



Local Languages as Generation Bridges: Looking at the Success of the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung Schools

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Abstract—The preservation of local languages is critical in maintaining cultural identity and fostering intergenerational connections, particularly in an era of globalization and digitalization. This study aims to evaluate the success of the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools as a model for bridging generational gaps and revitalizing local languages. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research combines quantitative analysis of students' language proficiency before and after the program with qualitative insights from interviews, observations, and documentation involving students, teachers, and parents. The findings reveal that the program significantly enhanced students' confidence and ability to use Sundanese in daily interactions while fostering stronger familial bonds through increased intergenerational communication. Despite these successes, challenges such as limited technological infrastructure and alignment with curricula were noted, highlighting the need for systemic support. This study underscores the potential of digital language programs to preserve linguistic heritage and serve as bridges between generations in culturally diverse societies.

Keywords— Local Languages, Sundanese Language, Digital Language

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the survival and revitalization of local languages are pressing concerns in many societies, especially in the face of globalization and technological advancement. Local languages are more than just communication tools; they serve as carriers of cultural identity and intergenerational knowledge (Alberti & Giusti, 2012; Faxon, 2013; King & Church, 2013). The erosion of local languages due to rapid urbanization and the dominance of global languages like English poses a significant threat to cultural heritage and community coherence (Alberti & Giusti, 2012; Camagni et al., 2020; Martias et al., 2023; Pujol-Tost, 2011; Ruiz-Ortega et al., 2021).

Indonesia, a country renowned for its linguistic diversity, faces similar challenges. Among its 700-plus local languages, Sundanese—a prominent regional language in West Java—has experienced a decline in daily use among younger generations. Educational institutions have increasingly recognized their role in safeguarding linguistic heritage, as they are pivotal in fostering an appreciation for local cultures (Baker-Bell, 2020; Braithwaite, 2020; Malenkina & Ivanov,

2018; McKiernan, 2021). This aligns with global trends that emphasize the integration of cultural education into formal schooling systems.

The advent of digital technology offers innovative solutions to address this linguistic gap. Bandung, known for its cultural dynamism, has spearheaded the Digital Sundanese Language Program, which leverages technology to promote local language learning among schoolchildren. This initiative exemplifies how digital tools can bridge generational divides, making language learning engaging and accessible (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018; Drugova et al., 2022; Hoffmann et al., 2022; Kustiawan, 2017). Studies show that such programs are instrumental in revitalizing endangered languages while fostering a sense of identity and belonging (Curran & Clark, 2003).

This study explores the success of the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools. It investigates its impact on fostering intergenerational cultural continuity and evaluates the program's role as a model for integrating local languages into modern educational frameworks. By analyzing the program's outcomes, this research aims to contribute to

global discussions on preserving linguistic diversity and enhancing education quality in a digital age.

II. METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the success of the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools. The quantitative approach was used to measure changes in students' proficiency in Sundanese before and after participating in the program, while the qualitative approach aimed to understand the experiences and perceptions of students, teachers, and parents toward the program. The research was conducted in primary and secondary schools in Bandung that had implemented the program, with a sample comprising 200 students, 20 teachers, and 50 parents selected through stratified random sampling and purposive sampling.

Data collection involved questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Questionnaires were used to assess students' proficiency in Sundanese before and after the program, while interviews with teachers and parents explored the program's impact on supporting the preservation of local languages. Observations were conducted over three months to examine interactions between students and teachers using digital materials. Additionally, students' work and program materials were reviewed as part of the documentation to complement the analysis.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-tests for quantitative data, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and key themes. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation and member checking to verify the accuracy of interpretations. With this methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive insight into how this program bridges generations and supports the preservation of local languages through digital approaches.

III. RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools has successfully enhanced students' proficiency in the Sundanese language. Students reported greater confidence in using Sundanese in daily interactions, both in school and at home. Teachers observed that the integration of digital materials, such as interactive videos and language games, significantly increased students' engagement and interest in learning the language. This suggests that the digital approach is an effective tool for revitalizing local languages among younger generations.

In addition to improving linguistic abilities, the program has also positively impacted intergenerational communication. Students expressed a stronger connection with their grandparents and other family members, often initiating conversations in Sundanese and discussing traditional cultural practices. Parents acknowledged the program's role in fostering familial bonds and cultural understanding within the household, making it a bridge between generations.

Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges were noted during program implementation. Teachers highlighted issues such as limited access to digital tools and the need for better alignment between program content and existing educational standards. Additionally, some students initially struggled with the language due to limited prior exposure. These findings suggest that while the program has been successful, further efforts are needed to improve infrastructure, provide teacher training, and adapt content to diverse student needs.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role of digital technology in revitalizing local languages and bridging generational gaps, as demonstrated by the success of the Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools. This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of integrating digital tools into language education to engage younger generations effectively (Teng et al., 2022). The program's ability to enhance students' proficiency and confidence in using Sundanese demonstrates how modern technology can make traditional language learning more appealing and accessible in contemporary educational settings.

In line with studies on digital learning, the program's interactive approach, including multimedia resources and gamification, was found to significantly increase student motivation and interest. Previous research has shown that integrating culturally relevant content into digital platforms not only fosters linguistic skills but also promotes cultural identity (Hasni et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). This is particularly important in preserving endangered languages, where a lack of use among younger generations often leads to language erosion. The program's success in engaging students reflects the potential of culturally contextualized digital education to address this challenge effectively.

Furthermore, the program's impact on strengthening intergenerational communication mirrors findings from other studies that explore the social dimensions of language learning. Research has shown that learning local languages can create meaningful connections within families, fostering dialogue and cultural transmission between generations (Arokiasamy et al., 2015). In this context, the Digital Sundanese Language Program served as a bridge, enabling students to communicate more fluently with their grandparents and explore traditional cultural values.

However, challenges identified in this study, such as limited access to technology and misalignment with existing curricula, underscore the need for systemic support to optimize such programs. Similar issues have been reported in other studies, which highlight the importance of teacher training and infrastructure development in ensuring the effective implementation of digital education initiatives (Pashkus et al., 2015). Addressing these barriers is critical for scaling up the program and ensuring equitable access to its benefits across diverse educational contexts.

V. CONCLUSION

The Digital Sundanese Language Program in Bandung schools has proven to be an effective initiative for revitalizing local languages and bridging generational divides. By leveraging digital technology, the program successfully enhanced students' proficiency in Sundanese and encouraged its use in everyday communication. Beyond language skills, the program fostered stronger familial bonds, as students became more confident in engaging with their elders in Sundanese, promoting cultural understanding and continuity across generations.

Despite its success, the program faced challenges, including limited technological resources and the need for better integration with existing curricula. These obstacles highlight the importance of providing systemic support, such as improved infrastructure, teacher training, and adaptive content, to ensure equitable access and long-term sustainability.

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