

The Decline in the Popularity of the Sundanese Language and Culture among Sundanese Ethnic Youth

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Abstract

As Indonesia's second-largest indigenous language, Sundanese plays a pivotal role in communication between Sundanese people. However, today's young generations of Sundanese do not use the Sundanese language entirely and do not use it either with their friends on campus or with their parents at home. This study tries to examine the decline in the popularity of the Sundanese language among the young Sundanese generations in the capital city of West Java, a centre for the Sundanese ethnic group. Employing a descriptive survey, this study involved a total of 317 participants from a Sundanese ethnic group. The findings confirmed the initial suspicions that the use of the Sundanese language has begun to decline among the young Sundanese generations in Bandung. Among the several factors of this decline are the very intensive interactions via social media by young Sundanese generations with people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, causing the limited use of the Sundanese language among them. It is also due to the shift of Bandung to become a multilingual city, a melting pot of people from different backgrounds. This study can hopefully inspire the language education stakeholders in West Java to raise concerns on this issue by strengthening and modifying Sundanese language education and teaching primarily at the school level.

Keywords: Ethnic youth; Indigenous language; Sundanese cultures; Sundanese language education

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INTRODUCTION

As a city with a majority Sundanese population, Bandung has a rich Sundanese culture and language. However, the capital city of West Java province has now become a multilingual city for education. Many students from various cities in Indonesia come to the city to pursue their education. Therefore, they certainly bring their respective indigenous language identities. According to Nguyen, these people have a bilingual identity (Kupolati, 2024), their indigenous language and Indonesian. Their bilingualism is related to ethnic-cultural factors, social factors, and their interactions (Nguyen, 2021).

However, the role and position of Sundanese among young people in Bandung show signs of decline in its use in daily life. It is prone to being abandoned by its speakers, like the case of the Lampung language (see Rusminto et al., 2021). Several factors, including globalization, modernization, and popular culture trends cause this phenomenon. It can be seen from the increasing number of young people in Bandung who prefer to use Indonesian or English daily. Globalization, with the internet and social media, has made

foreign cultures and languages more attractive to the young Sundanese generations. Modernization with the advanced technology has also influenced the attrition of Sundanese. Popular cultural trends are pivotal in decreasing the use of Sundanese among young people in Bandung. They tend to follow popular culture trends such as music, films, and fashion that predominantly use Indonesian or English in song lyrics and film dialogue. This causes the use of Sundanese to become less popular among young people, especially in a big city like Bandung. The decline in language use impacts the attrition of local and cultural identity. It also causes a shift in Sundanese values and a failure to understand Sundanese culture. With this description, Sundanese as the strong identity of the Sundanese ethnic group has difficulty maintaining its mother tongue in a multilingual society, especially when other languages such as Indonesian, English and other foreign languages have economic advantages compared to Sundanese (Sinayah et al., 2017).

The decline in the vitality of Sundanese language users can be seen in the data presented by the Central Statistics Agency in a 2020 Population Census Long Form Results document. The statistics state that around 30 per cent of West Java residents no longer use Sundanese, which is strongly used by the Priangan Tatar community. Currently, 72.45% of West Java residents still use the indigenous language in their family environment. Meanwhile, 71% of them use it among their neighbors/relatives.

As for the comparison of language use between Indonesian and Sundanese based on generation, BPS noted that the Pre-Boomer generation (born in 1945 and before) still uses Sundanese relatively highly, 84.73%. The Pre-Boomer generation still uses the Sundanese language in their communication within the family environment. However, the use of Sundanese is starting to decline in the Baby-Boomer generation (born 1946-1964) by 79.9% and continues to fall in the Millennial generation (born 1981-1996) to 73.92%, Gen Z (born 1997-2012) 72.44%. A sharp decline was seen in the Post-Gen Z generation (born 2013 to now) to 63.99%. In another aspect, BPS noted that the percentage of residents who use Sundanese in neighbors/relatives has decreased from generation to generation. The Pre Boomer generation is the highest with 83.06%, then Baby Boomers 78.16%, Millennials 70.59%, Gen Z 70.96%. The use of Sundanese among the Post Gen Z generation has drastically decreased to 63.20%.

The reality of the data above is important to pay attention to because this situation has an impact on several aspects of the lives of the Sundanese people, including the fading of local identity and Sundanese culture, the shift in values and identities, the lack of understanding of the Sundanese language, the elimination of historical roots, and the collapse of cultural identity. The protection of indigenous languages and literature is mandated in Government Regulation No. 57 of 2014. Two authorized institutions implement this regulation to regulate the protection of language and literature, namely the central government and regional governments. The central government's authority is to protect the Indonesian language and formulate national policies to protect the Indonesian language and literature. The authority of regional governments is to preserve indigenous languages and literature and provide facilities for necessary matters. In addition, they are responsible for supporting efforts to protect indigenous languages and literature. The protection of indigenous languages cannot be separated from the field of education. The preservation of indigenous languages for the education sector is contained in the attachment to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, which states that the development of languages and literature whose speakers span across districts/cities is within 1 (one) provincial region. Meanwhile, the development of languages and literature in the regency/city areas is for the speakers in the regency/city. In formal educational institutions, local governments pay little attention to teaching Sundanese in schools. Similar things also happen in Europe, such as research conducted by Cantone. Cantone stated that language education policies in Europe

regarding immigrant minority languages are still far from satisfactory (Cantone, 2020). Globally, educational institutions, such as teachers, must be empowered to develop Sundanese to help prevent language shifts (Shee, 2018).

Apart from being a means of communication, language also functions as a store of cultural values, including ethics and morals. Those values are stored in various linguistic forms, including vocabulary, rhymes, folklore, literature, myths, legends, oral traditions, and expressions. Thus, it can be said that language is the guardian of culture. If a language becomes extinct, its culture will also become extinct. The problem of language extinction and endangered languages is a topic that remains hotly discussed by language experts worldwide (Lauder, 2021).

On the other hand, Lauder stated that ordinary people and high-ranking decision-makers poorly understand the problem of language extinction. In general, when we talk about language and cultural issues, they are often considered unimportant. Culture is better understood as dance, traditional clothing, or just culinary. In fact, culture is an active and creative effort according to natural conditions and surrounding resources for the welfare of humanity (Lauder, 2021). The richness of indigenous languages is an asset for our country because indigenous languages contain various kinds of local wisdom, traditions, and ethnic culture. According to Sibarani, our nation is rich in culture because it consists of hundreds of ethnic groups. Each of them has its own culture. All ethnic cultures are culturally rich, including our nation's culture. This must be emphasized to understand that Indonesian culture is not "one" and not "uniform." Both covert culture, ideas stored in the human mind, and overt culture, manifested in human activities and work, are very diverse. Therefore, cultural uniformity is not permitted, let alone cultural domination and hegemony (Sibarani, 2004, p. 27). All the cultural riches of these ethnic groups are stored in language. Overall, the vitality of language is essential to society's functioning and individuals' well-being. It is a fundamental human capacity for communication, learning, and cultural expression.

Despite this, several community groups are still trying to maintain and preserve the Sundanese language through activities such as traditional arts performances and school language learning. Hopefully, with these efforts, the Sundanese language can still be upheld and not become extinct amidst the increasingly rapid development of globalization and modernization. Therefore, there needs to be support and collaboration between the government, society, and educational institutions to preserve the Sundanese language as one of our national identities. However, despite outside influences, we need to maintain linguistic and cultural diversity in Indonesia. One way to maintain this diversity is to maintain and preserve the Sundanese language as one of our national identities. Efforts must also be made to increase public awareness of preserving the local language and culture and teach the younger generations about the importance of using Sundanese in everyday life. By increasing understanding and appreciation of Sundanese, it is hoped that the young generations in Bandung can appreciate and use this language as a means of daily communication. This will not only strengthen our cultural identity but can also provide pride for the people of Bandung. Through appropriate education and campaigns, the awareness of the importance of preserving local language and culture can be instilled in the younger generations from an early age. Thus, they will become agents of change in maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity. In this way, the Sundanese language can remain alive and continue to develop amidst increasingly rapid globalization and modernization. The Sundanese language can be preserved as part of Indonesia's cultural richness. Therefore, this study aims to scrutinize how young Sundanese people use the Sundanese language in Bandung. Do the young Sundanese generation still use Sundanese to communicate with their friends in their environment? Will the Sundanese language become extinct due to globalization and modernization?

METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a quantitative survey methodology. In the survey design, several population tendencies, behaviors, or opinions were described quantitatively (numbers) by examining a population sample. This sample made generalizations or claims about the population (Creswell, 2014). This method was selected to find out whether Sundanese was still popular among the younger generations. It was inspired by a current phenomenon: many of the young generations in Bandung speak Indonesian or English in their daily lives. This change in language among young people could reflect the impact of globalization, modernization, and popular cultural trends that continue to develop in Bandung. Therefore, preserving the Sundanese language as one of our national identities is necessary.

Participants

In this study, the data were obtained via observations and surveys. Observations were needed to determine the distribution of questionnaires by randomly distributing questionnaires to 317 informants. Questionnaires were distributed randomly and lasted eight months. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted. The criteria for informants were young people of Sundanese ethnicity aged between 15-19, 20-24, and 24-29 years. This criterion is determined based on the age of 15-19 years, which is the beginning of adolescence towards adulthood. At this age, the level of imitation of the surrounding environment is very high. Meanwhile, 20-24 years old is the age of early adulthood. At this age, a person begins to be able to judge what he likes and what he doesn't and has an image of himself. Therefore, at this age, people will be selective about having something. The age of 24-29 can be said to be an established age. At this age, the average person is economically independent. At least they can support themselves. At this age, people are very selective in determining things and have the awareness to think about their identity through language and applying their ethnicity's culture. Questionnaires were distributed.

Procedure

After collecting the data, classification was carried out based on age and the questions in the questionnaire. Afterwards, a percentage was calculated for each question. The results were then described in the results and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study used field research to obtain the data through questionnaires to 317 randomly selected respondents. In the questionnaire, six (6) questions were given. Before that, data on population, taken from the results of the 2010 population census, were needed. This census data shows that there are 36.7 million Sundanese people, 15% of the Indonesia's total population. As shown in the census, 60.59% of them are city residents. The majority of the population lives in West Java Province (30.9 million people/84%), Banten (2.3 million/0.7%), and Jakarta (1.4 million/0.4%). As the language of daily household communication, Sundanese is used by 32.4 million people (78.2%).

The first question of the questionnaire focused on "Mother tongue" (language proficiency among respondents' parents). This question was broken down into more detailed questions: the respondent's parents whose mother tongue is Sundanese. The questionnaire results have shown that the respondents' fathers (whose mother tongue is Sundanese) speak Sundanese (95.70%) and Indonesian (91.30%). Meanwhile, the respondents' mothers (whose mother tongue is Sundanese) speak Sundanese (99.50%) and Indonesian (92.40%). Then, the question also asked whether the respondents' parents could speak Sundanese and Indonesian. From the questionnaire results, fathers who speak

Sundanese were 90%, whereas fathers who speak Indonesian were 92.90%. Meanwhile, mothers who speak Sundanese make up as many as 92.50% of the total, whereas mothers who speak Indonesian make up 94.20%. The details of the above description can be seen in the following chart.

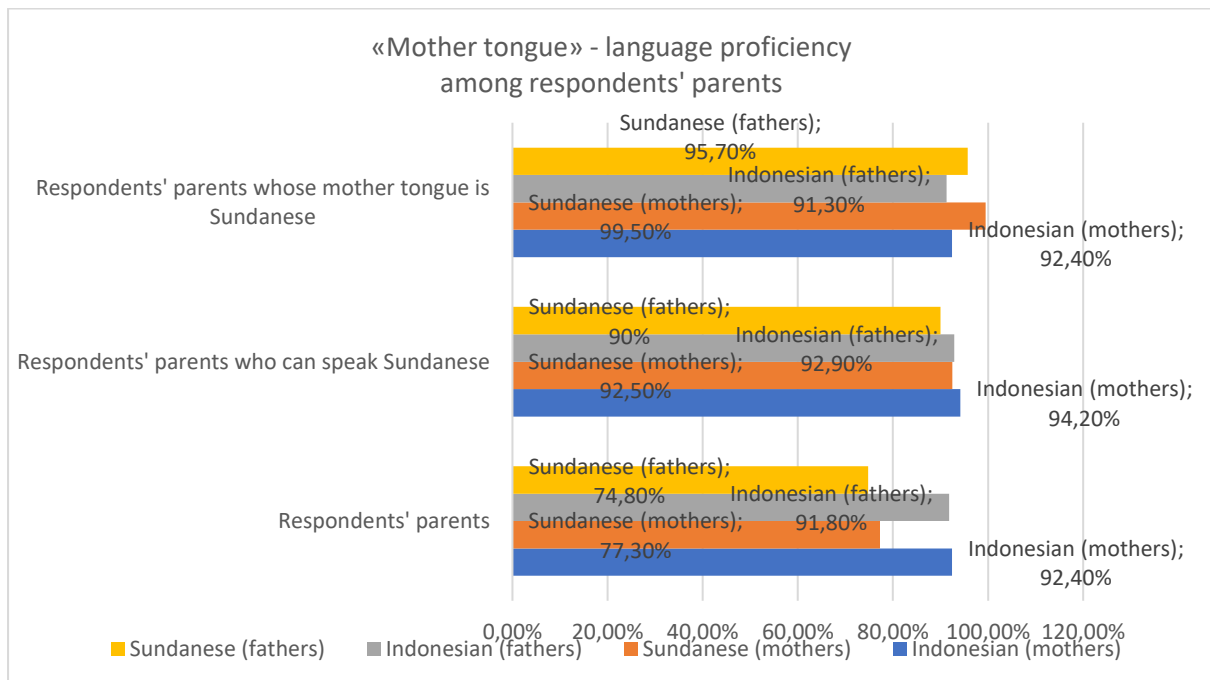


Figure 1. Mother Tongue: Language Proficiency Among Respondents' Parents

Figure 1 shows the language background and language proficiency of respondents' parents. The data indicate that Sundanese remains strongly rooted among the older generation, especially as a mother tongue. Most fathers and mothers of the respondents are reported to have Sundanese as their mother tongue, with mothers showing an especially high percentage. This suggests that the respondents generally come from families where Sundanese has historically been present and culturally meaningful. Therefore, the decline in Sundanese use among youth cannot be explained by the absence of Sundanese in the family background. Rather, it reflects a shift in language practice across generations, where young people inherit knowledge of Sundanese but may not always use it actively in daily communication.

At the same time, Figure 1 also shows that Indonesian is highly mastered by respondents' parents. The percentages for Indonesian proficiency among fathers and mothers are also very high, showing that parents are largely bilingual in Sundanese and Indonesian. This bilingual condition may have both positive and negative implications for Sundanese maintenance. On the one hand, bilingual parents can still transmit Sundanese to their children while also supporting their ability to use Indonesian in wider social and educational contexts. On the other hand, when Indonesian becomes more practical, prestigious, or frequently used in public life, it may gradually become more dominant even within families. Thus, Figure 1 suggests that the home environment still has strong potential to support Sundanese, but this potential may weaken if Indonesian becomes the preferred language of parent-child communication.

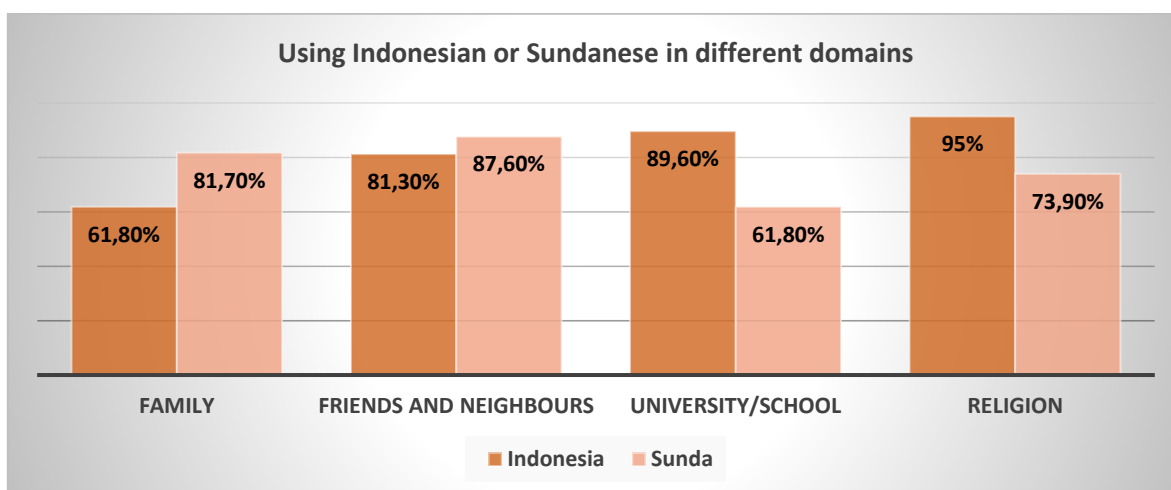


Figure 2. Using Indonesian or Sundanese in Different Domains

Figure 1 illustrates the mother tongue and language proficiency of respondents' parents, particularly in relation to Sundanese and Indonesian. The figure shows that Sundanese remains strongly rooted in the older generation, especially among mothers. The percentage of mothers whose mother tongue is Sundanese is very high, reaching 99.50%, while fathers also show a similarly high percentage, at around 95.70%. This indicates that most respondents come from families with a strong Sundanese linguistic background. In other words, the family environment still has an important foundation for transmitting Sundanese language and culture to the younger generation.

However, the figure also shows that Indonesian is highly present in the parents' linguistic repertoire. Both fathers and mothers demonstrate strong proficiency in Indonesian, with percentages above 90%. This suggests that the respondents' parents are largely bilingual, using or understanding both Sundanese and Indonesian. The high level of Indonesian proficiency reflects the position of Indonesian as the national language and as a dominant language in education, administration, public communication, and wider social interaction. Therefore, although Sundanese remains important as a mother tongue, Indonesian has also become deeply integrated into family and social life.

The comparison between Sundanese and Indonesian proficiency among parents suggests that the respondents grew up in a bilingual family environment. This condition can have both positive and challenging implications for Sundanese language maintenance. On the positive side, the strong Sundanese background of parents means that the family can still serve as a major space for preserving Sundanese. Parents, especially mothers, can play an important role in introducing Sundanese vocabulary, expressions, politeness forms, and cultural values to children. On the other hand, the equally strong presence of Indonesian may reduce the exclusive use of Sundanese at home, especially when family members choose Indonesian for practical, educational, or social reasons.

In addition, Figure 1 indicates that the decline of Sundanese among young people is not caused by the absence of Sundanese-speaking parents. Instead, the data suggest that the younger generation is exposed to both Sundanese and Indonesian from within the family. The issue, therefore, is not only whether parents know Sundanese, but whether Sundanese is actively used, transmitted, and valued in daily communication. Even when parents have strong Sundanese competence, the language may still weaken among youth if Indonesian becomes the more common language in education, media, peer interaction, and urban communication. Thus, Figure 1 provides an important starting point for understanding language shift: Sundanese remains strong in parental background, but its transmission to younger generations depends on continuous use in everyday family and community interaction.

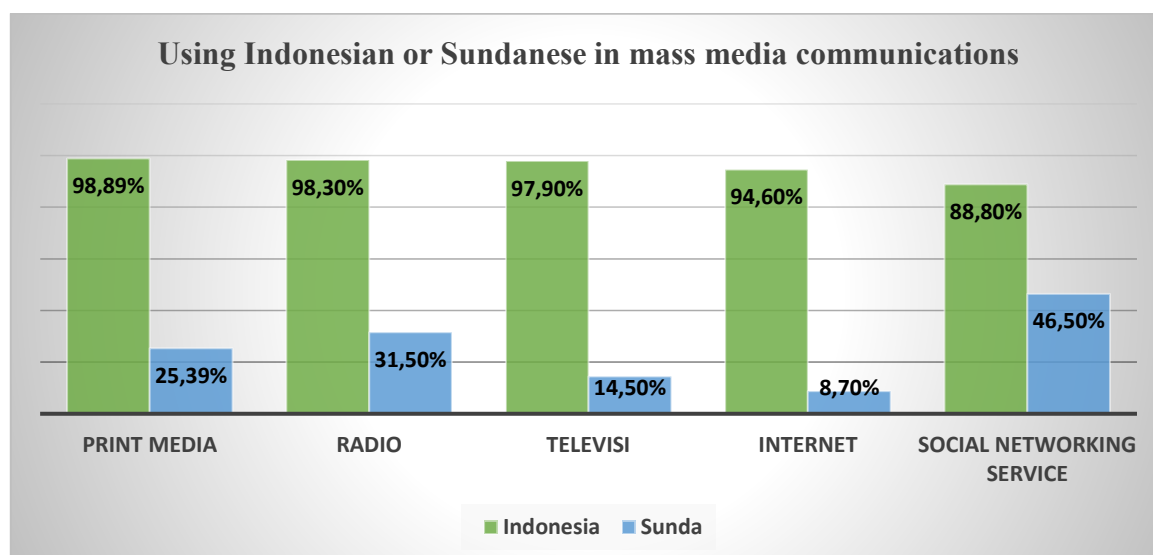


Figure 3. Using Indonesian or Sundanese in Mass Media Communications

Figure 3 shows a clear dominance of Indonesian over Sundanese in mass media communication. In all five media domains, Indonesian is used at a very high level, ranging from 88.80% in social networking services to 98.89% in print media. This indicates that Indonesian functions as the main language of public communication and media consumption among the respondents. The high use of Indonesian in print media, radio, television, and the internet suggests that young Sundanese speakers are more exposed to national-language content than to local-language content. As a result, Indonesian becomes more familiar, practical, and accessible in media-related activities.

The use of Sundanese in mass media is much lower than Indonesian across all categories. Sundanese appears in print media at 25.39%, radio at 31.50%, television at 14.50%, the internet at only 8.70%, and social networking services at 46.50%. The lowest use is found on the internet, which is significant because the internet is one of the most influential communication spaces for young people. This suggests that Sundanese has a weak presence in digital media platforms compared with Indonesian. The limited use of Sundanese on television and the internet may reduce young people's exposure to Sundanese vocabulary, expressions, and cultural meanings in modern communication contexts.

Interestingly, Sundanese use is relatively higher in social networking services, reaching 46.50%, compared with its use in print media, radio, television, and the internet in general. This may indicate that respondents still use Sundanese in more personal, informal, or community-based online interactions. Social networking platforms allow users to communicate with family members, friends, neighbours, and local communities, so Sundanese may still appear when the audience is familiar and ethnically close. However, even in this domain, Indonesian remains higher at 88.80%, showing that Sundanese is not the dominant language of online interaction among the respondents.

Figure 3 also indicates that Sundanese is losing visibility in modern media domains, especially in formal and digital communication. While the language still survives in some interpersonal and social media contexts, its limited presence in print media, television, radio, and the internet reflects a narrowing of its functional use. This finding supports the broader argument of the study that Sundanese among young people is not disappearing completely, but its role is becoming more restricted. Therefore, increasing Sundanese-language content in digital media, television, radio, and social networking platforms is important to strengthen the language's relevance among younger generations.

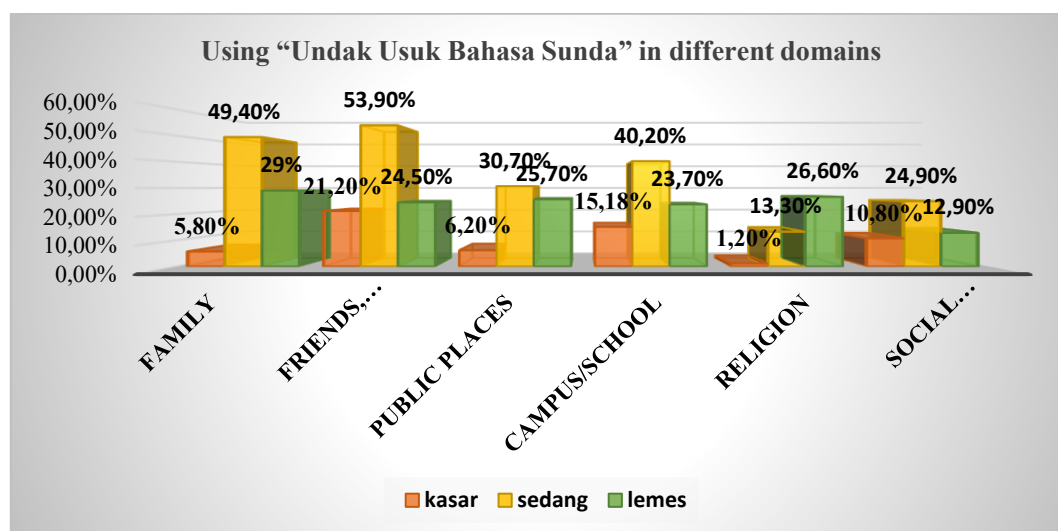


Figure 4. Using "Undak Usuk Bahasa Sunda" in Different Domains

Figure 4 illustrates the use of *undak-usuk basa Sunda*, or Sundanese speech levels, across different social domains. The data show that the medium level (*sedang*) is the most frequently used form of Sundanese in most environments. It appears most strongly among friends and neighbours at 53.90%, followed by the family environment at 49.40%, campus or school at 40.20%, public places at 30.70%, and social networks at 24.90%. This pattern indicates that young Sundanese speakers tend to choose a moderate and flexible form of Sundanese in everyday communication. The dominance of *sedang* suggests that respondents still understand the importance of speech levels, but they may prefer a variety that is easier, more neutral, and less risky than fully polite Sundanese. In this sense, *sedang* functions as a practical speech choice that allows speakers to maintain Sundanese identity while avoiding possible mistakes in the use of more complex polite forms.

The figure also shows that the use of polite Sundanese (*lemes*) varies according to the level of formality and respect required in each setting. Polite Sundanese is used most in the family domain at 29.00%, followed by religious settings at 26.60%, public places at 25.70%, friends and neighbours at 24.50%, and campus or school at 23.70%. Its relatively high use in family and religious contexts suggests that respondents still associate Sundanese politeness with respect, morality, and social harmony. In religious settings, the use of *lemes* is higher than both *kasar* and *sedang*, showing that speakers tend to adjust their language to the respectful atmosphere of mosques or prayer rooms. This finding indicates that Sundanese speech levels remain culturally meaningful, especially when respondents communicate with elders, respected people, religious figures, or people with whom they have a formal relationship.

The use of rough Sundanese (*kasar*) is generally lower than the other two levels, although it appears more frequently in informal peer domains. The highest use of *kasar* occurs among friends and neighbours at 21.20%, followed by campus or school at 15.18% and social networks at 10.80%. In contrast, its use is very low in religious settings, at only 1.20%, and also low in the family domain, at 5.80%, and public places, at 6.20%. This pattern shows that respondents are aware of the social restrictions attached to rough language. They may use *kasar* in relaxed or intimate interactions, especially with peers, but they avoid it in domains that demand politeness, respect, or self-control. Therefore, the figure suggests that young Sundanese speakers do not use speech levels randomly; rather, they adjust their language according to social distance, familiarity, and the expected norms of each communicative situation.

Figure 4 indicates that Sundanese youth still possess sociolinguistic awareness of *undak-usuk basa Sunda*, but their actual use is shaped by context and communicative

convenience. The preference for *sedang* across many domains may reflect a shift toward simplified and neutral Sundanese usage among younger speakers. At the same time, the continued use of *lemes* in family, public, and religious settings shows that politeness norms have not disappeared completely. The limited use of *kasar* in formal and religious settings further confirms that respondents still recognize the cultural value of respectful speech. These findings suggest that the challenge is not only to maintain Sundanese vocabulary, but also to strengthen young speakers' confidence and competence in using appropriate speech levels in different social situations.

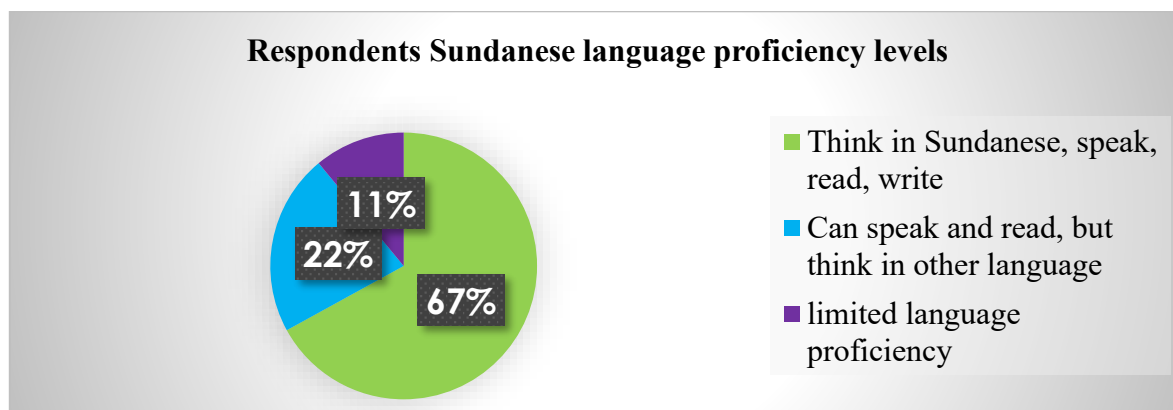


Figure 5. Respondents' Sundanese Language Proficiency Levels

Figure 5 indicates that most respondents still possess the ability to think and speak as Sundanese people, although this ability is not shared by all participants. Based on the data, 67% of respondents stated that they are able to think and communicate using Sundanese cultural and linguistic patterns. This finding suggests that Sundanese remains an important part of their identity and daily communication. However, 22% of respondents reported that they already think in another language. This condition may be related to their frequent interaction with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Such interaction can influence the way respondents organize their thoughts, choose words, and express ideas when using their local language. As a result, their Sundanese language use may gradually be affected by other languages that are more dominant in their social or educational environment. The following question examined whether respondents felt uncomfortable when speaking Sundanese because of their limited ability to use the language. The results show that 53% of respondents answered “yes,” indicating that more than half of them experience discomfort or lack of confidence when speaking Sundanese. This may occur because they are unsure about vocabulary, pronunciation, or appropriate speech levels. Meanwhile, 47% of respondents answered “no,” meaning that they do not feel uncomfortable when using Sundanese. Overall, these findings show that language ability, cultural interaction, and confidence are closely connected in the maintenance of Sundanese among respondents. Therefore, strengthening Sundanese learning and practice is necessary to support speakers' confidence and preserve local linguistic identity.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the popularity and functional use of Sundanese among Sundanese ethnic youth in Bandung are undergoing a gradual but visible decline, although the language remains present in several intimate and community-based domains. The survey data show that Sundanese continues to be used in family interaction and among friends and neighbours, but its use becomes weaker in institutional and public-facing domains such as schools, universities, mass media, the internet, and

social networking platforms. This pattern supports the argument that indigenous-language maintenance is strongly shaped by domain of use. In the family domain, Sundanese still has emotional and cultural value because it is associated with kinship, intimacy, respect, and ethnic belonging. However, outside the home, Indonesian increasingly functions as the dominant language of education, public communication, religion, and digital interaction. This finding is consistent with Cunningham's (2020) claim that the maintenance of home languages is often left to families and minority-language communities, which may eventually lead to intergenerational language shift when wider social institutions do not provide sufficient support. In this study, the home remains an important site of Sundanese maintenance, but the pressure from school, university life, media, and multilingual urban interaction weakens its wider social function.

The results also extend previous studies on language maintenance by showing that the decline of Sundanese among youth is not caused by a single factor but by the interaction of family language practices, urban multilingualism, education, media exposure, and language attitudes. The data indicate that respondents' parents generally still have strong Sundanese competence, yet Indonesian is also widely mastered and used by both fathers and mothers. This suggests that the younger generation grows up in a bilingual or multilingual environment where Indonesian is not only a national language but also a practical language for social mobility, education, and wider communication. This confirms Nguyen's (2021) view that bilingual identity is influenced by ethnic-cultural factors, social factors, and patterns of interaction. Sundanese youth in Bandung do not simply abandon Sundanese; rather, they negotiate between Sundanese as an ethnic identity marker and Indonesian as a wider communicative resource. This negotiation reflects Giles and Johnson's (1987) ethnolinguistic identity theory, which explains that language use is closely related to group membership, social recognition, and the perceived value of belonging to a linguistic community. In the present study, Sundanese still marks ethnic identity, but Indonesian increasingly dominates situations where youth seek broader participation beyond the ethnic group.

The sharp difference between Sundanese use in face-to-face domains and media domains is one of the most important findings. While Sundanese is still relatively visible in family and neighbourhood communication, it is far less common in print media, radio, television, and especially the internet. The study found that Indonesian dominates mass media communication, while Sundanese use is much lower, particularly on the internet. This finding confirms Ahmed et al. (2022), who argue that social media platforms influence youth identity, cultural preferences, and language choices. For Sundanese youth, digital environments expose them to Indonesian, English, and global youth cultures, which may reduce the attractiveness of Sundanese in online self-presentation. The finding also supports Sinayah et al. (2017), who showed that language choice on Facebook among Malaysian Tamil students was influenced by social context and the perceived usefulness of particular languages. Similarly, Sundanese youth may avoid Sundanese online because Indonesian and English are perceived as more modern, more widely understood, and more suitable for digital communication. Thus, the decline of Sundanese in digital spaces does not only reflect language ability but also changing ideas about prestige, modernity, and social belonging.

Another significant finding concerns respondents' use of *undak-usuk basa Sunda*, or Sundanese speech levels. The data show that medium-level Sundanese is the most frequently used variety across several domains, while polite Sundanese is more visible in religious, formal, or respectful situations. This confirms Djajasudarma's (2013) explanation that Sundanese has a sociolinguistic system that requires speakers to choose vocabulary according to social relationship, respect, and context. However, the results also suggest that the complexity of speech levels may contribute to discomfort among young

speakers. More than half of the respondents reported feeling uncomfortable speaking Sundanese because of limited ability. This finding supports Suandi and Utama's (2021) view that languages with speech-level systems may face challenges when younger speakers perceive them as difficult, hierarchical, or less compatible with contemporary egalitarian communication. In the Sundanese case, *undak-usuk* is culturally valuable because it encodes politeness, respect, and social harmony, but it may also become a barrier when youth are afraid of using the wrong level. Therefore, the preservation of Sundanese should not only focus on vocabulary and grammar but also on building confidence and communicative comfort among young speakers.

The study further confirms that language is inseparable from cultural identity. Respondents' continued use of Sundanese in family and community contexts shows that the language remains a symbolic marker of Sundanese belonging. This supports Santoso's (2017) argument that language functions as a marker of cultural identity, and Rummens' (1993) view that social identity is formed through recognition by others as a member of a group. In Sundanese society, language is closely connected to cultural values such as *soméah*, humility, friendliness, and politeness. Hidayat and Hafiar (2019) argue that the Sundanese philosophy of *Soméah Hade ka Sémah* is reflected in repeated communication practices such as the use of polite expressions like *punten* and *mangga*. The current findings extend this view by showing that although these values remain culturally important, younger speakers may not always possess the linguistic confidence needed to express them fully in Sundanese. Therefore, the decline of Sundanese use is not merely a linguistic issue; it also has implications for the transmission of cultural values, social etiquette, and local worldview.

The findings also align with studies on family language policy and language socialization. Bezcioglu-Goktolga and Yagmur (2022), drawing on Spolsky's (2003) framework, emphasize that language practices are influenced by ideology, management, and actual use within families. In this study, the family remains a key environment where Sundanese can survive, but family use alone is not sufficient if schools, media, and public institutions do not reinforce the language. Children and young adults interact with peers, teachers, lecturers, media content, and online communities that often prioritize Indonesian or English. As a result, even when Sundanese is present at home, its functional range may narrow. This supports Shee's (2018) argument that educational institutions and teachers must be empowered to prevent language shift. In the Sundanese context, schools and universities need to move beyond symbolic teaching and create meaningful opportunities for students to use Sundanese in creative, academic, cultural, and digital activities.

The present findings also correspond with Rusminto et al. (2021), who found that local languages in Indonesia face pressure from the national language in contexts of modernization and national integration. Like Lampung, Sundanese is not immediately endangered in terms of speaker numbers, but its vitality among younger generations is weakening in particular domains. This distinction is important: a language may still have many speakers but still experience declining prestige, reduced intergenerational transmission, and limited use in modern domains. Lauder (2021) warns that language extinction is often poorly understood by the public and decision-makers because cultural issues are sometimes seen as less urgent than economic or political matters. The findings of this study support that warning. Sundanese may appear "safe" because many people still understand or speak it, but the reduced use among youth, limited digital presence, and discomfort in speaking indicate a risk of gradual functional decline.

Finally, the study extends previous research by highlighting Bandung's position as a multilingual urban centre. The decline of Sundanese among youth is closely related to Bandung's transformation into an educational and cultural melting pot, where students

from different regions and linguistic backgrounds interact daily. This multilingual environment encourages the use of Indonesian as a neutral lingua franca and may reduce the need for Sundanese in interethnic communication. However, this does not mean that multilingualism must lead to language loss. Instead, it suggests the need for additive bilingualism, where Indonesian and English are learned without weakening Sundanese. As Cantone (2020) argues in the European context, language education policy and teacher training are central to minority-language maintenance. For Sundanese, revitalization requires collaboration among families, schools, universities, local government, cultural communities, and digital content creators. The findings therefore confirm previous research on language shift while also extending it by showing how indigenous-language decline occurs through everyday choices in family, education, media, and online spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of Sundanese among Sundanese ethnic youth in Bandung is declining, particularly in formal, educational, media, and digital domains. Although Sundanese is still used in family interaction and among friends and neighbours, Indonesian has become more dominant in schools, universities, religious spaces, mass media, and online communication. The findings show that the decline is not simply a matter of language competence but also of confidence, prestige, context, and social change. Many respondents still possess Sundanese language ability, but more than half feel uncomfortable speaking it because of limited mastery, uncertainty about vocabulary, or fear of using inappropriate speech levels. This indicates that Sundanese remains culturally meaningful, yet its practical use among youth is becoming more restricted. The role of Bandung as a multilingual urban centre also contributes to this shift, as young people interact intensively with speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and increasingly use Indonesian or English in wider communication.

The study further concludes that Sundanese language preservation requires stronger, more creative, and more systematic efforts from families, schools, universities, government institutions, cultural communities, and digital media actors. Family use remains essential, but it is not enough to maintain the language if Sundanese is absent from education, entertainment, social media, and youth culture. Sundanese should be promoted not only as a traditional heritage but also as a living language that can be used in contemporary communication, digital creativity, academic activities, and public cultural expression. Language learning should also help young speakers become confident in using *undak-usuk basa Sunda* without feeling afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, revitalization programs should combine formal language teaching, cultural festivals, digital content production, community-based practice, and institutional support. Through such efforts, Sundanese can continue to function as a marker of identity, a medium of cultural values, and an important part of Indonesia's linguistic diversity.

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STATEMENT OF USING AI TOOLS

The authors declare that AI-based tools were used only to assist with language refinement, academic wording, grammar checking, and organization of the manuscript. The research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and final academic responsibility remain entirely with the authors.

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