

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of this study, problem identification, limitations of the study, research question, research objectives, and significance of the study.

1.1 Research Background

Austronesian is one of the largest language families in the world, consisting of approximately 1,268 languages spoken by more than 300 million speakers, or about one-eighth of all the world's languages (Purwanti, 2020). The distribution of Austronesian language speakers covers a very wide area, stretching from Madagascar in the west to Easter Island in the east, and from Taiwan in the north to New Zealand in the south (Noerwidi, 2018). The vast geographical coverage makes Austronesian a significant linguistic and cultural phenomenon, attracting the attention of researchers from various disciplines, such as linguistics, archaeology, history, and anthropology (Noerwidi, 1995). Studies on Austronesian not only discuss its origins and dispersal, but also highlight processes of adaptation, interaction, and cultural change that have shaped the diversity of languages and cultures in the regions inhabited by its speakers from prehistoric times to the present (Noerwidi, 2018).

Language itself is dynamic and continuously changes over time. According to Campbell (1998), language change occurs naturally because speakers constantly adapt their pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures to social, geographical, and cultural environments. These changes affect every component of

language, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. Among these linguistic components, phonology has become one of the most important aspects in historical linguistics because sound changes generally occur in systematic rather than random ways. Crowley and Bower (2010) explain that regular sound correspondences enable linguists to trace historical relationships among languages and reconstruct their ancestral forms. Consequently, phonological evidence plays an essential role in determining whether two or more languages originate from the same proto-language.

Historical and comparative linguistics investigates these systematic changes to reconstruct proto-languages and explain the development of descendant languages. Campbell (1998) states that the comparative method compares cognate vocabularies among related languages to identify regular sound correspondences. Through these correspondences, linguists are able to reconstruct earlier linguistic forms and establish languages into historical relationship. Crowley and Bower (2010) further emphasize that inherited vocabulary normally undergoes regular phonological changes, allowing researchers to distinguish inherited forms from innovations or borrowed words. Therefore, phonological analysis provides stronger evidence for determining historical relationships than lexical similarity alone.

Indonesia is one of the primary centers of Austronesian language distribution due to its exceptional linguistic diversity (Purwanti, 2020). Archaeological evidence indicates that Austronesian-speaking populations began settling in the Indonesian archipelago approximately 3,600 years ago, as evidenced by findings from the Minanga Sipakko Site in West Sulawesi (Noerwidi, 2018). Sulawesi is considered one of the earliest settlement areas before Austronesian

speakers dispersed westward toward Sumatra and Java, eastward toward Maluku and the Pacific Islands, and southward toward the Lesser Sunda Islands (Fox, 2006). This migration resulted in the emergence of hundreds of regional languages, each developing its own linguistic characteristics while preserving traces of their Proto-Austronesian (PAN) ancestry (Campbell, 1998).

The Lesser Sunda Islands, including West Nusa Tenggara, constitute one of the important regions within this migration route. This area exhibits remarkable linguistic diversity due to centuries of migration, cultural interaction, and geographical isolation (Noerwidi, 2018). Bima Regency, located on Sumbawa Island, is home to several local languages and isolects, including Bima, Sambori, Sanggar, Teta, and Kolo. Although these languages share historical similarities, they also demonstrate distinctive phonological and lexical characteristics that have developed over time. Such diversity makes Bima an important region for investigating historical language development and Austronesian language diversification.

Kolo Language is one of the indigenous languages spoken by the community in Kolo Village, Asakota District, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara (Candra, 2022). This study assumes that Kolo belongs to the Austronesian language family, particularly within the Sumbawan subgroup, based on its geographical distribution and lexical similarities with neighboring languages. Nevertheless, this assumption has not yet been fully verified through systematic historical-comparative analysis. Although Kolo continues to be actively used by its speech community, written documentation concerning the language remains very limited,

and previous studies have primarily focused on other languages in Bima, such as Bima, Sambori, and Sanggar (Candra, 2022).

One of the few studies concerning Kolo language was conducted by Candra (2022), who described its phonological system by identifying vowels, diphthongs, consonants, consonant clusters, and syllable patterns. The study documented that Kolo possesses forty-six phonemes and a variety of syllable structures, providing valuable information about the synchronic sound system of the language. However, the research did not investigate the historical origin of these phonological features or examine whether they were inherited from Proto-Austronesian (PAN). As a result, the historical development of Kolo language remains largely unexplored.

Furthermore, Budasi et al. (2021) investigated lexical relationships among several languages spoken in Bima and reported that Kolo shares approximately 56% lexical similarity with Bima, 48% with Sambori, and 41.1% with Sanggar. These findings suggest that Kolo has historical connections with neighboring languages. Nevertheless, lexical similarity alone cannot conclusively establish historical relationships because similar vocabulary may result from borrowing, language contact, or parallel development rather than common inheritance (Campbell, 1998). Therefore, additional evidence from systematic phonological correspondences is required to examine the historical relationship between Proto-Austronesian and the Kolo language.

Lexicostatistics provides a quantitative way to measure the degree of lexical relatedness between languages by calculating the percentage of cognate words in a basic vocabulary list. Swadesh (1955) provides a basis for interpreting the resulting percentage of lexical relatedness. In this classification, a cognate percentage of 100-

81% corresponds to the Language level, 81-36% to the Language Family level, 36-12% to the Stock level, 12-4% to the Microphylum level, and 4-1% to the Mesophylum level. Therefore, the percentage of cognates obtained through lexicostatistical analysis can provide not only a numerical measure but also an indication of the degree of linguistic relationship between languages.

This classification is relevant to the present study because the lexical relationship between the Kolo language and Proto-Austronesian (PAn) is examined using the 200-word Swadesh basic vocabulary list. The resulting percentage of cognates can be interpreted according to the ranges proposed by Swadesh to provide a clearer quantitative description of the relationship between Kolo and Proto-Austronesian. However, the quantitative classification should be interpreted together with historical-comparative evidence, particularly regular phonological correspondences, because lexical similarity alone may not conclusively establish historical inheritance.

According to Crowley and Bower (2010), languages inherited from a common ancestor generally preserve regular sound correspondences that reflect historical phonological developments. Such correspondences allow researchers to identify inherited vocabulary (retention) and distinguish it from innovations or borrowed forms. Wahid (2021) further explains that retention and innovation constitute important evidence in determining historical relationships because inherited forms maintain traces of the proto-language, whereas innovations illustrate the systematic changes experienced by descendant languages. Consequently, identifying regular sound correspondences and phonological

changes between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and Kolo is necessary for examining the historical relationship between the two language varieties.

Numerous previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of historical-comparative approaches in identifying phonological changes from Proto-Austronesian to contemporary languages. Ariantini et al. (2017) analyzed phonological changes between the Gelgel and Tampekan dialects of Balinese and identified several regular sound changes, including apheresis, syncope, apocope, assimilation, and dissimilation. Dardanila et al. (2022) investigated Proto-Austronesian sound changes in the Gayo language and identified systematic phonological innovations that reflect both historical development and cultural identity. Similarly, Rizqi and Widayati (2021) examined phonological changes from Proto-Austronesian (PAn) to the Sumatran dialect of Javanese, while Siregar et al. (2022) analyzed sound changes across several Batak languages. These studies consistently demonstrate that systematic phonological correspondences provide strong evidence for determining historical relationships among Austronesian languages.

Despite the growing number of studies on Austronesian historical linguistics, important gaps remain in the investigation of the Kolo language. Previous studies have primarily focused on describing the synchronic phonological system of Kolo (Candra, 2022) or examining Proto-Austronesian (PAn) lexical form and their reflexes in other local languages spoken in Bima Regency, such as Mbojo, Sambori, and Teta (Budasi et al., 2021; Wahid, 2021; Utamayana et al., 2024). These studies have provided valuable insights into the phonological characteristics and historical development of Austronesian languages. However,

they have not explained whether the phonological features of the Kolo language represent inherited Proto-Austronesian (PAn) forms or subsequent innovations resulting from historical language change. Consequently, the historical relationship between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language, as well as the historical position of Kolo within the Austronesian language family, remain insufficiently understood.

In addition, previous historical-comparative studies have generally emphasized the identification of phonological changes or Proto-Austronesian (PAn) reflexes without integrating quantitative lexicostatistical analysis and qualitative historical-comparative analysis within a single investigation. As a result, the percentage of lexical relatedness between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language has not been systematically measured alongside the analysis of regular phonological change, retention, and innovation. To address these gaps, the present study combines lexicostatistics with a historical-comparative linguistic approach to determine the degree of lexical relatedness between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language, identify regular phonological changes, classify the lexical items into cognates and non-cognates, and further classify the cognates into full retention and retention with phonological changes. By integrating these analytical perspectives, this study is expected to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the historical relationship between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language while contributing to the documentation and classification of lesser-studied Austronesian languages.

The urgency of this research is also strengthened by the limited documentation available for Kolo language. As globalization and the increasing

dominance of Indonesian continue to influence local communities, many minority languages face declining intergenerational transmission. Without adequate documentation, valuable linguistic evidence concerning the historical development of these languages may gradually disappear. Comprehensive phonological documentation therefore contributes not only to historical-comparative linguistics but also to language preservation and cultural heritage conservation. Moreover, identifying phonological correspondences between Proto-Austronesian (PAN) and Kolo language will enrich the scientific understanding of Austronesian language diversification, particularly in eastern Indonesia.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the lexical and phonological relationship between Proto-Austronesian (PAN) and Kolo language through a historical-comparative linguistic approach. Using the 200-word Swadesh list as the primary dataset, this research aims to determine the percentage of linguistic relatedness between Proto-Austronesian (PAN) and Kolo language, identify cognate lexical items, analyze the phonological changes and sound correspondences found in the cognate forms, distinguish inherited lexical items from non-cognate forms, and determine the most prominent patterns of lexical inheritance. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the historical relationship between Kolo and Proto-Austronesian, contribute to the development of historical-comparative linguistics, and support efforts to preserve one of the less-documented local languages in Indonesia.

1.2 Problems Identification

Candra (2022) described the phonological system of the Kolo language in Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. The study explained the vowels, diphthongs,

consonants, clusters, and syllable patterns of the language, and showed that Kolo has 46 phonemes with many kinds of syllable structures. However, this research only focused on describing the sound system. It did not analyze the historical development of the language or compare it with Proto Austronesian (PAn). In contrast, other local languages such as the Batak languages, Gayo, Javanese Sumatran dialect, and Balinese dialects have already been studied in relation to Proto Austronesian (PAn) sound changes (Ariantini et al., 2017; Dardanila et al., 2022; Fahmi Anggia Rizqi & Dwi Widayati, 2021; Siregar et al., 2022). These studies show how sound changes can help identify the historical relationship between local languages and their proto-language. Because of this gap, the position of the Kolo language within the Austronesian family remains unclear. It is important to study the phonological changes of Kolo language in order to provide evidence about its historical relationship with Proto Austronesian (PAn).

1.3 Limitation of the Study

This research focuses on examining the lexical inheritance and phonological development of Kolo in relation to Proto-Austronesian (PAn). The data analyzed in this study consist of 200 basic vocabulary items from the Swadesh list as the primary source for comparison. The study identifies cognate and non-cognate forms, classifies the cognate forms into full retention and retention with phonological changes, and analyzes the phonological changes and sound correspondences found in the inherited lexical items. Within the scope of this research, this study aims to provide an initial description of the phonological changes of Kolo language and to serve as a reference for future investigations in historical and comparative linguistics.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the identification problems, the research questions of this research can be proposed as follows:

1. What percentage of lexical relatedness does the Kolo language share with Proto-Austronesian (PAn)?
2. What forms of Proto-Austronesian lexical inheritance are found in the Kolo language?
3. Which form of Proto-Austronesian lexical inheritance is the most prominent in the Kolo language?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study could be obtained as below :

1. To determine the percentage of lexical relatedness between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language.
2. To identify and analyze the forms of Proto-Austronesian inheritance found in the Kolo language.
3. To determine the most prominent form of Proto-Austronesian lexical inheritance in the Kolo language.

1.6 Research Significance

This study is expected to provide meaningful contributions to the following areas:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to the development of historical and comparative linguistics by providing empirical evidence of lexical inheritance and

phonological change between Proto-Austronesian (PAn) and the Kolo language. According to Crowley and Bower (2010), The findings may enrich the theoretical framework of phonological change and historical classification of languages, particularly within the Austronesian family. By analyzing phonological data from Kolo, the research applies the framework of phonological change theory and demonstrates its relevance for less-studied Austronesian languages. Furthermore, this study is expected to serve as an academic reference for future research related to phonological reconstruction and the historical relationship among local languages in Eastern Indonesia.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

a. For Local Language Center

As a reference for the local language Center (Balai Bahasa) in documenting and preserving the Kolo language, as well as in strengthening programs aimed at revitalizing regional languages.

b. For Kolo Language Teachers

As supplementary material to support classroom instruction and to enhance students' appreciation of their linguistic and cultural heritage.

c. For Future Research

Provide a foundation and reference for subsequent research on phonological change, historical classification, and language preservation, particularly for less-studied Austronesian languages in Eastern Indonesia.