

Contextualizing Indonesian Language Instruction through Language Ecology: A Case Study in Tourism Vocational Schools in East Lombok

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Indonesian language education;
language ecology;
contextual learning;
vocational schools;
merdeka curriculum

Article history:

Received 2025-06-09

Revised 2025-06-27

Accepted 2025-12-11

ABSTRACT

This study explores the contextual needs of Indonesian language instruction in tourism vocational high schools (SMK Pariwisata) in East Lombok by aligning the Merdeka Curriculum with the principles of language ecology. Generic instructional models often fail to address the ecological, cultural, and occupational realities faced by students in vocational settings. An exploratory qualitative approach was employed using a language ecology framework. Data were collected through observations, interviews, document analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and questionnaires across three ecological zones: urban (Mataram City), coastal (Senggigi), and mountainous (Sembalun). Thematic analysis and data triangulation were conducted to identify region-specific linguistic demands. Findings revealed significant variation in learning needs across ecological zones. In coastal areas, 88% of students required practical spoken language for tourism communication. In urban areas, 82% prioritized formal and professional Indonesian for business and bureaucratic contexts. Meanwhile, 91% of students in mountainous regions expressed a preference for materials rooted in local folklore and cultural heritage. Teacher responses (above 85% in all regions) affirmed the importance of integrating local context into instructional content. Effective strategies identified included simulation-based learning, project-based activities, and the development of culturally relevant texts. These results suggest that Indonesian language instruction in SMK Pariwisata should be differentiated based on ecological contexts and grounded in local cultural and professional practices. The study recommends teacher training in ecolinguistics, curriculum adaptation, and cross-sector collaboration with tourism stakeholders to ensure linguistically relevant and workforce-aligned education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lombok is one of Indonesia's most visited tourist destinations, hosting a diverse influx of both domestic and international visitors. Within this context, tourism vocational high schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Pariwisata*, or SMK Pariwisata) are tasked with preparing graduates who can communicate professionally in Indonesian while remaining responsive to real-life tourism interactions. Yet, despite the flexibility granted by the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which encourages context-based and student-centered instruction, there is a lack of clear, research-based models that align Indonesian language instruction with the ecological and vocational realities of tourism-based education in local regions such as East Lombok (Nathasia & Abadi, 2022; Sianturi, 2021).

Prior studies in language ecology (Isti'anah, 2022; Mbete, 2017; Nahdi, 2021) have shown that embedding language learning in local environmental and sociocultural contexts supports deeper comprehension and identity formation. However, most research to date has either focused on general ecological education or on language vitality in regional contexts. Few studies have specifically addressed how Indonesian language learning can be systematically tailored to the vocational tourism sector using ecological principles, particularly in a geographically diverse region like East Lombok.

In the context of vocational education, language is not merely a subject of study but a tool for communication in professional domains. Previous research on language instruction in vocational settings (Ahmad, 2021; Padlurrahman & Al-Pansori, 2021) has emphasized the need for project-based learning and contextually grounded materials. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in understanding how Indonesian language instruction can be adapted to specific ecological and occupational contexts—such as coastal, city, and mountainous tourism environments and how this adaptation can improve communicative competence and cultural literacy.

Additionally, ecolinguistic perspectives (Permana et al., 2019) highlight the need to move beyond the use of decontextualized national texts in language teaching. They advocate for the integration of language, environment, and local culture to ensure relevance and sustainability in education. Yet, in the practical implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, many teachers continue to rely on standardized textbooks that fail to reflect local sociolinguistic dynamics or the authentic communication needs of tourism workers.

This study builds upon and extends the theoretical contributions of language ecology by applying its principles to Indonesian language instruction in vocational tourism schools. Unlike previous studies, which have treated local culture as supplementary material, this study integrates language ecology as a *problem-solving approach* to identify and meet specific learning needs. It also compares how different ecological zones (city, mountainous, and coastal) shape students' linguistic demands, using empirical data from classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

This study conceptualizes language learning as embedded within nested systems from immediate classroom settings (microsystem) to broader cultural and policy influences (macrosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). This theoretical lens supports the central hypothesis that effective Indonesian language instruction must respond not only to curricular goals but also to the physical, social, and occupational ecologies in which students live and work.

Furthermore, sociocultural learning theory underscores the role of social interaction and culturally mediated tools in language acquisition (L. S. Vygotsky, 2020). By applying this theory, the study positions local texts, tourism discourse, and ecological themes as key mediators that can scaffold students' development of communicative competence and critical literacy.

This research also draws from applied linguistics literature advocating for the axiological integration of environmental and cultural values into language pedagogy (Hidayat & Fardiansari, 2016; Ramadhan et al., 2023). By focusing on Indonesian language instruction within SMK Pariwisata, this study

contributes a novel model for ecolinguistically grounded curriculum design—relevant not only to the Indonesian context but also to other multilingual and multicultural education systems.

Therefore, the objective of this study is threefold: (1) to identify the Indonesian language learning needs of students in tourism vocational schools across different ecological zones in East Lombok; (2) to analyze how these needs can be addressed through an ecology-based instructional approach; and (3) to propose integrative strategies that link language learning with students' social environment, local culture, and professional tourism contexts. Through this research, we aim to develop a more contextual, responsive, and culturally sustaining model for Indonesian language education within the *Merdeka Curriculum* framework.

2. METHODS

This study utilized an exploratory qualitative approach informed by the principles of language ecology. Sampling was conducted purposively by selecting three vocational tourism schools (SMK Pariwisata) located in ecologically and socio-culturally distinct regions of Lombok: Senggigi (coastal), Mataram (city), and Sembalun (mountainous). These regions were chosen to represent varied environmental contexts that influence language learning practices in tourism-related education.

Data collection methods included structured observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, focus group discussions (FGD), and questionnaires (Amalia et al., 2019; Stevanny & Pribadi, 2020). The questionnaire included both closed- and open-ended items designed to capture students' and teachers' perceptions of language learning needs. The FGDs were guided by prompts focused on local language use, cultural values, and ecological relevance in classroom practices. Interviews focused on exploring pedagogical strategies and contextual challenges in implementing language ecology-based instruction.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing (Baltaci, 2017; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Inductive coding was employed to identify recurring patterns related to ecological learning needs and instructional relevance. Triangulation across multiple sources and techniques was applied to enhance trustworthiness (Creswell, John W. & Poth, 2016). Quantitative data from questionnaires were tabulated to complement the thematic findings.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, limitations must be acknowledged. The findings may be subject to researcher bias due to close familiarity with the setting, and generalizability is limited to similar vocational schools within comparable ecological contexts. Nonetheless, this research offers rich, contextual insights valuable for curriculum development and policy making in language instruction.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This study successfully identified differing Indonesian language learning needs at tourism vocational schools (SMK Pariwisata) based on their geographical environmental contexts. The language ecology approach emphasizes the significance of the interconnection between physical, social, and cultural environments and the form and content of language instruction. The three regions examined—city, mountainous, and coastal—demonstrate distinct needs in Indonesian language learning. These differences are reflected in the results of observations, interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and questionnaires conducted with both teachers and students.

Table 1. Indonesian language learning needs based on geographical location

No	Region	Primary Learning Needs in Indonesian Language Instruction	Student Response Percentage (%)	Teacher Response Percentage (%)
1	City	Formal language for bureaucratic communication, tourism business correspondence, and professional presentations	82%	90%
2	Mountainous	Local folklore, traditional cultural narratives, tourism communication based on local wisdom	76%	85%
3	Coastal	Practical spoken language, tourist conversations, marine and ecotourism vocabulary	88%	92%

The data presented in Table 1 underscores the diverse Indonesian language learning needs across different ecological zones—city, mountainous, and coastal—within East Lombok’s tourism vocational schools. In city schools, both students (82%) and teachers (90%) reported a strong preference for formal language skills. These include the ability to compose official documents for bureaucratic purposes, write business correspondence for tourism enterprises, and deliver professional presentations. Such needs are closely related to the city's employment context, where communication with stakeholders—government institutions, tour operators, and international clients—requires standardized, professional language use. The emphasis on formal register suggests that Indonesian language learning in city settings should integrate materials such as job application letters, meeting minutes, promotional proposals, and public speaking modules, thereby preparing students for professional communication demands in the tourism sector.

In contrast, mountainous region schools demonstrate a distinct need for language instruction rooted in local culture. With 76% of students and 85% of teachers emphasizing the importance of content related to folklore, traditional storytelling, and communication grounded in local wisdom, it becomes clear that learning should tap into the rich oral heritage of the region. This suggests that the curriculum should incorporate traditional Sasak legends, ceremonial speeches, and local proverbs to foster language mastery while preserving cultural identity. The ecological context of the mountains, where communities often maintain strong intergenerational cultural transmission, supports the pedagogical relevance of such materials.

Meanwhile, coastal schools prioritize highly practical and oral forms of Indonesian. With 88% of students and 92% of teachers identifying conversational language, especially in the context of tourism interactions and marine ecotourism, as their main need, it is evident that communicative competence is crucial. These learners often engage directly with tourists, local guides, or vendors, requiring a flexible and responsive use of Indonesian. Instructional content should therefore include situational dialogues, expressions for hospitality, and vocabulary specific to marine life, eco-tourism attractions, and customer service. These findings affirm that language learning in coastal zones must be responsive to the daily linguistic realities of tourism-based livelihoods.

The research findings indicate that local cultural values in East Lombok hold significant potential for integration into Indonesian language instruction at vocational tourism schools (SMK Pariwisata). This integration fosters contextual, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences, as students feel acknowledged and connected to the learning materials.

Table 2. Quantitative data from questionnaires on students and teachers

No	Region	Percentage of Students Who Feel Helped by Local Cultural Content (%)	Percentage of Teachers Supporting Local Culture Integration (%)
1	City	78%	85%
2	Mountain	91%	92%
3	Coastal	83%	88%

Table 2 highlights broad support for integrating local cultural values into Indonesian language instruction, with regional variations reflecting how deeply culture is embedded in educational contexts. In city settings, 78% of students and 85% of teachers support the inclusion of local culture. While city areas are generally associated with formal, standardized communication, the presence of cultural heritage sites, festivals, and artistic performances in cities can serve as entry points for culturally rich language instruction. Students in city areas may benefit from learning materials that link formal expression with local content, such as writing reports on traditional events or composing formal invitations to cultural ceremonies.

In mountainous areas, the case for cultural integration is even stronger, with 91% of students and 92% of teachers expressing that local cultural content enhances learning. These results reflect the socio-cultural environment in which tradition remains central to daily life. Students often participate in rituals, oral storytelling, and community events, yet such experiences are rarely represented in textbooks. This disconnect between lived culture and classroom materials creates an opportunity for revitalizing instruction through the inclusion of authentic cultural expressions—ritual language, kinship terms, traditional occupations, and festivals—that simultaneously support language development and affirm identity.

In coastal schools, 83% of students and 88% of teachers endorse cultural integration. These learners typically interact with tourists and are engaged in local economic activities tied to culture, such as boat tours, culinary traditions, or handicrafts. Instruction that incorporates these elements—dialogues in traditional markets, brochures describing local marine rituals, or role-plays involving tourist interactions—can make lessons more meaningful and directly applicable. The data suggest that students feel more connected and confident when their own cultural backgrounds are represented in the classroom, enhancing not only linguistic competence but also self-esteem and motivation to learn.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Learning Indonesian in City Areas

City environments indicate a high demand for formal Indonesian language instruction. Students at tourism vocational schools (SMK Pariwisata) in city areas tend to engage in professional communication practices such as composing official letters, preparing activity reports, delivering presentations in formal forums, and crafting promotional texts. This need is driven by the nature of city areas, which serve as centers for administration, governance, and tourism business activities. This demand is reflected in the questionnaire results, which show that 82% of students feel the need to improve their proficiency in formal Indonesian. Additionally, 90% of teachers reported that the current curriculum does not sufficiently emphasize professional language aspects relevant to the city tourism industry. Therefore, strengthening students' abilities in producing formal text genres such as job application letters, proposals, activity reports, and speeches is considered essential.

Focus group discussions with teachers revealed that many students still struggle to construct cohesive and coherent paragraphs in formal contexts. For instance, their ability to write descriptions of tour packages or deliver welcoming speeches remains limited. Consequently, instruction should

include strategies for paragraph development, text editing exercises, and exploration of formal tourism-related vocabulary. Observational data also showed that teachers tend to rely on standard textbooks without adapting content to the city local context. This presents a gap that must be addressed through the development of city environment-based teaching materials that incorporate elements of city life, such as tourism transportation systems, bureaucracy, business licensing, and formal interactions among industry stakeholders. Thus, in city areas, Indonesian language instruction should focus on the skills of composing and delivering information in a formal and professional manner, using project-based learning approaches that simulate real-world activities such as business presentations and official document preparation.

Findings related to urban-based vocational schools indicate a significant need for formal and professional Indonesian language instruction. From an ecolinguistic perspective, this underscores the linguistic demands in urban environments that necessitate the development of communicative competencies aligned with institutional and bureaucratic interactions. These findings align with Halliday's theory of language as a social semiotic, emphasizing that language structures and usage are shaped by social functions (Knain et al., 2021). The high percentage of student and teacher responses indicating a lack of formal language instruction reveals a curricular gap between vocational education and the actual linguistic demands in the tourism sector.

When compared to national research in SMK Malang, similar challenges arise: teachers struggle to contextualize the curriculum to suit urban tourism industries (Nathasia & Abadi, 2022). Internationally, vocational students in Spain benefited more from project-based instruction that mirrored real-world work environments (Macías, 2023). This supports the argument for implementing project-based learning models to bridge formal language instruction with practical tourism communication.

The practical implications are considerable. Educators must design modules that simulate authentic communicative tasks, such as writing business correspondence or delivering professional presentations. Curriculum developers should ensure that Indonesian language syllabi for urban tourism vocational schools emphasize formal text genres and discourse patterns relevant to the service and tourism industries. Policymakers should consider embedding industry collaboration within the curriculum framework to ensure relevance and responsiveness to labor market demands.

Moreover, urban schools are generally better resourced and situated near tourism stakeholders, presenting opportunities for internships and cooperative learning with tourism companies. Integrating Indonesian language instruction into such partnerships can result in a more adaptive, industry-aligned curriculum. In this context, ecology-based learning is not only an instructional tool but also a career-preparation mechanism directly linked to the regional economy.

This approach also opens opportunities to develop community-based collaborative models, such as partnerships with local tourism information centers or cooperation with municipal governments. In this sense, the Indonesian language becomes not only a tool for formal communication but also an instrument for empowering students' civic roles through urban literacy and effective public communication.

3.2.2 Learning Indonesian in Mountainous Areas

In contrast to city areas, schools located in mountainous regions exhibit a strong need for narrative and descriptive texts that reflect local culture. Most students in these areas live within traditional communities that still uphold oral traditions and folklore. Therefore, the language ecology approach in this context should focus on Indonesian language learning on the transmission of local cultural heritage through language.

A total of 76% of students showed strong interest in learning materials that include legends, myths, and local stories, such as tales about Mount Rinjani, traditional rituals, and the social life of mountain communities. Additionally, 85% of teachers agreed that teaching materials should better reflect local values to make Indonesian language learning more relevant and meaningful for students. During interviews, teachers explained that students understood narrative texts more easily when they were based on familiar local settings. Learning through folklore, such as the story of Putri Mandalika and other regional myths, not only improves language skills but also helps students develop character and a sense of identity. This approach supports the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which promotes contextual learning.

Indonesian language learning in mountainous areas becomes more effective when combined with local cultural activities, such as traditional performances, theater, and making cultural documentary videos. These activities provide students with opportunities to practice integrated language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—within meaningful cultural contexts. During the FGD, participants suggested using authentic Sasak-language texts translated into Indonesian for linguistic analysis. This method is considered helpful for improving students' language awareness and encouraging a positive attitude toward local languages as valuable educational resources.

Therefore, Indonesian language learning in mountainous regions should focus on strengthening narrative competence and cultural exploration. Teaching materials need to include local content, folklore, and traditional values, presented through communicative and creative language activities.

In mountainous regions, the emphasis on narrative and culturally embedded language practices highlights the importance of cultural identity in language instruction. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory asserts that learning is most effective when situated within familiar social and cultural contexts (L. S. Vygotsky, 2020). The preference for folklore and local narratives aligns with findings suggesting that ecological approaches promote language vitality through culturally rooted materials (Isti'anah, 2022).

Other studies concluded that language materials containing local cultural elements enhance student engagement and identity formation (Kartono et al., 2021; Samsiyah et al., 2021). The consistency of findings across regions indicates that integrating local values in language instruction is pedagogically sound and essential for character development and contextual relevance in rural settings.

Practically, language teachers in mountainous areas should be empowered to collect and adapt local oral traditions as instructional content. Curriculum developers must provide frameworks that support cultural storytelling and performance-based assessments. For policymakers, it is crucial to support initiatives that value indigenous knowledge systems and facilitate collaborations with cultural elders and institutions to preserve and promote local knowledge through education.

Furthermore, integrating local myths and ritualistic language not only enriches vocabulary but also enhances students' metalinguistic awareness. Assignments such as comparing Sasak proverbs with modern Indonesian idioms can deepen linguistic insight and cultural appreciation. In this way, language serves as a bridge between heritage and modern expression, reinforcing the *Merdeka Curriculum's* goal of fostering culturally literate learners (Isti'anah, 2022).

Policy support that encourages school-based cultural literacy initiatives can further enhance the role of language as a medium for transmitting local values. For example, folk story writing competitions or regional literature festivals can function as integrative platforms between education and cultural preservation, positively impacting student character formation and community engagement.

3.2.3 Learning Indonesian in Coastal Areas

Indonesian language learning in coastal areas requires a practical and communicative approach. Due to frequent interactions with both domestic and international tourists, students in these regions

need to develop oral communication skills for real-life tourism scenarios. Survey data shows that 88% of students expressed a need to learn vocabulary related to maritime and tourism services, such as snorkeling, diving, and marine ecotourism. Meanwhile, 92% of teachers reported the necessity for teaching materials that include contextual dialogues to help students practice hospitality-related conversations, including greeting guests, explaining tour itineraries, describing hotel services, and promoting tourism packages.

However, classroom observations revealed that many students lacked confidence in speaking. This was largely due to limited opportunities for practicing two-way communication in Indonesian language classes. Instructional materials often focused on general narrative texts, which did not align with the students' daily communicative needs in coastal settings. These findings suggest a gap between curriculum content and the sociolinguistic realities of coastal students.

To bridge this gap, teachers and curriculum developers should consider implementing task-based and simulation-based learning strategies. Role-playing activities where students act as tour guides, hotel staff, or customer service agents can provide authentic contexts for language use and boost students' speaking confidence. This approach supports the ecological view of language learning, which emphasizes the interaction between language, learners, and their environment (Hornberger, 2018; Vaishali & Rukmini, 2021; Zhang, 2022).

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) further highlighted the demand for learning materials set in coastal contexts—such as fish markets, beaches, and harbors. Suggested texts include interviews with fishermen, beach descriptions, and environmental reports on marine conservation. These materials can enrich language learning while connecting to other subjects like geography, biology, and entrepreneurship. This interdisciplinary model aligns with the ecolinguistic approach, which places language within its environmental, social, and cultural domains (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2006; Kramsch & Vork Steffensen, 2008).

When viewed through the lens of ecolinguistics, the results of this study reinforce the argument that language learning is most effective when rooted in the learner's environment. In the context of coastal tourism schools, this means designing Indonesian language lessons that reflect the daily realities of students and the sociocultural dynamics of coastal life. This is consistent with Hornberger's (2002) "continua of biliteracy" framework, which supports multilingual and contextual language education as a means of promoting equity and engagement in diverse settings.

Comparative studies offer additional support. For instance, it was reported that vocational school teachers in East Java found the ecological approach useful when adapting the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to local contexts (Nathasia & Abadi, 2022). That students better understood complex texts when these texts reflected their social and cultural experiences. These findings affirm that context-based instruction not only enhances comprehension but also motivates learners to engage more deeply with the material (Sianturi, 2021).

Moreover, research on language vitality in Lombok revealed that local languages like Sasak and Bajo remain robust when they are integrated into both social life and formal education. This supports the idea that combining local language elements with Indonesian instruction can foster linguistic awareness and appreciation for local identity (Nahdi, 2021).

In coastal settings, digital media also presents an opportunity for language practice. Students who are active on social platforms can be encouraged to create tourism content—such as promotional videos or social media captions—using standard Indonesian. This enhances both their digital literacy and communicative competence. With 92% of teachers requesting training in developing context-relevant materials, there is a clear need for institutional support to implement these ecological strategies.

In conclusion, Indonesian language instruction in coastal vocational schools must shift from generic content to practical, locally relevant learning experiences. By integrating students' sociocultural environments into the curriculum, educators can create more meaningful, engaging, and effective

instruction. This approach not only prepares students for real-world communication but also supports broader goals of cultural preservation and educational equity.

3.2.4 Integration of Local Cultural Values in Indonesian Language Learning

This study found that many students possess rich cultural experiences, such as participation in local traditions, yet these experiences remain underrepresented in classroom learning. Most textbooks still present generic texts that lack grounding in Sasak culture or Lombok's traditional practices. Interviews with teachers revealed that lessons become more engaging when traditional stories or cultural ceremonies are used as teaching materials. For instance, using local legends such as *Putri Mandalika* and *Batu Bolong* enhances students' understanding of narrative structures and cultural elements simultaneously. This aligns with research indicating that environment-based language learning can improve students' ecological intelligence (Mbetse, 2017). Mbetse emphasizes the importance of ecolinguistics in strengthening local values through language education. Furthermore, oral traditions serve not only as means of environmental and cultural preservation but also as effective pedagogical tools (Hidayat & Fardiansari, 2016).

Local culture-based learning also holds potential for character development. Values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), politeness, and respect for elders can be embedded into language learning through narrative and descriptive texts. This aligns with the goals of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which aims to cultivate *Pelajar Pancasila*—students with strong character. Students engaged in culturally based activities—such as traditional theater performances, writing folk stories, and observing local ceremonies—demonstrated significant improvement in the four core language skills. They not only grasped text structures better but also expressed their ideas more effectively in Indonesian.

Teaching strategies such as “Culture as Text Content” and “Cultural Exploration Assignments” have proven effective. Teachers can assign descriptive writing on the *ikat* weaving process, expository texts on the meaning of *peresean*, or reports based on observing *melasti* (purification ceremonies) at the beach. This model is supported by research that developed task-based digital teaching materials incorporating environmental education, which found that integrating local culture strengthens students' positive responses and increases engagement (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Through the lens of language ecology, the reinforcement of local values becomes not just the subject of instruction, but also the method and context of learning. Indonesian functions as a medium for cultural transmission and local environmental preservation.

Teachers in this study expressed the need for specialized training to develop culturally based teaching materials that are not only engaging but also academically rigorous. This opens up opportunities for collaboration between educators, cultural practitioners, and local communities. Teaching materials developed through such collaboration could serve as prototypes for vocational tourism schools (*SMK Pariwisata*) across East Lombok, given the region's vast diversity in customs and cultural wealth. In this way, Indonesian language learning becomes not only relevant but also a vehicle for cultural conservation. Moreover, integrating local culture into education strengthens the role of Indonesian as a tool for social transformation. Within the ecolinguistic framework, cultural and language preservation is inseparable from educational practice. The application of language ecology in writing environmentally themed drama scripts has proven to enhance writing skills while simultaneously raising ecological awareness among students. This approach has also been shown to build awareness of local norms and values (Permana et al., 2019).

In the context of local content enrichment, studies have shown that the functional paradigm in ecolinguistics provides space for students to understand the relationship between language, culture, and social function (Isti'anah, 2022). The implementation of language ecology in East Lombok must be accompanied by school policies that support collaboration with cultural leaders, arts communities, and

heritage institutions. This will enrich learning resources and support the sustainability of culturally based learning practices. Concretely, culture-based learning activities may include creating glossaries of local terms, composing poetry inspired by traditional values, and adapting folklore into classroom drama. This approach broadens the scope of content while reinforcing the relationship between language and culture.

Observations in several classrooms revealed that students more easily understood linguistic concepts such as conjunctions, figurative language, and metaphors when these were presented in culturally familiar contexts. This reinforces the idea that language cannot be separated from the learner's lived experiences. Additionally, using local learning resources—such as oral folklore and village historical records—has become a vital part of contextual teaching strategies. Teachers can position students as young researchers who explore surrounding cultures. Local cultural integration is also relevant in assessment. Teachers can develop rubrics that account for cultural elements when evaluating students' narratives, thereby providing pedagogical fairness for learners living in different cultural ecologies. By enriching learning approaches through local culture, the Indonesian language becomes not only a tool for communication but also a medium of identity expression and regional pride. Thus, it can be concluded that relevant and meaningful Indonesian language instruction in vocational tourism schools must integrate local cultural values as content, context, and a means of strengthening student identity and cultural preservation.

3.2.5 Strategies for Developing Contextual Indonesian Language Learning Based on Language Ecology

The development of Indonesian language learning strategies at vocational tourism schools (*SMK Pariwisata*) requires an approach that is not only responsive to the curriculum but also contextual to the students' social and cultural environment. The research findings indicate that learning oriented toward an ecological context—namely, the interconnection between language, local culture, and the natural environment—can enhance student engagement and comprehension of the material. Ecology-based learning enables Indonesian to be taught not merely as a linguistic skill but also as a tool for making meaning of the social and professional realities students face in the tourism sector.

The strategy formulated in this context emphasizes the importance of integrating local and thematic texts as part of the learning resources. Research confirms that utilizing local texts in Indonesian language learning can increase students' cultural awareness and encourage their active participation in the learning process (Primasari et al., 2021). This aligns with the principles of ecolinguistics, which view language as part of a cultural and social ecosystem. Within the *SMK Pariwisata* environment, texts discussing tourist destinations, local wisdom, and interactions between tourists and communities serve as effective media for contextual learning.

The application of project-based learning approaches is one suitable strategy considering the vocational nature of *SMK* students. In learning activities, students are directly involved in projects that combine linguistic aspects with tourism practices, such as creating destination brochures, simulating tour guiding, or composing promotional texts in formal and persuasive Indonesian. This is supported by studies highlighting that project-based learning in vocational schools develops soft skills alongside communication competencies relevant to workforce needs (Ahmad, 2021; Macías, 2023; Maritasari et al., 2022).

Contextualizing learning materials by incorporating Lombok's local cultural elements is a crucial dimension of this strategy. Integrating cultural values into Indonesian language learning not only fosters student identity but also strengthens their communicative competence in real-life situations. Students are more motivated and able to understand the social functions of language when teaching materials contain local culture and traditions, such as folklore, guest reception protocols, and local

terminology used in tourism interactions (Muslim & Makmun, 2020; Samsiyah et al., 2021; Shaleh & Mirnawati, 2020).

The involvement of the tourism industry as a learning partner is a vital reinforcement of this strategy. Collaboration with tourism practitioners through guest lectures, field observations, and short training sessions provides authentic experiences for students. Establishing connections between vocational education units and the workplace must be facilitated to build transformative learning. In language learning, this means students use Indonesian in real work contexts, rather than solely practicing written texts (Adiwijaya & Wedayanthi, 2022; Dina, 2022; Sianturi, 2021).

Ecology-based language learning strategies also emphasize the importance of enhancing teacher capacity. Indonesian language teachers must be competent in designing contextual, creative, and project-based learning. Training on ecolinguistics and environmental literacy is a vital need so that teachers can explore local potential and integrate it into their teaching. Research by Latifah (2019) demonstrates that ecolinguistics-based teacher training improves teachers' abilities to develop learning materials that are ecologically and culturally relevant (Mbete, 2017; Tjendani, 2020).

Differentiation of learning materials based on the geographical location of schools—such as coastal, city, and mountainous areas—represents a response to the diversity of students' language environments. Each language ecology context has distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics. Therefore, Indonesian language learning must accommodate these differences to be more contextual. Learning that is responsive to the local environment encourages students' emotional and cognitive engagement (Kartono et al., 2021).

The use of technology and digital media can enrich this strategy by providing students with opportunities to practice language creatively. For example, students can create tourism vlogs, write reviews of tourist sites on school blogs, or produce visual content combining language and local culture. Technology is not only an aid but also a means to develop digital literacy and multimodal communication competencies required in the digital tourism industry era.

Assessment in ecology-based language learning should be designed authentically and reflectively. Performance assessments, portfolios, and project-based assessments are relevant approaches to comprehensively measure student achievement (Boy, 2022; Gotama & Astini, 2022). Assessment should not only focus on linguistic aspects but also students' ability to use language strategically and contextually. Authentic assessment encourages students to reflect on their learning process and strengthens metacognitive skills.

Local community participation in Indonesian language learning can be a rich source of learning. Collaboration with cultural leaders, local artists, or cultural practitioners opens opportunities for students to directly interact with oral culture and local communication practices. Community-based learning aligns with the ecology of language approach, which sees language as the product of living social interactions within communities. This approach enhances the humanistic aspect of education and builds students' social awareness.

Implementing this strategy also introduces an educational dimension toward environmental preservation. By addressing ecological issues such as nature conservation, sustainable tourism, and environmentally friendly practices in teaching materials, students not only learn the language but also develop ecological sensitivity. Indonesian language learning becomes a space for fostering environmental ethics through critical literacy. Integrating environmental values into language lessons can shape students' character as responsible citizens toward nature (Permana et al., 2019).

The success of implementing this learning strategy heavily depends on structural support from schools. Schools need to provide curriculum flexibility, facility support, and time allocation for teachers to design and implement contextual learning. This support will strengthen the position of Indonesian as a strategic subject in enhancing the *Pelajar Pancasila* profile, particularly in the aspects of global insight and local wisdom.

Overall, the ecology-based Indonesian language learning strategy represents an innovative and adaptive approach in vocational education. This approach not only cultivates language skills but also shapes students into culturally aware, work-oriented individuals with environmental consciousness. The strategy reflects a synergy between scientific approaches, national education policy, and local needs, as mandated in the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

Synthesizing findings from the three ecological zones reveals a nuanced understanding of how geographical and sociocultural contexts shape linguistic needs. This supports the core ecolinguistic assumption that language learning is most effective when grounded in the learner's immediate environment. The diversity of linguistic needs based on ecological contexts challenges uniform national curricula and calls for differentiated instructional design. At the national level, this study affirms prior research that highlights the value of contextualized learning (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Globally, it aligns with vocational education trends in which language instruction is increasingly tailored to sector-specific and region-specific needs (Ahmad, 2021; Macías, 2023).

For educators, these findings underscore the need for responsive and adaptive pedagogy that reflects students' sociolinguistic realities. For curriculum developers, modular and flexible designs that accommodate various ecological contexts are essential. For policymakers, this study signals the urgency of decentralizing curriculum planning and promoting collaboration among schools, local communities, and industry stakeholders.

Moreover, integrating ecolinguistics into teacher education programs can serve as a long-term strategy to sustain context-responsive instruction. Embedding ecolinguistic frameworks within national teaching standards ensures that future educators are equipped to navigate Indonesia's linguistic diversity. Ultimately, this paradigm shift positions language learning not merely as skill acquisition but as a transformative act that affirms local identity, responds to economic demands, and fosters ecological consciousness (Rahardi, 2023; Seydi, 2021).

In addition, the development of ecology-based assessment indicators is crucial to ensure that language evaluations reflect students' capacity to use language strategically within their environmental contexts. Authentic assessments—such as project portfolios, cultural reflections, and contextual oral presentations—offer fair and representative measures of student achievement in localized language learning settings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that an ecology-based approach to Indonesian language instruction in tourism vocational schools effectively addresses the diverse learning needs of students in urban, mountainous, and coastal regions of East Lombok by aligning language education with their sociocultural, environmental, and professional contexts. The main finding demonstrates that integrating local culture, ecological awareness, and tourism-oriented communication into instructional design enhances students' linguistic competence, critical literacy, and cultural identity. A key contribution of this research is the application of ecolinguistic principles as a pedagogical foundation for contextual and differentiated language learning, offering an alternative to uniform, decontextualized curricula. However, the study is limited by its qualitative, context-specific nature, which may restrict generalizability beyond similar vocational and ecological settings. Future research is recommended to develop and test structured curriculum models based on language ecology through quantitative and longitudinal designs, thereby providing stronger empirical support for its broader implementation in vocational education.

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