

## Preserving mother tongues remains crucial for cultural identity and diversity amid the homogenizing forces of globalized educational systems

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**Abstract** - The study of mother tongue is becoming increasingly important in understanding the dynamics of language's relationship to cultural identity, cognition, and society. Mother tongue, as the first language learned from infancy, not only influences the way individuals communicate, but also shapes the way they think and see the world. In the context of globalization which is increasingly accelerating the development of international languages, it is critical to evaluate how mother tongues continue to play an important role in education and the maintenance of cultural identity. This research aims to examine critical thinking regarding the existence and importance of mother tongues in education and cultural sustainability, using a document study approach. The analysis was carried out through a review of relevant literature regarding language policy, the foundational role of mother tongue in academic instruction, and the challenges faced by language minority communities. Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that the mother tongue not only supports better understanding in education, but also contributes to the preservation of cultural identity. However, there are major challenges related to global language dominance that could threaten its sustainability. In conclusion, there is a need for policies that support the use of mother tongues in schools and society to maintain a balance between globalization and cultural preservation.

**Keywords:** mother tongue; critical thinking; cultural identity; cultural preservation; social identity

### 1. Introduction

Mother tongue is the first language learned by individuals in their lives, which is the basis of communication and cognitive abilities. Psychologically, the mother tongue has a huge influence on a person's mental and intellectual development. In the midst of the phenomenon of globalization and rapid technological developments, mother tongues are often marginalized by the dominance of international languages, especially English. Nevertheless, mother tongue remains an important element in maintaining cultural identity and local wisdom. Therefore, it is important to review the role of the mother tongue in the context of modern education and society.

Indonesia, as a country with ethnic and linguistic diversity, has more than 700 regional languages, each of which has a rich culture and history. However, as time goes by, many regional languages are threatened with extinction due to shifts in language use, especially among the younger generation. In this case, the role of the mother tongue is not only limited to communication, but also in the formation of identity, personality and cultural awareness. Thus, it is very relevant to carry out

studies on mother tongues to understand how mother tongues play a role in education, social development and cultural preservation.

The study of mother tongue is very relevant, considering the many phenomena that occur in society regarding the role of mother tongue in everyday life. As the first language learned, the mother tongue has a huge contribution to cognitive development, communication and the formation of individual identity. However, in a situation of globalization which dominates the use of foreign languages such as English, mother tongue is starting to lose its function in various sectors, including in the world of education.

The increasingly marginalized use of mother tongues in educational contexts has become a significant concern, as it affects the preservation of cultural values and local wisdom embedded within these languages. Language is more than just a communication tool; it is a repository of cultural heritage, identity, and values passed down through generations (Crystal, 2000). However, modern educational policies in several countries, including Indonesia, prioritize the use of national or global languages as the primary medium of instruction, often at the expense of mother tongues. This trend has led to a gradual decline in the younger generation's proficiency in their native languages, posing a serious threat to linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

In Indonesia, the emphasis on Indonesian as the main language of instruction has its roots in the country's efforts to foster national unity and identity. Bahasa Indonesia, as the national language, plays a pivotal role in connecting the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups across the archipelago (Sneddon, 2003). While this policy has contributed to national cohesion, it has inadvertently marginalized local languages, especially in formal education settings. According to a study by Alwasilah (2016), many schools in Indonesia either neglect or entirely exclude mother tongue instruction, leaving students with limited opportunities to develop and use their native languages. This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia; similar trends are observed globally, particularly in post-colonial nations where national or colonial languages dominate educational frameworks (Phillipson, 1992).

The consequences of side-lining mother tongues in education are multifaceted. First, it impairs intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Younger generations who are not fluent in their mother tongues struggle to engage with traditional practices, oral histories, and indigenous knowledge systems (Fishman, 1991). Consequently, the cultural values and local wisdom encapsulated in these languages face the risk of being forgotten. For instance, languages like Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese, which carry rich traditions and philosophies, are increasingly less spoken by younger Indonesians (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014). This loss not only impoverishes cultural diversity but also weakens community identity and social cohesion.

Second, the marginalization of mother tongues in education contributes to linguistic endangerment. UNESCO (2003) has classified many local languages worldwide as vulnerable or endangered, warning that language extinction results in the irreversible loss of cultural heritage. In Indonesia, approximately 40% of the 700+ languages are at risk of disappearing (Riza, 2019). The lack of institutional support for these languages exacerbates their decline, creating a cycle of linguistic and cultural erosion.

To address these challenges, education policies must adopt more inclusive language practices. Research highlights the benefits of bilingual or multilingual education models that incorporate mother tongues alongside national and international languages (Cummins, 2000). Such approaches not only enhance students' cognitive and academic outcomes but also promote cultural pride and linguistic preservation. For example, the Philippines' Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program has demonstrated positive outcomes in fostering literacy and cultural identity among students (Dekker & Young, 2005).

Prioritizing national languages in education at the expense of mother tongues poses significant risks to linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Policymakers must recognize the importance of mother tongues and implement strategies that balance national unity with cultural preservation. Incorporating mother tongues into formal education is not just a linguistic issue but a cultural imperative to sustain the rich tapestry of human heritage.

In addition, mother tongue has a very vital role in strengthening social ties within a particular community. In indigenous communities, mother tongue not only functions as a means of



communication, but also as a symbol of identity and cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the study of mother tongue is very important to understand how important this language is in forming a society that is harmonious, cultured, and still adheres to local values, even in an increasingly modern global context.

Studies on mother tongue have been carried out by various researchers from various scientific disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and education. Several studies highlight the importance of mother tongue in identity formation, such as research conducted by Fishman (1991), which states that mother tongue plays an important role in maintaining the ethnic and cultural identity of a group. Fishman also revealed that the mother tongue functions as a link between individuals and their communities, so that it can strengthen a sense of togetherness and social solidarity.

The article that provides a concise yet insightful examination of the disconnect between national language policies and the documentation of mother tongues, emphasizing the importance of aligning theoretical frameworks with practical implementation strategies. Although the discussion is well-structured and relevant, the lack of empirical data limits the depth of its conclusions. Nonetheless, it highlights the critical need for inclusive language planning and supports the preservation of linguistic diversity in national education systems (Nwachukwu & Joseph, 2024).

In the educational context, research by Cummins (2000) emphasizes the importance of using the mother tongue in education, especially for children who come from families with different language backgrounds. Cummins believes that a good understanding of the mother tongue will improve children's academic abilities, because the mother tongue becomes a strong basis for learning a second language or other language of instruction.

In addition, research by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) revealed the negative impacts that can arise if the mother tongue is neglected, such as loss of cultural identity and low cognitive abilities in individuals who do not have good mastery of the mother tongue. This study shows that the continuity of the mother tongue is very important to maintain cultural diversity and avoid cultural homogenization caused by global language dominance.

However, despite numerous studies highlighting the importance of the mother tongue, there are still gaps in the implementation of language policies in many countries. In Indonesia, for example, education policy places more emphasis on using Indonesian as the language of instruction, while regional languages and mother tongues often do not receive enough attention. This shows that although awareness of the importance of mother tongue is increasing, implementation in the field still faces many challenges.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) has been instituted in the Philippines to improve learning outcomes and promote cultural identity. This approach emphasizes the use of students' mother tongue as the main medium of instruction in the early grades, which then moves on to second and third languages at higher levels. This policy is in line with global trends supporting multilingual education and aims to address linguistic diversity in the country (Philippines Department of Education, 2009).

Guidelines were then developed to provide a structured implementation framework, covering key strategies such as learning materials development, teacher training, and community engagement. These guidelines also emphasize the role of the mother tongue in improving students' understanding and participation in learning (Philippines Department of Education, 2012).

The selected literature presents a diverse and multidimensional exploration of mother tongue use, preservation, and its pedagogical, sociolinguistic, and cultural implications. The studies collectively emphasize that the mother tongue is not merely a linguistic medium but a vital carrier of identity, heritage, and epistemological frameworks.

A number of the sources focus on the educational significance of mother tongue instruction. Research indicates that incorporating native languages in formal education systems can enhance student comprehension and engagement, especially in multilingual and multicultural contexts. This is evident in analyses of multilingual policies in the Philippines and India, which examine how educational frameworks both enable and restrict mother tongue use in classrooms (Tungul & Lapinid, 2024; Sruthi & Anburaj, 2024). Similarly, the work on the impact of teacher education reveals that attitudes toward using mother tongues in English classrooms are shaped by teacher training, with many still hesitant to fully embrace multilingual strategies (Neokleous et al., 2022).

The potential for mother tongues to support cultural sustainability is also a prominent theme. Several studies stress the importance of actively preserving native languages as repositories of collective memory, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. For instance, the link between language preservation and identity is strongly established through ethnographic and philosophical studies that approach mother tongue from decolonial, spiritual, and communal lenses (Chaudhary, 2023; Tsebe, 2021; Wandusim, 2023). These texts emphasize that language is not neutral – it is inseparable from the worldview it encapsulates.

On a technological front, keystroke dynamics and digital profiling methods offer a modern lens on linguistic identity, showing how language use leaves traces even in online behavior (Tsimperidis et al., 2023). However, such approaches may risk reducing complex cultural-linguistic identities into data points, a methodological limitation that warrants critical reflection.

Language shift, influenced by globalization and dominant language ideologies, appears as a recurring threat to minority languages. Global economic and social forces have accelerated the marginalization of local languages, particularly in post-colonial and developing societies (Sruthi & Anburaj, 2024; Vishnu et al., 2025). In contrast, some works advocate for inclusive educational environments that welcome and validate linguistic diversity, proposing multilingual schooling models as pathways to equity (Lorenzini & Giulivi, 2021; Oral & Lund, 2022).

From a linguistic analysis standpoint, the interference of native language structures in second language acquisition, such as in Japanese passive sentence construction, highlights the importance of functional grammar in understanding learning difficulties (Liu, 2018). Meanwhile, biblical hermeneutics and scriptural translations into mother tongues underscore the theological and philosophical depth that native languages contribute to interpretation and spiritual experience (Wandusim, 2023; Korankye et al., 2024).

Finally, the sociolinguistic vitality of mother tongues in regions such as Dieng, Central Java, reveals the resilience of these languages despite growing multilingualism, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between language maintenance and societal change (Sitaresmi et al., 2024). Gender also emerges as a factor influencing language acquisition, with findings showing significant differences in how men and women learn second languages, raising questions about equity in language education policy (van der Slik et al., 2015).

These works collectively advocate for a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach to mother tongue research—one that acknowledges its cognitive, cultural, and political dimensions while resisting oversimplified narratives of language loss or superiority (Liu, 2018; Atifnigar et al., 2025; Chaudhary, 2023; Sruthi & Anburaj, 2024; Vishnu et al., 2025; Tsimperidis et al., 2023; Korankye et al., 2024; Tsebe, 2021; Lorenzini & Giulivi, 2021; Wandusim, 2023; Tungul & Lapinid, 2024; Neokleous et al., 2022; Oral & Lund, 2022; van der Slik et al., 2015; Sitaresmi et al., 2024).

The four works collectively explore the intersections of language, culture, and education within globalized contexts, though they approach these themes from distinct angles and methodologies. Shen provides a macro-level analysis of how globalization pressures indigenous languages, offering a valuable synthesis but lacking detailed case-specific data to ground its claims (Shen, 2024). Kalu, through a literature review, makes a strong argument for the inclusion of mother tongue diversity in educational policy, though the study could benefit from empirical validation to support its theoretical stance (Kalu, 2021). Malgoubri contributes significantly by presenting grounded research that intertwines culturally sustaining pedagogy with arts-based learning in a multilingual African context, yet the generalizability of findings may be limited due to its specific sociocultural focus (Malgoubri, 2025). Salih, on the other hand, offers a politically charged analysis of cultural imperialism through the Kurdish experience, effectively highlighting internal marginalization, although its historical framing may overshadow contemporary dynamics (Salih, 2020). Together, these works underscore the ongoing challenges and potentials of preserving linguistic and cultural identity in a rapidly globalizing world.

Although these policies have good intentions, challenges remain in implementing mother tongue-based education in linguistically diverse contexts. These challenges include a lack of qualified teachers in local languages, limited teaching resources, and varying levels of community support. In some cases, the complexity of the Philippines' linguistic diversity, with more than 170 languages,



makes standardization difficult. Additionally, socio-cultural factors such as the perceived prestige of English and Filipino further complicate implementation (Metila et al, 2016).

The main problem that is the focus of this study is the lack of attention to preserving mother tongues in education and daily life, especially in the era of globalization which increasingly prioritizes the use of international languages. Many regional languages are threatened with extinction because the younger generation prefers to use Indonesian or foreign languages to communicate, thereby ignoring their mother tongue. This phenomenon is also exacerbated by educational policies that often do not accommodate the use of mother tongue as part of the curriculum, even though many studies show the importance of mother tongue in supporting educational success and the development of cultural identity.

Additionally, another problem faced is a lack of understanding of how best to maintain mother tongues in an increasingly globally connected world. The influence of mass media, technology and education oriented towards international languages is increasingly weakening the position of mother tongue among society. Therefore, there needs to be a more in-depth study of the efforts that can be made to preserve the mother tongue, both through educational policies and active community participation in maintaining their language.

The aim of this study is to examine critical thinking regarding the importance of mother tongues in education and cultural preservation, as well as to provide recommendations regarding steps that can be taken to maintain mother tongues in the era of globalization. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze the role of mother tongue in the formation of an individual's cultural and cognitive identity. (2) assess the impact of globalization on the continuity of mother tongues and educational policies that lead to the preservation of mother tongues. (3) identifying the challenges faced in preserving mother tongue in the world of education and society. (4) provide policy recommendations that can be implemented to support the use of mother tongue in education and daily life.

By understanding the role of the mother tongue and the challenges it faces, it is hoped that this study can contribute to efforts to preserve language and culture in Indonesia and increase awareness of the importance of the mother tongue in education.

## **2. Method**

In this research, the approach used is document study, which aims to analyse and explore critical thinking regarding the importance of mother tongue in education and cultural preservation. Document study was chosen as the main method because it allows researchers to examine various related literature and policies that can provide in-depth insight into the role of mother tongues, the challenges faced in preserving them, as well as policy recommendations that can be implemented. The following is a further explanation regarding the data collection methods and data analysis techniques used in this research.

### **2.1 Document Review**

The data collection method used in this research is document study. Document studies allow researchers to collect and analyse information contained in a variety of relevant written sources, such as books, scientific articles, research reports, government policies, and other documents that discuss the topics of mother tongue, education, and cultural preservation. In this research, the documents collected include:

(1) Academic Articles and Books: Researchers collected various articles and books that discuss the role of mother tongue in education, cultural identity, and globalization. These sources help provide a theoretical basis for the importance of mother tongues and the challenges faced in preserving them (Fishman, 2001; Ng, 2007).

(2) Education Policy: Policy documents relating to the use of language in education, both at the national and regional levels, are an important part of this research. Researchers examine existing policies to determine the extent to which they support the use of mother tongue in the educational curriculum (Hornberger, 2009).

(3) Previous Research Reports: Relevant research reports, both conducted in Indonesia and other countries, are used to provide a broader perspective on the preservation of mother tongues and their impact on education and culture (Harrison, 2007; Piller, 2016).

(4) Local Policy Documents: To add depth to the analysis, researchers also collected documents relating to language policy at the local level, which often has a different approach from national policy (Dutcher, 2004).

The data collection process is carried out by reviewing these written sources, whether published by government institutions, educational institutions, or academic researchers. These sources were then analyzed to identify key themes relating to the role of the mother tongue in education, the challenges faced, as well as proposed solutions for its preservation.

## **2.2 Data Analysis Techniques**

After the data is collected, the next stage is data analysis. In this research, the analysis technique used is content analysis, which focuses on identifying themes, patterns and meanings contained in the documents that have been collected. The content analysis process is carried out in the following steps:

(1) Categorizing Themes: The first step in content analysis is identifying and grouping the main themes that emerge from the documents that have been collected. These themes include the role of mother tongues in education, the impact of globalization on mother languages, challenges faced in preserving mother languages, and policies implemented to support the preservation of mother languages (Pennycook, 2010; García, 2009).

(2) Data Coding: After the main themes have been identified, the next step is to code the data, namely marking the parts of the document that are relevant to the categorized themes. This process allows researchers to connect the information contained in the documents with the research questions asked (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

(3) Critical Analysis: Once categorization and coding are complete, critical analysis is carried out to assess and evaluate the thoughts contained in the document. This analysis aims to understand how ideas regarding mother tongue, education and cultural preservation are presented in various existing sources. Researchers also identify the arguments put forward by the authors and assess the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments in the context of existing policies (Fairclough, 2010).

(4) Synthesis and Interpretation: After the analysis stage, the researcher synthesizes and interprets the findings obtained. This process aims to unite the results of the analysis into a coherent narrative, reflecting a deeper understanding of the role of mother tongues in education and culture, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining these languages (Cohen et al., 2011).

(5) Preparation of Recommendations: Based on the results of the analysis and interpretation, this research also aims to formulate policy recommendations that can be implemented to support the preservation of mother tongues in education and society. These recommendations are based on findings that reveal the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies, as well as steps that can be taken to increase the role of mother tongues in the era of globalization.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Results**

This section aims to answer the study problems previously identified, as well as the objectives of this study. In this research, the study problem focuses on the importance of mother tongue in education, as well as the challenges and solutions faced in preserving mother tongue in Indonesia. For this reason, this section presents a critical analysis of the themes that emerge in the documents that have been studied.

#### **3.1.1. Analysis of the Importance of Mother Tongue in Education**

The importance of the mother tongue in education has become a topic that is widely discussed in educational literature, both from a linguistic, cultural and psychological perspective. Mother tongue, as the first language learned by children, not only functions as a means of communication, but also has broader value in the development of children's social and cultural identities. Research shows that the mother tongue plays a very important role in strengthening children's emotional connections with their families, as well as creating strong ties with their community and culture (García, 2009). Mother tongue is a medium that allows children to understand their world in depth and according to their own cultural context. Therefore, the use of mother tongue in education is very important to support children's cognitive and social development.

The use of the mother tongue in education has been proven to provide a number of significant benefits. Research shows that children who are given the opportunity to learn in their native language



tend to be quicker at understanding basic concepts, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. This is because they are already familiar with the language, which allows them to relate new knowledge to their everyday experiences. In an educational context, this in-depth understanding is important to help children develop their critical and analytical thinking skills.

Apart from that, the use of mother tongue also has a positive impact on children's emotional involvement in the learning process. When children learn in their native language, they feel more secure and confident because they can express themselves more freely and without inhibitions. It also strengthens their relationships with teachers and classmates, and encourages them to more actively participate in class discussions and other learning activities.

In the Indonesian context, where there are more than 700 regional languages spoken by various tribes and ethnic groups, preserving the mother tongue through education becomes very relevant. Indonesia is a country with extraordinary cultural and linguistic diversity, and the mother tongue is an important part of that cultural identity. The use of mother tongue in education can act as a tool to maintain and preserve local linguistic and cultural diversity. By involving regional languages in the educational curriculum, children not only learn the language as a means of communication, but also learn the cultural values contained in the language.

This not only helps preserve these languages, but also enriches children's learning experiences and increases their sense of pride in their cultural heritage. Apart from that, the use of the mother tongue also contributes to mastery of a second or foreign language. Research shows that children who have a strong foundation in their native language find it easier to learn a second language because they have already mastered basic language concepts, such as syntax, grammar, and vocabulary, that can be applied in other languages. This shows that the mother tongue is not only important for the survival of local culture, but also for improving children's language skills in global languages.

However, although the benefits of using the mother tongue in education are clear, its implementation in Indonesia is still limited and often overlooked. In many regions, Indonesian, as the state language, is often used dominantly in classrooms, while the mother tongue, which should be the language of instruction in education, is marginalized. This results in increasingly threatened preservation of mother tongues and local cultural identities, which are increasingly being eroded by globalization and language homogenization. Many regional languages are threatened with extinction, and as their use in education decreases, it is increasingly difficult for these languages to survive in future generations.

Globalization and the dominance of global languages, especially English, have also exacerbated this situation. Indonesian, although important as a national language, cannot replace the role of the mother tongue in the context of identity and culture. Without strong and integrated mother tongue teaching in the curriculum, regional languages tend to disappear over time, resulting in the loss of a large part of priceless cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, several initiatives in various regions in Indonesia show great potential for integrating mother tongues in education. In several regions such as Bali and Papua, there are already policies that support the use of regional languages in education, although their implementation is not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. The use of mother tongue in education can be a tool to not only maintain linguistic diversity, but also enrich the social, cultural and educational lives of children throughout Indonesia.

Thus, to maintain and preserve the mother tongue, joint efforts are needed between the government, society and educational institutions. The government needs to support policies that strengthen the preservation of regional languages through education, while the community must play an active role in maintaining the use of their mother tongue in their environment. Mother tongue-based educational approaches must be integrated into the curriculum more broadly, and teachers need to be trained to master the mother tongue spoken by their communities. Only in this way can mother tongues continue to develop and play an important role in education and cultural preservation in Indonesia.

### **3.1.2. Challenges in Preserving Mother Tongues in Education**

One of the main challenges in preserving mother tongues in Indonesia is the lack of policies that support the use of mother tongues in education. Although some regions, such as Bali and Papua, have regional language policies in education, their implementation is not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. The government often focuses more on Indonesian language policies as the language of

instruction in educational institutions, while regional languages do not receive enough attention in the educational curriculum.

Globalization and modernization also influence the maintenance of mother tongues. In everyday life, people tend to prefer to use Indonesian or even English because they are considered more practical and prestigious. This further worsens the condition of marginalized mother languages (Pennycook, 2010).

On the other hand, the shortage of teaching staff who are proficient in the mother tongue is also a big obstacle. Many teachers do not master their mother tongue in depth, making it difficult to teach students in an effective way using their mother tongue. This condition creates a gap in the quality of education between children who speak their native language and children who only master Indonesian.

One of the main challenges in preserving mother tongues in Indonesia is the lack of policies that support the use of mother tongues in education. Even though there are several regions that are starting to implement policies to integrate regional languages in education, such as Bali and Papua, the implementation of this policy is still not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. In many other areas, especially in big cities and more economically developed areas, Indonesian and English tend to be dominant in education. The government often focuses more on using Indonesian as the language of instruction in educational institutions, considering its role as a national language that unites various tribes and ethnic groups in Indonesia. Meanwhile, regional languages, which are the mother tongue for the majority of Indonesian people, are often neglected in the education curriculum. Mother tongues, which should be a means of enriching learning and strengthening cultural identity, are increasingly marginalized.

The importance of policies that support the use of mother tongue in education is very clear considering its role in children's cognitive and emotional development. In an education system that only relies on Indonesian as a medium of instruction, children who come from families who speak their native language often experience difficulties in following the teaching and learning process. Using their mother tongue in class can help them understand lesson material more easily, while strengthening their attachment to local culture. Therefore, a more inclusive policy is needed that allows regional languages to be integrated into educational curricula throughout Indonesia, both as separate subjects and as the language of instruction in other subjects.

Globalization and modernization also play a role in influencing the maintenance of mother tongues. In everyday life, people increasingly tend to use Indonesian or even English, especially in urban areas, because these languages are considered more practical, modern and have higher social value. Indonesian is seen as a language that can open up greater opportunities in the world of education and employment, while English is considered a global language that is important for competing in international markets. This choice has an impact on maintaining the mother tongue which is increasingly marginalized. Mother tongues are considered less useful in an increasingly globalized context, and this has the potential to cause regional languages to become increasingly endangered, considering that fewer and fewer speakers use these languages in everyday life.

Apart from these external factors, the lack of teaching staff who are proficient in mother tongue is also a major obstacle in implementing mother language-based education. Many teachers do not master their mother tongue in depth, even if they come from areas where a particular mother tongue is spoken. Teaching in the mother tongue requires a deep understanding of the structure, vocabulary and cultural values contained in the language. Without these skills, teachers find it difficult to teach students in an effective and comprehensive way, especially in exploring the potential of local culture which can be used to enrich learning. This condition creates a gap in the quality of education between children who speak their native language and children who only master Indonesian.

Children who do not have access to education in their native language often experience difficulties in optimally developing their language skills, which in turn affects their cognitive development and cultural identity.

The lack of teaching staff who have skills in their mother tongue also has the potential to exacerbate social and educational disparities in Indonesia. Education that ignores the regional mother tongue risks creating differences in the quality of education between children who speak the mother tongue and children who do not. This could exacerbate existing inequalities in access to quality



education, especially in regions where mother languages are less spoken or less accepted in the national context. Therefore, it is important to provide training for teachers in these areas, in order to improve their ability to use their mother tongue as part of the teaching process.

Mother tongue-based education, supported by clear policies and skilled teaching staff, will provide greater opportunities for children to develop holistically. This will also strengthen efforts to preserve local languages and culture which have historical and cultural value which is very important for the diversity of the Indonesian nation. Although the challenges are enormous, with the right policies and cooperation between government, educational institutions and society, the preservation of mother languages can be better realized, creating a more inclusive and sustainable future for future generations

### **3.1.3. Solutions for Preserving Mother Tongues in Education**

There are various solutions proposed by various studies to support the preservation of mother tongue in education. One of the recommended approaches is strengthening a mother tongue-based curriculum that involves local communities in the teaching process (Hornberger, 2009). In this case, government policy must better support mother tongue-based education by providing relevant teaching materials and involving mother language experts to become teachers in educational institutions-schools.

Research also shows that the use of technology can be an effective tool for preserving mother tongues. With the existence of digital platforms, applications and social media, mother tongue can be learned in a more interactive and interesting way, especially for young children who are more accustomed to using technology (Dutcher, 2004).

Apart from that, collaboration between the government, educational institutions and the community is very important to realize the preservation of the mother tongue. By involving parents, indigenous communities and non-governmental organizations, the process of preserving mother tongues can be carried out in a more holistic and sustainable manner.

There are various solutions proposed by various studies to support the preservation of mother tongue in education. One of the recommended approaches is strengthening a mother tongue-based curriculum that involves local communities in the teaching process. This approach emphasizes the importance of community participation in integrating the mother tongue into the formal education system. Hornberger (2009) states that implementing a mother tongue-based curriculum that involves local communities will be more effective in preserving regional languages because the community has deeper knowledge of their language and culture. In addition, community involvement can provide a sense of ownership of the mother tongue, which in turn can strengthen the use of the mother tongue in everyday life.

The importance of government policies that support mother tongue-based education has also been highlighted in various studies. The government must be more proactive in developing policies that facilitate the use of mother tongue in education. One step that can be taken is to provide relevant and mother tongue-based teaching materials for use in educational institutions-schools. Apart from that, the government must also work together with regional language experts to ensure that the curriculum taught is in accordance with the needs and characteristics of the mother tongue. This support will ensure that the mother tongue is not only used as the language of instruction in the classroom, but can also be taught in a structured manner in regional language subjects that focus on developing children's language and literacy skills.

Apart from policies and strengthening the curriculum, research also shows that the use of technology can be an effective tool in preserving mother tongues. In this digital era, young people tend to be more interested in using technology, such as digital platforms, applications and social media. By utilizing technology, mother tongue can be taught in a more interactive and engaging way, which can increase children's and young people's learning motivation. Dutcher (2004) explains that technology can be an efficient means of facilitating mother language learning, because it allows wider access to learning materials and reaches the younger generation who are more familiar with the use of digital devices. Using mother tongue-based applications can also overcome limited access to education in remote areas which may not have many mother tongue teaching staff.

However, the most effective solution to preserve mother tongues in education is to create collaboration between the government, educational institutions and society. This collaboration is very important so that preserving the mother tongue is not only the responsibility of education, but also of

indigenous communities, parents and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Indigenous peoples have an important role in maintaining the continuity of mother tongues, because they are native speakers who have in-depth cultural and linguistic knowledge. By involving them in the teaching process, the preservation of the mother tongue can be done in a more authentic and sustainable way. Indigenous communities and parents can also play a role in providing examples of the use of their mother tongue in everyday life, which will help children become more accustomed to and interested in using their mother tongue.

Apart from that, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also provide support in terms of developing teaching materials and training for mother language teachers. NGOs focused on preserving local languages and cultures can play a role in providing resources and support to ensure that mother tongues can be taught effectively and involve a wide range of interested parties. This collaboration will create a more holistic system, where the preservation of the mother tongue is not only carried out in the formal context of education, but also in the social and cultural life of society.

Overall, preserving mother tongues in education requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach, involving government policies, strengthening mother tongue-based curricula, the use of technology, and active participation from the community. With these steps, it is hoped that mother tongues can continue to be preserved and developed in the context of education, as well as contributing to Indonesia's cultural diversity which is increasingly being eroded by globalization.

#### **3.1.4. Response to Study Objectives**

The aim of this study is to assess the role of mother tongues in education, identify the challenges faced in their preservation, and provide recommendations for educational policies and practices that support the use of mother tongues. This study succeeded in achieving its objectives by providing a clear picture of the importance of mother tongues in education, as well as identifying the main challenges faced by communities, schools and governments in efforts to preserve them. Apart from that, this research also provides new insights into various approaches that can be taken to overcome this problem.

One of the main contributions of this research is the emphasis on the importance of more inclusive policies towards mother tongues in education. So far, education policy in Indonesia has prioritized the use of Indonesian as the language of instruction in educational institutions, while regional languages are often neglected. This research highlights the need for policies that better support the preservation of mother languages, for example by including mother languages in the national curriculum and providing appropriate teaching materials for students who speak certain mother languages. This research also recommends that the government involve local communities in developing mother tongue-based curricula, by involving regional language experts who can ensure mother language teaching is carried out in an appropriate and authentic way.

Apart from policy, this study also emphasizes that preserving mother tongues in education not only serves to preserve local culture, but also has a significant impact on cultural diversity at the global level. In an increasingly global society, linguistic and cultural diversity is becoming increasingly important, as it can enrich intercultural interactions and create a better understanding of different cultural perspectives. Mother tongue preservation, as explained in this research, can play a key role in maintaining this cultural diversity, by creating space for younger generations to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. It can also help children who speak a particular mother tongue to have a sense of pride in their cultural identity, which in turn can strengthen social ties within their community.

Furthermore, this study also identified several challenges faced in preserving mother tongues, such as a lack of supportive policies, limited resources for teaching mother tongues in educational institutions, and a lack of teaching staff skilled in mother tongues. This research shows that these challenges must be addressed with collaboration between government, educational institutions and local communities. The use of technology, for example, can be an effective solution to overcome the problem of limited teaching staff, by providing mother tongue learning applications or platforms that can be used by students outside of school hours. Apart from that, involving the community in efforts to preserve their mother tongue is also very important, because they have in-depth knowledge and skills regarding the local language and culture.

The recommendations resulting from this research cover several aspects, including the importance of integrating mother tongues in the national education curriculum, providing training to



teachers to teach mother tongues, and developing relevant teaching materials. Apart from that, this research also encourages the use of technology as a means of preserving mother tongue, especially for the younger generation who are more accustomed to digital technology. With these steps, it is hoped that the preservation of mother tongues can be carried out more effectively, as well as contributing to cultural diversity in Indonesia and the world.

Preserving the mother tongue in education is increasingly recognized as essential for both maintaining cultural identity and fostering global cultural diversity. This approach acknowledges the importance of local languages as repositories of cultural knowledge, history, and traditions. When integrated into educational systems, mother tongue-based education can enhance learning outcomes, promote cognitive development, and build a stronger sense of cultural pride among students. These benefits extend beyond local contexts, contributing to the enrichment of global cultural diversity by ensuring the survival and continuity of linguistic heritage.

The integration of mother tongues into education requires more than awareness; it demands inclusive policies that prioritize linguistic diversity in curriculum design and teaching strategies. Policies such as the use of local languages as the medium of instruction in early education have shown significant benefits. For example, UNESCO (Year) emphasizes that children learn best in their mother tongue during the formative years, as it allows them to grasp foundational concepts more effectively before transitioning to a second language. Furthermore, such policies support marginalized linguistic communities, reducing disparities in educational access and achievement.

In addition to policy interventions, technology-based approaches are proving instrumental in preserving and revitalizing mother tongues. Digital platforms, mobile applications, and online resources enable the documentation, teaching, and dissemination of indigenous languages, making them accessible to wider audiences. For instance, initiatives like Duolingo's indigenous language courses and community-driven projects to digitize local languages highlight the transformative potential of technology in this domain (Author, Year). These tools not only facilitate learning but also ensure that younger generations remain connected to their linguistic roots in a rapidly globalizing world.

Community involvement is equally crucial in sustaining mother tongue education. Active participation from parents, educators, and local organizations fosters an environment where linguistic heritage is celebrated and valued. Grassroots initiatives, such as local storytelling programs, traditional song preservation, and intergenerational language transmission, are effective strategies to reinforce the use of mother tongues in everyday life (Author, Year). Collaboration between stakeholders, including governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, can amplify these efforts, ensuring a holistic and sustainable approach to language preservation.

Preserving the mother tongue in education offers profound benefits for cultural continuity and global diversity. Through inclusive policies, technological advancements, and active community engagement, this endeavour can be sustained effectively. These efforts not only enrich education but also fortify the cultural fabric of Indonesia and beyond, demonstrating the enduring value of linguistic diversity in a connected world.

### **3.1.5. Discussion of Key Findings**

The main findings of this research reveal a dual reality: there is widespread awareness of the importance of preserving mother tongues, but effective implementation in educational systems remains significantly lacking. The root causes of this issue lie in both policy limitations and the unpreparedness of teaching staff to effectively integrate mother tongues into formal education. Policies in many regions, including Indonesia, often emphasize national or international languages, overshadowing local languages and their vital role in fostering cultural identity. This prioritization stems from a broader goal of national unity and global competitiveness, as seen in Indonesia's emphasis on Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of instruction (Sneddon, 2003). While this policy has succeeded in unifying a linguistically diverse nation, it has inadvertently marginalized mother tongues, making their inclusion in education a secondary consideration (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014).

One of the significant barriers to effective implementation is the lack of teacher preparation. Many educators lack the skills, training, and resources to teach mother tongues effectively (Alwasilah, 2016). This unpreparedness often results in a reliance on national or global languages in classrooms, even when mother tongue education policies exist. For example, in Indonesia, although there are mandates for teaching regional languages in schools, their application is inconsistent due to

insufficient teacher training and a lack of standardized materials (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014). This situation underlines the necessity of systemic support, including teacher development programs and curriculum design that incorporates local languages meaningfully.

Despite these challenges, the potential for preserving mother tongues through education remains promising. Contextual and community-based approaches to education have shown considerable success in revitalizing and maintaining local languages. For instance, research demonstrates that integrating cultural practices and community participation into educational programs fosters a deeper connection to heritage and enhances the sustainability of language use (Cummins, 2000; Dekker & Young, 2005). Bilingual and multilingual education models that include mother tongues alongside national languages are effective in promoting both academic success and cultural pride (Cummins, 2000).

While policy and institutional barriers persist, targeted efforts in teacher preparation and community engagement can unlock the potential of education to preserve mother tongues. A balanced approach that values both national unity and linguistic diversity is essential to sustain cultural heritage for future generations.

Overall, these findings strengthen the argument that preserving the mother tongue is not only the responsibility of the government or educational institutions, but is also a shared responsibility of society, parents and local communities. Communities must be empowered to teach their mother tongue to the younger generation, and government policies need to be changed to better support the use of mother tongue in educational institutions and schools.

Based on the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that mother tongue has a very important role in education, especially in enriching cultural identity and supporting children's linguistic development. However, preserving the mother tongue in Indonesia still faces various challenges, such as inadequate policies, a lack of teaching staff who master the mother tongue, and the impact of globalization on the use of the mother tongue.

This research also provides policy recommendations that can be implemented to support the preservation of mother tongues, such as strengthening mother tongue-based curricula, involving local communities in mother language teaching, and utilizing technology in mother language learning. With these steps, it is hoped that the mother tongue can be maintained and preserved as an integral part of the education system in Indonesia.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research examines the importance of mother tongue in the context of education in Indonesia, with a focus on the challenges and solutions faced in its preservation. Based on the results of document analysis and literature review, it can be concluded that mother tongue has a very significant role in children's cognitive and social development. The use of the mother tongue in education not only improves understanding of basic concepts, but also strengthens cultural ties and local identity. Even though the benefits are very clear, the implementation of mother tongue-based education in Indonesia still faces various obstacles.

One of the main findings in this research is the lack of policies that support the use of mother tongue in educational institutions-schools. Even though several regions such as Bali and Papua already have policies on the use of regional languages in education, their implementation is not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. The government places greater emphasis on Indonesian as the language of instruction in educational institutions-schools, which often ignores the mother tongue as a very important means of communication. As a result, many mother languages are marginalized, even threatened with extinction.

Apart from that, the unpreparedness of teaching staff who master their mother tongue is also a big obstacle. Many teachers do not have skills in a particular mother tongue, so mother language teaching in the classroom is limited and not optimal. This is exacerbated by the fact that Indonesian, as the state language, is considered more practical and prestigious in everyday life, so that people are more likely to use Indonesian or foreign languages, especially English, in various aspects of life.

However, this research also provides solutions that can be implemented to support the preservation of mother tongue in education. One way is to strengthen the mother tongue-based



curriculum that involves local communities. In this case, the role of the community is very important to introduce and teach the mother tongue to the younger generation, both in educational institutions and in everyday life. Involving parents and communities in mother tongue-based education can help create an environment that supports language preservation.

Apart from that, the use of technology is also a solution that can help preserve the mother tongue. Digital platforms, apps and social media can be used to make mother tongue learning more interactive and engaging for the younger generation. With technology, mother tongues can be learned in a more flexible and enjoyable way, which will hopefully increase children's interest in learning their mother tongue.

In order to preserve mother tongues, this research also highlights the importance of more inclusive policies from the government. There needs to be greater support in the form of providing teaching materials in the mother tongue, training teachers who master the mother tongue, as well as empowering local communities to teach the mother language in educational institutions-schools. Apart from that, strengthening an education system based on multilingualism can also help improve children's language skills, both in their mother tongue, Indonesian and foreign languages.

Overall, preserving the mother tongue in education requires a holistic and integrated approach, involving various parties from the government, educational institutions, to the community. With supportive policies, adequate training for teachers, as well as support from technology and local communities, mother languages can be maintained and preserved, so that they not only provide benefits for children's educational development, but also for the preservation of cultural diversity in Indonesia. This research shows that although the challenges faced are enormous, there are many solutions that can be implemented to ensure that mother tongues are maintained and valued in the Indonesian education system.

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