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## Bilingualism and Cultural Identity: An Impact Analysis of the Use of Sundanese and Indonesian among Adolescents in Pandeglang

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### Abstract

Bilingualism is a prevalent phenomenon in Pandeglang, Banten, where teenagers navigate between the local Sundanese language and the national Indonesian language in various social contexts. This study aims to explore how bilingualism influences the cultural identities of youth in this region. Through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and participatory observations, data were collected from 20 teenagers aged 15-18. The study reveals that the use of Sundanese primarily occurs in informal family settings, while Indonesian dominates formal settings like school and public media. Additionally, both languages are creatively integrated in digital spaces, such as social media, where local identity is expressed through Sundanese, and broader national identity through Indonesian. However, challenges in maintaining Sundanese due to the dominance of Indonesian, particularly in urban areas, were noted. The study concludes that bilingualism serves as a bridge between local and national identities, but the sustainability of Sundanese is threatened without strategic interventions, such as incorporating it into formal education and leveraging digital platforms for cultural preservation.

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### Keywords

Bilingualism<sup>1</sup>; Identity<sup>2</sup>; Language Maintenance<sup>3</sup>; Sundanese<sup>4</sup>; Indonesian<sup>5</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism, the ability to use two or more languages, is an increasingly common phenomenon in Indonesia, particularly in regions with diverse cultures and languages, such as Pandeglang, Banten Province. This phenomenon not only reflects individuals' linguistic abilities but also has profound implications for their cultural and social identities (Li, 2020). In this context, the use of Sundanese as the local language and Indonesian as the national language in Pandeglang plays a crucial role in shaping the cultural identity of teenagers, who interact with both languages depending on the social contexts they encounter.



Bilingualism in Pandeglang is not merely a tool for communication but also serves as a medium for shaping and reflecting identity. Hidayati (2021) states that the ability to master both languages enables teenagers in Pandeglang to interact with the local community using Sundanese while connecting with the wider world through Indonesian. For instance, in daily life, teenagers in Pandeglang often converse with family or peers in Sundanese, particularly in informal contexts. However, in school or formal meetings, Indonesian becomes the primary language of communication. This practice of code-switching is often observed, such as when teenagers begin a conversation in Sundanese but switch to Indonesian when discussing more serious or formal topics, for example, during lessons or when interacting with friends from other regions.

Language, beyond being a communication tool, also symbolizes identity and cultural values. The use of Sundanese and Indonesian by teenagers in Pandeglang illustrates the process of internalizing local cultural values while simultaneously opening opportunities for interaction in broader social domains. Hidayati (2021) emphasizes that bilingualism among teenagers acts as a bridge between local and global cultures, allowing them to explore and internalize values from both worlds. In this regard, Indonesian provides access to participate in national and global discourse, while Sundanese maintains their connection to local culture and community.

However, with globalization and technological advancements, new challenges have emerged in maintaining Sundanese amidst the dominance of Indonesian. Dewi (2023) argues that although Sundanese is still used in many daily interactions, particularly within families and communities, the growing influence of Indonesian, both in social media and education, could affect the use of Sundanese, especially among teenagers. For instance, while teenagers in Pandeglang might use Sundanese to communicate with parents or neighbors, they are more likely to use Indonesian when speaking with friends from other regions or interacting on social media.

This study aims to delve deeper into the impact of bilingualism, involving the use of Sundanese and Indonesian, on the cultural identity and awareness of teenagers in Pandeglang. The primary goal of this research is to understand how the use of these two languages shapes teenagers' self-perception and cultural identity. By exploring this phenomenon, this study seeks to provide insights into how language, as a vital aspect of social and cultural life, plays a role in maintaining local identity amidst the growing tide of globalization. Furthermore, the study will examine how both languages are used in various contexts of teenagers' daily lives, from conversations at home and social interactions outside the home to language use in schools and on social media.

Thus, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of bilingualism in shaping cultural identity among teenagers and how the influence of local language and culture can be preserved in an increasingly advanced era of globalization. See the end of the document for further details on references. Technical terms should be defined. Symbols, abbreviations, and acronyms should be defined the first time they are used. All tables and figures should be cited in numerical order.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the impact of bilingualism on the cultural identity of teenagers in Pandeglang. This approach was chosen because it allows for a richer exploration of social and cultural phenomena through the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2018). The focus of this research is to explore the experiences of teenagers in using Sundanese and Indonesian and how these experiences shape their cultural identity. The study also aims to understand the social, cultural, and technological contexts influencing bilingual practices among teenagers.

### **A. Research Subjects**

The research subjects are teenagers aged 15–18 living in Pandeglang who actively use Sundanese and Indonesian in their daily lives. A total of 20 teenagers were selected as participants through purposive sampling, allowing the researcher to choose subjects based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

Participant Selection Criteria:

1. **Family Context:** Teenagers from bilingual families (using Sundanese and Indonesian at home), with varying levels of dominance between the two languages.
2. **Educational Environment:** Teenagers attending schools where Indonesian is the primary language of instruction but who still interact with Sundanese outside academic settings.
3. **Social Participation:** Teenagers actively involved in social or cultural activities that involve the use of both languages, such as traditional arts communities (e.g., jaipongan or wayang golek) or student organizations.

The participants come from diverse social, economic, and geographical backgrounds. Most of the teenagers interviewed live in semi-urban areas with good access to technology, while others reside in rural areas with a stronger Sundanese cultural influence. This diversity provides rich data on how bilingualism is practiced in various aspects of teenage life in Pandeglang.

## **B. Research Procedures**

The study was conducted in several stages designed to obtain valid and comprehensive data:

### 1. Data Collection:

**In-Depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interview techniques were used to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and bilingual practices. Questions covered situations involving the use of Sundanese and Indonesian, the family's role in language maintenance, and their views on cultural identity.

**Participatory Observations:** Observations were conducted in various settings, such as schools, homes, and community activities, to record how teenagers use both languages in daily interactions, including code-switching and language choice based on context.

**Document Analysis:** Text messages (e.g., WhatsApp), social media posts (e.g., Instagram, Facebook), and personal notes were analyzed to understand digital communication patterns and cultural symbols used by teenagers.

### 2. Research Instruments:

- a) Semi-structured interview guides.
- b) Observation notes focusing on social interactions and language use contexts.
- c) Voice recording devices for documenting interviews and small group discussions.

### 3. Preparation and Implementation:

The researcher first built relationships with local communities and schools in Pandeglang to gain support for participation. A pilot study was conducted with five teenagers to test the clarity and effectiveness of the research instruments.

### 4. Preliminary Analysis:

After data collection, the researcher performed an initial analysis to identify key themes emerging from interviews and observations.

## **C. Data Collection and Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) to identify main patterns relevant to the research objectives. The stages of analysis included:

- 1) **Data Transcription:** All interviews and observation notes were transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

- 2) Theme Identification: The researcher thoroughly reviewed the data to identify initial themes, such as “perceptions of local language,” “code-switching in daily life,” and “environmental influences on cultural identity.”
- 3) Coding: Data were grouped based on codes representing major themes, such as the role of Sundanese in traditional ceremonies, the dominance of Indonesian in schools, and the use of both languages in digital media.
- 4) Data Interpretation: The findings were contextualized with bilingualism and cultural identity theories to provide an in-depth interpretation of the research results.

Qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo, was used to facilitate data organization and coding. Method triangulation was applied to ensure data validity and reliability by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis.

#### **D. Research Materials and Instruments**

The primary materials in this study include:

1. Interview Recordings: Documentation of in-depth interviews capturing participants’ narratives about language use and cultural identity.
2. Observation Notes: Documentation of participants’ behavior in various social situations, including notes on cultural symbols observed.
3. Digital Documents: Social media posts, text messages, or other digital artifacts showcasing language use patterns among teenagers.

The research instruments were designed to ensure that the collected data are relevant and cover various aspects of bilingualism and cultural identity.

#### **E. Ethical Procedures**

This study adhered to research ethics principles, including:

- 1) Informed Consent: Participation consent was obtained from teenagers and their parents after explaining the research objectives and procedures.
- 2) Data Confidentiality: Participants’ identities were protected using anonymous codes, and the data were used solely for research purposes.
- 3) Participant Rights: Participants were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

These procedures were designed to ensure the research was conducted ethically and that participants felt comfortable sharing their experience.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Bilingual Practices Among Teenagers in Pandeglang

This study reveals that bilingual practices among teenagers in Pandeglang vary significantly, depending on social, cultural, and situational contexts. Teenagers flexibly switch between Sundanese and Indonesian based on their needs. The main patterns of language use are as follows:

#### 1. In the Family Environment:

Sundanese is predominantly used in daily conversations at home, especially when communicating with older family members such as parents or grandparents. This reflects the family's role as the guardian of local language and culture.

A participant noted:

> "I feel more comfortable using Sundanese at home because it's how I connect with my family, especially with my grandmother, who is not fluent in Indonesian."

However, the use of Indonesian is increasing among younger or urban families, particularly in educational and technological contexts.

#### 2. In the School Environment:

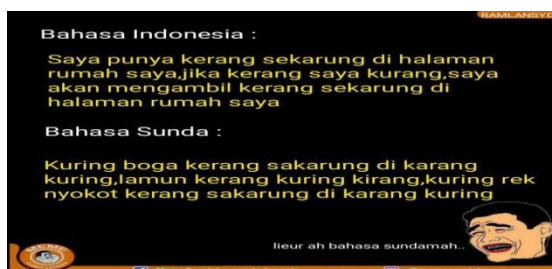
Indonesian is the primary language for formal activities such as learning, administration, and class discussions. Sundanese persists in informal contexts, such as casual conversations or jokes with peers. Some schools also organize extracurricular activities involving Sundanese, although these are not widespread.

#### 3. In the Digital and Social Media World:

Social media platforms provide a unique space where teenagers blend Sundanese and Indonesian. Sundanese is often used to express humor or cultural pride, such as in memes and short videos, while Indonesian is used for more formal or public communication.

Figure 1: Examples of social media posts by Pandeglang teenagers:

#### a) Sundanese memes with local context..



b) Indonesian posts discussing national issues



## B. Language and Identity Formation

Language use plays a central role in shaping the identities of teenagers in Pandeglang. Their identity is formed through daily interactions in various environments, both local and national.

### 1. Local Cultural Identity:

Sundanese serves as a primary symbol of local cultural identity. Teenagers who actively use Sundanese feel more connected to their ancestral heritage.

A participant remarked:

“By speaking Sundanese, I feel like a part of a unique culture, different from my friends outside this region.”

### 2. National Identity:

Conversely, Indonesian allows teenagers to connect with broader communities at the national and global levels. It is a vital tool for navigating education, job opportunities, and cross-cultural interactions.

## C. Challenges in Maintaining Bilingualism

Despite many teenagers demonstrating bilingual capabilities, the study identifies several challenges threatening the sustainability of Sundanese use:

### 1. Language Shift:

A shift occurs due to the strong influence of Indonesian as the official language of education and media. Young generations, especially in urban areas, show a decline in active Sundanese proficiency.

### 2. Social Pressure:

Some participants feel less confident using Sundanese in public spaces, considering it less relevant or modern.

### 3. Lack of Formal Support:

Limited attention to Sundanese instruction in formal education restricts its use to informal contexts.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. The Role of Social Context in Bilingual Practices

The bilingual practices of Pandeglang teenagers highlight how language is flexibly used based on social and cultural contexts. This finding supports previous research (Hidayati, 2021; Sari, 2022) emphasizing the family's role in preserving local languages. Schools, however, reinforce the dominance of the national language. This study adds a new perspective by showing how the digital world becomes a space where both languages are creatively used to express teenagers' dual identities.

### 2. Language as a Tool for Identity Formation

The findings indicate that bilingualism enables teenagers to integrate local and national identities. Sundanese reinforces connections to local communities and cultural traditions, while Indonesian facilitates broader participation in national discourses. These findings align with Dewi (2023), who stated that "bilingual teenagers have higher social adaptability."

### 3. Challenges and Opportunities in Preserving Local Languages

A key finding is the threat to Sundanese preservation among younger generations. This language shift requires greater attention from stakeholders. Strategies include:

#### a. Integrating Sundanese into Schools:

Incorporate Sundanese into formal curricula using engaging methods, such as storytelling or local arts projects.

#### b. Using Technology to Preserve Languages:

Launch social media campaigns in Sundanese, such as creative content challenges, to spark interest among younger generations.

### 4. Contribution to Existing Literature

This research contributes significantly to studies on bilingualism in Indonesia. The findings on digital language use and its role in identity formation provide fresh insights not widely explored in previous studies.

#### a. New Perspectives on Dual Identity Formation:

This study enriches the discussion on how bilingualism serves as a tool for building dual identities. It shows that Sundanese functions as a medium for expressing local identity, while Indonesian connects teenagers to broader national communities. This aligns with Dewi (2023) but adds a dimension by exploring the integration of both languages in teenagers' digital lives.

b. The Digital World as a Space for Local Language Preservation:

Unlike prior research focusing on formal education and family environments (Hidayati, 2021; Sari, 2022), this study highlights the significance of digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for creative use of Sundanese in memes, humorous videos, or short stories.

c. Identifying Language Shift Challenges:

This study provides concrete data on language shift trends, where Indonesian gradually replaces Sundanese, particularly in urban areas. This aligns with global trends where local languages are often overshadowed by dominant national or international languages (Pratama, 2023).

d. Practical Strategies for Supporting Local Language Preservation:

Beyond empirical data, this research offers practical strategies for preserving local languages, such as integrating Sundanese into school curricula with youth-friendly approaches and leveraging digital media for cultural engagement.

## 5. Directions for Future Research

Based on these findings, potential topics for further exploration include:

- a. The influence of social media on local language use among teenagers.
- b. The relationship between bilingualism and other identity aspects, such as religion or gender.
- c. Effective bilingual education strategies to support local language preservation

The results obtained from the research have to be supported by sufficient data. The research results and the discovery must be the answers, or the research hypothesis stated previously in the introduction part.

**Table 1. Summary finding and discussion**

Context	Language Use	Key Insights
Home	Predominantly Sundanese	Strengthens cultural identify and family bonds.
School	Primarily Indonesian	Facilitates national integration but reduces sundanese use.
Digital Spaces	Mixed (Sundanese and Indonesian )	Reflects creativity in identity expression.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant role of bilingualism in shaping the cultural identity of teenagers in Pandeglang, Banten. By alternating between Sundanese and Indonesian, these teenagers maintain a balance between their local heritage and national identity. The findings reveal that Sundanese fosters a strong sense of local identity, particularly in informal family settings, while Indonesian serves as a gateway to broader educational and societal opportunities. Additionally, the innovative use of both languages in digital spaces, such as social media, highlights the adaptability of these youth in integrating traditional and modern cultural expressions.

Future research could explore the potential of digital platforms to support local language preservation and examine how bilingualism interacts with other aspects of identity, such as gender or religion. Long-term studies on the impact of bilingual education on cultural preservation in multilingual societies would also provide valuable insights.

By implementing these strategies, bilingualism can remain a powerful bridge that connects local traditions with global interactions. This ensures the sustainability of local languages like Sundanese while fostering cultural pride and adaptability in an increasingly interconnected world.

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