and used the Kafoa language as their mother tongue. They were then divided into two groups, namely (1) the old speakers, and (2) the young speakers. There were 20 old speakers and 20 young speakers. As data resources of the research, the groups were characterized by their ages, the old speakers are the native speakers of Kafoa language who are 25 years old and above ( $\geq 25$  years), while the young speakers are they who are under 25 years old ( $< 25$  years). The grouping of 25-year-old speakers considered Gufran's (2011) offer, who mentioned that the categorization of language vitality is based on the principle of exchange generations in line with the biological considerations in a 25-year cycle. In addition, a 25 years is generally believed to be a productive age at work, so these speakers have high levels, expectations, and motivation to achieve their goals and live in society. In terms of language point of view, teenagers ( $< 25$  years old) are speakers of languages that tend to change so that they are uprooted from the roots of their language.

### Instruments and procedures

Questionnaire is the primary instrument of the research. The questionnaire encompassed information about the respondents including their name, age, and mother tongue. In addition, the questionnaire included the list of basic cultural vocabulary in the Kafoa language as questions in nine domains to assess its vitality. These domains are (a) the body parts with 52 questions; (b) pronouns, greetings, and references with 11 questions; (c) kinship with 24 questions; (d) village and community life with 35 questions; (e) house and parts with 48 questions; (f) equipment and tools with 71 questions; (g) foods and beverages with 52 questions; (h) plants and trees with 68 questions; and (i) animals with 90 questions. The total number of questions in the questionnaire is 451. To strengthen the data of questionnaire, the researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with the native speakers of the Kafoa language to find more comprehensive data.

By using the instruments, the researchers collected data through the questionnaire, followed by an interview applying the questions and answer method from the distributed questionnaire guided by a list of questions in the questionnaire (Emzir, 2016; Sugiyono, 2008). Through these techniques, the researchers could explore the basic cultural vocabulary mastered by native speakers of the Kafoa language and identify its vitality. Data collection began with finding symptoms about the research aspects as a whole so that the circumstances and conditions are clear, then proceeded with delivering questionnaire. The researcher gave more time to the respondents for getting more answers according to the list of questionnaire provided. The researcher asked the native speakers to answer these questions in the Kafoa language. To find more comprehensive data, the researchers then simply interviewed the respondents after receiving the questionnaire.

The data gathered in the questionnaire was classified for data analysis. The data was processed, classified, and analysed so that the results obtained were in line with the needs and objectives of the research. Moreover, the data collected through interview measured the respondents' answer in questionnaire. As a whole, The data analysis technique was carried out by referring to the views of Miles et al. (2019), which required three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusions or verification. These stages require development and modification according to the research needs. In data reduction, the researchers were input data, then reducing the repetition answers. In data display, the researchers were tabulating data, then displaying into the graph and figure. In taking conclusions, the researchers verified data as final conclusion to determine the Kafoa language vitality level.

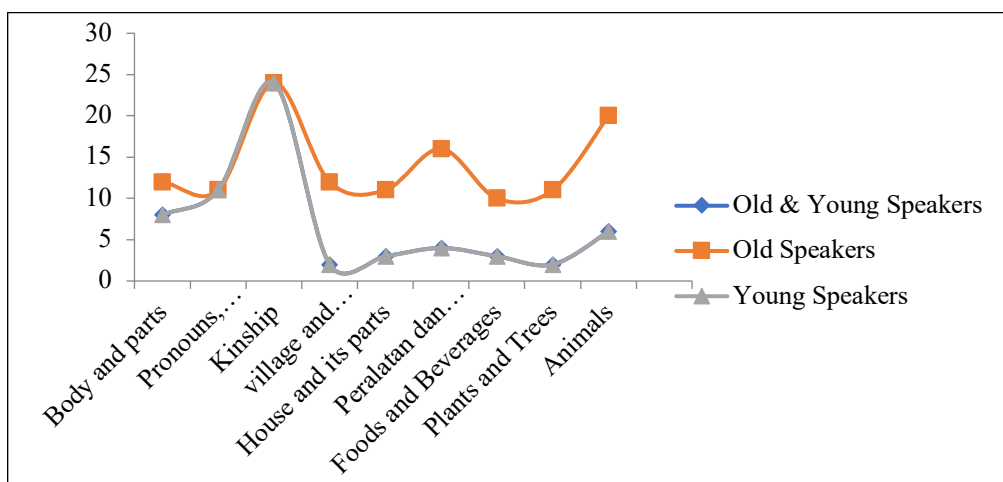
## **Results**

To measure the Kafoa language vitality through the basic cultural vocabulary, the researchers distributed questionnaire to 40 respondents (20 respondents as old native speakers and 20 respondents with total 451 questions of basic cultural vocabulary in nine domains of (a) body parts, (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, (c) kinship, (d) village and community life, (e) houses and their parts, (f) tools and equipment, (g) food and drink, (h) yard plants and trees, and (i) animals. Due to the questionnaire distribution, the researchers found (a) the basic cultural vocabulary mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language, and (b) the basic cultural vocabulary that is not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language. These findings will be described in detail consecutively as follows.

The basic cultural vocabulary mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language

Referring to 451 basic cultural vocabulary questions in nine domains of questionnaire proposed, there were 190(42%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language. The result of the basic cultural vocabulary that are mastered by the native speakers

of Kafoa language can be mapped in the graph 1 below.



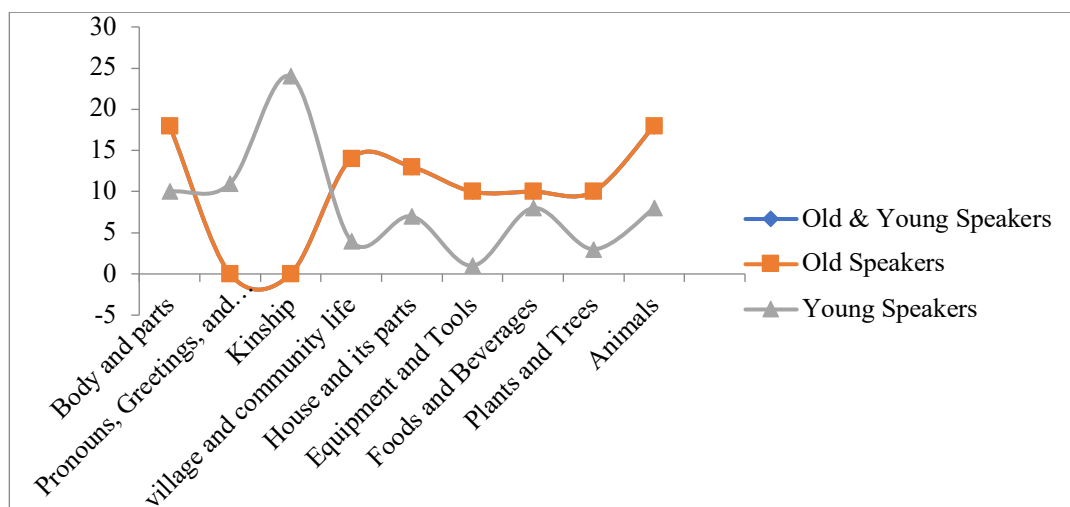
Graph 1. The Basic Cultural Vocabulary Mastered by Native Speakers of Kafoa Language

Graph 1 shows the basic cultural vocabulary mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language. There were 63(14%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the both old and young speakers and 127(28%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by only the old speakers. In terms of body and parts, there were 12(2.6%) and 8(1.8%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, there were 11(2.4%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the both speakers; (c) kinship, there were 24(5.4%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the both speakers; (d) village and community life, there were 12(2.6%) and 2(0.4%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; (e) house and its parts, there were 11(2.4%) and 3(0.7%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; (f) equipment and tools, there were 16(3.5%) and 4(0.9%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; (g) foods and beverages, there were 10(2.2%) and 3(0.7%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; (h) plants and trees, there were 11(2.4%) and 2(0.4%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers; and (i) animals, there were 20(4.5%) and 6(1.3%) basic cultural vocabularies mastered by the old and the young speakers.

The basic cultural vocabulary not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language

Referring to 451 basic cultural vocabulary questions in nine domains of questionnaire proposed, there were 261(58%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language which were divided into 3 parts, such as, vocabularies that are not mastered by the both old and young speakers, (b) vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers, but still mastered by the old speakers, and (c) vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers and rarely used by the old speakers. The result of the basic cultural vocabulary that are not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language can be mapped in the graph 1 below.



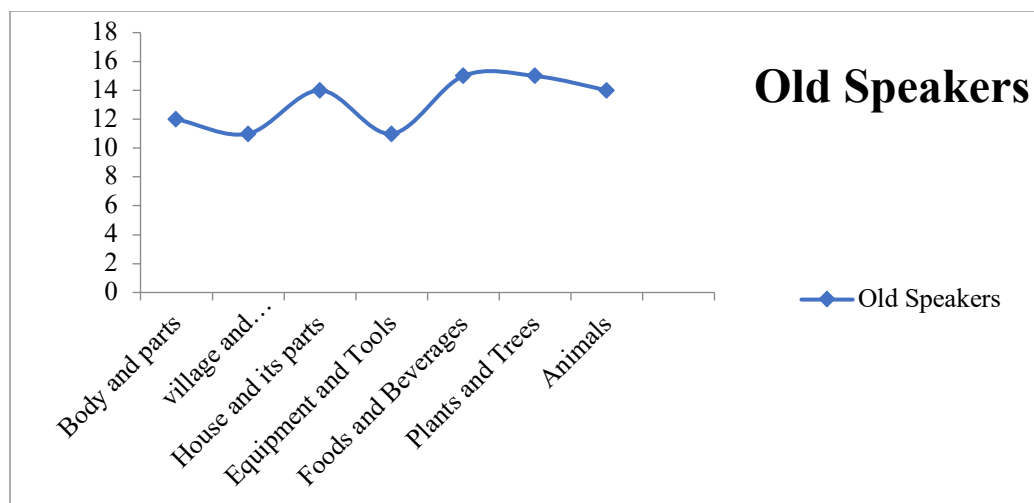


Graph 2. The Basic Cultural Vocabulary Not Mastered by Native Speakers of Kafoa Language

Graph 2 shows the basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language. There were 93(20.6%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the both old and young speakers; 76(17%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers, but still mastered by the old speakers; and 92(20.4%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers and only few old speakers knew them.

In terms of body and parts, there were 18(4%) and 10(2.2%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, there were 11(2.4%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers; (c) kinship, there were 24(5.4%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers; (d) village and community life, there were 14(3.1%) and 4(0.9%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; (e) house and its parts, there were 13(2.9%) and 7(1.6%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; (f) equipment and tools, there were 10(2.2%) and 1(0.2%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; (g) foods and beverages, there were 10(2.2%) and 8(1.8%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; (h) plants and trees, there were 10(2.2%) and 3(0.7%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers; and (i) animals, there were 18(4%) and 8(1.8%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young and the old speakers.

Furthermore, there were 92(20.4%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young speakers and only few of the old speakers knew them. These basic cultural vocabularies are spread across the seven domains of (a) body parts, (b) village and community life, (c) houses and their parts, (d) tools and equipment, (e) food and drink, (f) yard plants and trees, and (g) animals. As a whole, these basic cultural vocabularies on this category can be mapped in the graph 3 below.



Graph 3. Basic Cultural Vocabulary Rarely Used by the Old Speakers of Kafoa Language

Graph 3 shows 92(20.4%) basic cultural vocabularies which are not mastered by the young speakers and only few old speakers knew and used them. These basic cultural vocabularies consisted of 12(2.6%) in term of body and parts; (b) 11(2.4%) in term of village and community life; (c) 14(3.1%) in term of house and its parts; (d) 11(2.4%) in term of equipment and tools; (e) 15(3.4%) in term of foods and beverages; (f) 15(3.4%) in term of plants and trees; and (g) 14(3.1%) in term of animals.

## Discussion

Due to the findings, there were 63(14%) basic cultural vocabularies which are still mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language, either the old or the young speakers. It indicated that the concepts of 63 basic cultural vocabularies in the Kafoa language are still strong so that the life power of these vocabularies are strong. After interviewing some of them, the native speakers mentioned that they deeply knew and understood these vocabularies and used them in their daily life communication. Besides, these basic cultural vocabularies had similarities in two domains of (a) pronouns, greetings, and references; and (b) kinship, even all vocabularies in the two domains are still mastered. It means that these two domains are still strong and the tendency to become extinct is very low. Therefore, the 63 basic cultural vocabularies that are mastered by the old and young speakers of Kafoa language are included in **safe category**. It is in accordance with Kincade (1991), Wurm (2003), and Sugono et al., (2017) who mentioned that a language is safe if everyone in that ethnic group still uses it. Krauss (1992) also said that safe languages are languages with many speakers.

There were also 127(28%) basic cultural vocabularies that are mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language. It indicated that these 127 basic cultural vocabularies in the Kafoa language have valuable opportunity to be alive. Even though the old speakers used are few, their chance are still strong to be known from the old speakers because they still used them in family. Due to interview, the young native speakers mentioned that they basically knew and understood these vocabularies because their parents still used them in their family communication, but rarely found out of their home. Therefore, these 127 basic cultural vocabularies that are mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language are included in **declining experienced category**.

According to Wurm (2003), a language is experiencing a decline when some of the speakers, both children and older people use it and some other children not use it anymore.

Unlikely with the condition of 92(20.4%) basic cultural vocabularies which are not mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language, but the old speakers still mastered them. Due to interview, the young native speakers mentioned that they basically knew the meanings, but rarely used in their family and social interactions. The old native speakers used were few, but they still mastered them. Therefore, these 92 basic cultural vocabularies which are not mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language are included in **endangered category**. It is in line with Kincade (1991) and Wurm (2003) perspectives who stated that a language is **endangered** if the speakers aged 20 years old and above used are few. The few people used them well including in the family sphere. According to Krauss (1992), children are still studying endangered languages but will be abandoned in the future.

Furthermore, there were 76(17%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language. After interviewing some of the young speakers, they mostly said that they did not know these vocabularies anymore and they never heard from their parents, neighbour, teacher, and other related people in their social interactions. It means that these vocabularies have decreased vitality and life power. Therefore, these 76 basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the young native speakers of Kafoa language are included in **critical category**. According to Wurm (2003), a language is in critical when the old speakers used are very few and the young speakers are lack of them.

At least, there were also 93(20.6%) basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the both old and young native speakers of Kafoa language. After interviewing some of the speakers, no one felt ever heard and known these words. Therefore, these 93 basic cultural vocabularies that are not mastered by the old and young native speakers of Kafoa language are included in **extinct category**. A language is in a state of extinction when its speakers are no longer there (Wurm (2003), Kincade (1991)). It means that the vitality and life power of the Kafoa language based on the basic cultural vocabulary is lost and there is an even greater chance of its extinction.

As a whole, all categories of the Kafoa language vitality based on the basic cultural vocabulary examined that they are more mastered by the old speakers rather than the young speakers. It is generally caused by many factors, such as, (1) the old native speakers still learn the Kafoa language from their parents or family at home when they were young, (2) they tend to use Kafoa language in their daily life communication, and (3) they often use Kafoa language when interacting with other Kafoa speakers. Meanwhile, the mastery of Kafoa language by the young speakers is low because (1) they do not know the concept of the basic cultural vocabulary in the Kafoa language, even though they know it in Indonesian, (2) they do not understand the vocabulary in the Kafoa language, even though it exists in Kafoa language; (3) they with their parents do not use these vocabularies in their family domain; (4) they rarely learn the Kafoa language at their home and so do their parents who do not teach the concept of these vocabularies to their children; (5) they do not use these vocabularies in their daily interactions with the fellow of Kafoa language, both at home and in public areas; (7) they often interact with the same native speakers of Kafoa language in other languages, like Klon, Abuy, or Indonesian language. The causes of getting lower mastery of the Kafoa language showed that the native speakers of Kafoa language do not used their mother tongue in the family sphere as well as mandated in the Law No. 24/2009.

## Conclusion

The Kafoa language vitality through the basic cultural vocabulary by its native speakers shows a striking disparity. From 451 basic cultural vocabularies, 190 (42%) vocabularies are still mastered by the native speakers of Kafoa language, while 261(58%) vocabularies are not longer mastered. It is clearly understood that the tendency to master the basic cultural vocabulary by the native speakers of Kafoa language decreases, so its vitality is getting lower. The basic cultural vocabulary is from the domains of (a) body parts, (b) pronouns, greetings, and references, (c) kinship, (d) village and community life, (e) houses and their parts, (f) tools and equipment, (g) food and drink, (h) yard plants and trees, and (i) animals.

The Kafoa language vitality through the basic cultural vocabulary consists of five categories. First, 63(14%) basic cultural vocabularies are in safe category. Second, 127(28%) basic cultural vocabularies are in declining experienced category. Third, 93(20.6%) basic cultural vocabularies are in endangered category. Fourth, 76(17%) vocabularies are in critical category. Fifth, 92(20.4%) basic cultural vocabularies are in extinct category. The five categories have each own characteristic in determining the level of the Kafoa language vitality through the basic cultural vocabulary.

To maintain the vitality or life power of the Kafoa language, a policy from the Government of Alor Regency is needed to follow up on the results of this research, including the Kafoa language as a local content teaching material in schools in Bawah Subvillage, Probur Utara Village, Southwest Alor District, Alor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. In line with this, the Kafoa language is very important to be taught for students considering they are young generation and young native speakers of the Kafoa language who will maintain the Kafoa language vitality.

### **Implications for language education**

This research provides implications for Indonesian learning and regional language learning. In Indonesian learning, teachers can use Kafoa language vocabulary to explain things that students cannot understand in Indonesian. Meanwhile, in regional language learning, Kafoa language vocabulary can be used as local content material. The goal is to maintain the vitality of the Kafoa language. The vocabulary of the Kafoa language can be used as material in regional language learning as local content. In this case, the Kafoa language can be as local content teaching material at schools in Southwest Alor District, so that the Kafoa language can continue to survive as a regional cultural asset.

Apart from that, Kafoa language vocabulary can also supply for Indonesian vocabulary. Kafoa language vocabulary which can become Indonesian vocabulary will certainly be read and known by students in Indonesia. Kafoa language vocabulary in the context of language education can also be developed by compiling a Kafoa Language Dictionary, whose entries come from the vocabulary in this research. The entries in the dictionary can be defined using the Kafoa language or Indonesian. If it can be done, the Kafoa language vocabulary resulting from this research can certainly be preserved and studied by students, teachers, and another.

### **Declaration of conflicting interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Funding acknowledgements**

The research received no external funding.

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