

## Youth Perspectives on Dayak Desa Language in Sintang: Challenges and Opportunities for Preservation

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### Abstract

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Research on the use of Dayak Village language in Sintang Regency, especially among young Dayak people, is motivated by the sentiment about the shift in language use and the decreasing number of speakers of the language. The purpose of this study is to see how the position of language use in the social interaction of young Dayak people. This research used a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods, data was collected by surveys and interviews. The participants in this study were students of STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang aged 17-25 years old. The research findings show that the use of Dayak Village language is in a position that is due to a tendency to decrease the ability, frequency, and scope of its use. This is influenced by social, educational, and psychological factors. The psychological factors that shape the younger generation's attitude towards the Dayak Village language are a strong sense of cultural pride and ownership, which fosters a positive attitude towards preservation. However, some of them experience hesitation or embarrassment in using the language in public due to lack of confidence or fear of judgment. In addition, family is also very important in preserving the Dayak Desa language. Language use by parents significantly affects fluency, while mixed language background or preference towards Indonesian can weaken the use of Dayak Desa. Based on the findings in this study, the following are some recommendations that can be implemented immediately to maintain and develop the Dayak Desa language. Develop technology-based media or teaching materials for Dayak Village language. Integrating Dayak Village language into the school curriculum. Organize Dayak Desa cultural and language events. Increase language opportunities in public spaces and government support for language revitalization.

**Kata Kunci:**

*Perspektif Bahasa,  
Perspektif Generasi  
Muda,  
Pelestarian Bahasa,*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian tentang penggunaan bahasa Dayak Desa di Kabupaten Sintang, khususnya di kalangan anak muda Dayak, dilatarbelakangi oleh adanya sentimen tentang pergeseran penggunaan bahasa dan semakin berkurangnya jumlah penutur bahasa tersebut. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat bagaimana posisi penggunaan bahasa tersebut dalam interaksi sosial anak muda Dayak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran yang menggabungkan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dengan survei dan wawancara. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang yang berusia 17-25 tahun. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan bahasa Dayak Desa berada pada posisi yang karena adanya kecenderungan penurunan kemampuan, frekuensi, dan cakupan penggunaannya. Hal ini dipengaruhi oleh faktor sosial, pendidikan, dan psikologis. Faktor psikologis yang membentuk sikap generasi muda terhadap bahasa Dayak Desa adalah rasa kebanggaan dan kepemilikan budaya yang kuat, yang menumbuhkan sikap positif terhadap pelestarian. Namun, beberapa dari mereka mengalami keraguan atau rasa malu dalam menggunakan bahasa tersebut di depan umum karena kurangnya kepercayaan diri atau takut dihakimi. Selain itu, keluarga juga sangat penting dalam melestarikan bahasa Dayak Desa. Penggunaan bahasa oleh orang tua secara signifikan memengaruhi kefasihan, sementara latar belakang bahasa campuran atau preferensi terhadap bahasa Indonesia dapat melemahkan penggunaan bahasa Dayak Desa. Berdasarkan temuan dalam penelitian ini, Berikut ini beberapa rekomendasi yang dapat segera diimplementasikan untuk mempertahankan dan mengembangkan Bahasa Dayak Desa. Mengembangkan media atau bahan ajar bahasa Dayak Desa berbasis teknologi. Mengintegrasikan bahasa Dayak Desa ke dalam kurikulum sekolah. Menyelenggarakan acara-acara budaya dan bahasa Dayak Desa. Meningkatkan kesempatan berbahasa di ruang publik dan dukungan pemerintah untuk revitalisasi bahasa.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Currently, the use of regional languages such as Dayak language tends to experience a decline or shift in its use among teenagers. The downward trend in the use of Dayak language occurs because the association of young people today is increasingly complex. In the educational environment, teenagers prefer to use Indonesian because they think it is more practical and do not need to consider the background of their interlocutors. The behavior of adolescents in using Dayak language, especially village Dayak, needs special attention considering that regional language is one of the important aspects that needs to be preserved for the existence of a culture. If it does not immediately get special attention, it is possible that the Dayak Desa language will be swallowed up by global trends. This shows that the development of broader global trends also has an influence on the language used in communication, where the same reason threatens the existence and existence of regional languages (Fishman, 1991; Crystal, 2000). On the other hand, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) emphasize the state of indigenous languages around the world is also in decline, highlighting how social, economic and political pressures affect the shift and loss of indigenous languages. Austin and Sallabank (2011) discuss the impact of globalization on endangered languages, observing how dominant languages often replace indigenous languages due to perceived socio-economic advantages. Hornberger (2008) further examines the relationship between ideology and language practices, emphasizing how economic and educational factors influence people's language choices in multilingual societies. In addition, Lewis and Simons (2010) explain that the strength of a language is related to the social network and daily interactions of its speakers, when the younger generation uses the more dominant language, the strength of the language may decrease. This shows that the habit of using a second language can affect the ability of teenagers to use their local language or native language. Mufwene (2001) discusses how economic globalization and migration patterns can affect mother tongue use, often resulting in the decline of minority languages as people use more common languages. This is also the case for Dayak youth, where they prefer to use Indonesian or other languages in social

interactions when they are in urban or campus environments. If this continues without any real action from the relevant parties, the use of regional languages, especially the Dayak Desa language, will slowly disappear.

Local languages are essential for transmitting knowledge, traditions, and community values, which are important components of indigenous cultural identity and survival. Several studies have shown that language decline often leads to the loss of associated cultural practices and the weakening of community ties. May (2012) looks at the relationship between language loss and minority rights. In her research, she highlights how the loss of an indigenous language affects the social and cultural identity of indigenous groups, which is particularly true for the Dayak Desa community. Similarly, Austin (2013) emphasizes that language extinction often indicates a threat to the cultural survival of indigenous peoples. With these issues in mind, this study aims to look at how the Dayak Desa language is used among the younger generation in Sintang District. The study aims to provide insight into the current state of the village Dayak language and the prospects for its preservation by looking at language use and proficiency as well as the social, economic and cultural factors that influence language use. To understand how the trend of language use shifts, there needs to be an in-depth study related to the Reversing Language Shift (RLS) Theory (Fishman 1991), the theory can provide us with a basis for understanding how language shifts occur and how to overcome them. According to Fishman, when another language is considered more prestigious or economically advantageous, the mother tongue is gradually ignored. This phenomenon is also seen among the younger generation of Dayak Desars. Where they prefer Indonesian and English because they think these languages are more prestigious. Similar trends are also occurring in other indigenous communities. This shows that efforts to maintain and revive local languages are very important (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). In *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Lewis, Simons and Fennig (2015) show strong evidence that indigenous languages are often abandoned in favour of languages perceived to offer better socio-economic opportunities. This suggests that overcoming this

shift requires planned language preservation efforts from various parties so that the Dayak Desa language can continue to exist in the future.

The relationship between language and cultural identity is complex, especially among young people who have multiple identities influenced by world trends and local traditions. Young Dayak Desars often face a dilemma between maintaining their mother tongue or using a language that allows for greater social and economic mobility. Edwards (2009) discusses this conflict by emphasizing how difficult it is to balance linguistic heritage with the needs of a globalized world. To properly preserve these languages, strategies involving communities, educational institutions and government support are needed. Community involvement, use of the language in everyday life, and incorporation into the school curriculum are crucial. In addition, modern technologies, such as mobile apps and social media, can attract the younger generation and encourage the use of mother tongues (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). As an effort to preserve indigenous languages, such as Dayak Desa language, there needs to be a deeper study to see the phenomenon of language use and determine the right preservation steps. This is important to ensure the existence of the Dayak Desa language in the future. Routledge, Hinton and Hale (2022) in their book discuss current approaches and techniques for language revitalization that are relevant to modern preservation efforts. Chambers and Trudgill (2023) examine the role of young people in language change and maintenance, highlighting the elements that drive language shift among the younger generation. The latest information on language vitality, including information on indigenous languages and preservation efforts, is provided by Lewis and Simons (2023) in 'Ethnologue: Languages of the World'. Miller and Baker (2022) discuss new approaches to language policy and education, with an emphasis on innovative program that can support Village Dayak languages. Kroskrity and Field (2021) investigate the impact of modern media on language change and revitalization, this study provides new insights into how digital platforms can affect language use. Finally, Kumagai and Nakamura (2023) discuss technological innovation in language learning, providing insights into tools that can support and sustain indigenous languages.

There is a strong gap between previous studies on the dynamics of Dayak Desa language use among Dayak youth in Sintang Regency. Previous studies have mostly discussed or focused on language revitalization and language change globally, but none have specifically addressed the cultural and geographical context of Dayak Desa. Previous studies have not highlighted the role of the younger generation and their efforts in preserving the Dayak Desa language. Therefore, the current study specifically focuses on Dayak youth who are currently studying at a private university in Sintang district. They come from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas. The study aims to analyze attitudes, beliefs, and language skills, as well as provide an overview of the future of the Dayak Desa language. The study of the dynamics of Dayak Desa language use in Sintang district also adds different insights into how the policy of Dayak Desa language preservation in the local government environment, how the policy can help the preservation of Dayak Desa language, provides a local context of the dynamics of regional language use that has not been well represented by global studies.

In conclusion, understanding the dynamics of the Dayak Desa language among the younger generation is crucial to developing effective preservation strategies. By analyzing the current state of language use, identifying influencing factors, and referring to successful preservation models, this Study aims to offer actionable insights to maintain and revitalize the Dayak Desa language, ensuring its continued role in the community's cultural identity and heritage.

## **METHOD**

This study uses mixed methods, namely qualitative and quantitative methods to describe the dynamics of the use of Dayak Desa language among the younger generation in the campus environment of STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang. This method was deemed suitable for this study because it allows a thorough analysis of the subjective experience of language use as well as an objective analysis of abilities, patterns of language use, the future of the language and opportunities for language preservation. Interviews were used in the qualitative component of the study to gather knowledge about attitudes, beliefs

and cultural practices relating to the Dayak Desa language among the younger generation. The quantitative component of the Study involved the use of surveys to measure frequency of language use, proficiency levels, and the influence of various social, economic and cultural factors on the use of Dayak Desa. The targets of the survey were young Dayak Desa who were studying at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang. To understand this, the researchers conducted surveys and interviews with more than 120 adolescents who were sampled for this study, all of whom were from Sintang district representing rural, semi-urban and urban areas. They were chosen because they are considered representative of the younger generation of Dayak Desa in Sintang district; they come from various regions or villages that speak the native language of Dayak Desa or village tribes. They are also considered very important for the process of language inheritance and the formation of regional cultural identity. Closed and open-ended questions were used in this survey to assess language use, proficiency level, context, and attitudes. In addition, demographic data was collected to investigate the relationship between education, socioeconomic status, and family background. To reach a larger number of people who participated, the survey was distributed online using a Google form that was distributed through WA Groups and student organization groups. To learn about personal experiences regarding the use of Dayak Desa language, the importance of Dayak Desa language, and the challenges faced in its maintenance, a portion of the survey respondents were selected for in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics to describe important variables such as proficiency level, frequency of language use, and demographic variables. This was intended to provide an in-depth picture of current Dayak Desa language use patterns. The study used thematic analysis to find common themes and patterns in the interview transcripts and observation notes for the qualitative data, with an emphasis on participants' attitudes towards the language, their experiences of delivery, and its cultural significance. By combining both quantitative and qualitative results, the results of this study can provide a broad understanding of language dynamics and help discover the main factors that influence language

use. Finally, this study provides suggestions for appropriate and successful language preservation approaches.

The survey revealed a significant decline in the frequency and proficiency of language use, particularly among young generation from rural areas, reflecting a concerning trend in active language engagement. In contrast, the interviews provided qualitative insights, showing that despite this decline, the younger generation is highly aware of the importance of preserving the language. They expressed strong concern for its future and suggested actionable solutions, such as using technology for language learning, creating specialized materials, and organizing cultural events to promote and sustain the language. While the survey quantified the issue, the interviews highlighted the emotional and cultural significance of the language and a proactive desire to ensure its survival. Together, these findings present a comprehensive picture, balancing data-driven trends with human-centered perspectives and emphasizing the need for collective efforts to preserve the Dayak Desa language.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Previous studies have mostly discussed or focused on language revitalization and global language change, but no one has specifically discussed the cultural and geographical context of Dayak Desa. Study conducted by Hinton and Hale, as well as Kroskrity and Field focused on the technological and media aspects of language revitalization, while the current Study focuses on the dynamics of the use of Dayak Desa language by young generations in their social interactions in daily life and highlights social beliefs among the younger generation regarding the use of Dayak Desa language. Previous Study has not highlighted much about the role of young people and their efforts in preserving the Dayak Desa language. For example, Study by Chambers and Trudgill only highlights the role of young people in language change. The current study specifically focuses on Dayak youth aged between 17-25 years old from rural, semi-urban and urban areas, analyzing attitudes, beliefs and language skills and providing a picture of the future of the Dayak Desa language. Although



technology plays an important role in preserving culture and language, this study broadens the scope by considering other factors such as social and cultural factors that play an important role in local language dynamics such as communication patterns and local government policies. The study of the dynamics of Dayak Desa language use in Sintang district also adds different insights into how Dayak Desa language preservation policies in the local government environment, how these policies can help preserve the Dayak Desa language, providing a local context about the dynamics of regional language use that has not been well represented by global Study.

This study aims to find out the use and position of Dayak Desa language among young people aged between 17-25 years. The young people referred to in this study are those from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas who currently live in Sintang city and are studying at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang. This research was conducted to see the dynamics of Dayak language use, especially the Dayak Desa language. This needs to be done because of the sentiment that arises among children, where many of them are reluctant to use their local language, especially if they are in urban areas. The new environment in which they currently live is allegedly the main factor influencing the frequency and duration of speaking Dayak, which is then considered to affect their ability to speak Dayak, especially the Dayak Desa language. If this does not receive immediate attention, it is possible that the Dayak Desa language will not survive in the future. The survey in this study was used to investigate the use of Village Dayak language among young Dayak people, focusing on language skills, attitudes, and perspectives on the future of the language. Through questionnaires and interviews with 129 students of STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa, the survey collected demographic information and assessed the use of the Dayak Desa language. The survey results showed that most of the respondents, aged 20-22 years old and mostly female, were from rural areas. Findings showed that although 58.1% of participants claimed to be fluent in Dayak Desa, the language is used less and less when they are outside the home or family environment. According to the survey, Indonesian is used more often when the teenagers are in social and academic

settings due to convenience factors, peer influence, and sometimes a lack of confidence in using Dayak Desa. The level of awareness of the younger generation towards the importance of preserving regional culture is very high, more than 90% of respondents feel strongly about preserving the Dayak Desa language as part of their cultural identity. However, they face several challenges in preserving the language such as limited resources for learning Dayak Desa and pressure to use other languages. The survey results show that many young people are concerned about the sustainability of the Dayak Desa language and they propose measures to protect it, such as creating learning resources, organising cultural events, and encouraging its use in schools and family settings. Such efforts, if supported by relevant stakeholders, can help ensure the survival of the language and its existence for future generations.

The findings reveal a complex dynamic regarding the preservation of the Dayak Desa language among the younger generation, which shows both concern and optimism. Although Dayak youth often use Indonesian in their daily interactions, they remain highly aware of the importance of preserving their mother tongue. Many respondents believe that while the number of Dayak Desa speakers may be declining, the language will still be spoken by future generations. Key challenges include limited opportunities to use the language outside of the family environment, low confidence in using the language, and a lack of accessible learning resources. A surprising finding was that 12.4% of respondents did not understand or use the language. This suggests that there is a younger generation who have abandoned their local language. Despite these challenges, more than 90% of respondents felt responsible for preserving the language as an important part of their cultural identity. To support the survival of the Dayak Desa language, the younger generation recommended creating learning resources, organising cultural events, integrating Dayak Desa language lessons in schools, and seeking support from the government. The findings align with linguistic theories on language shift, maintenance, and revitalization. The decline in Dayak Desa language use reflects Fishman's Theory of Language Shift, where modernization pressures lead to reduced language vitality without active

intervention. The younger generation's concern for preservation resonates with UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment Framework, highlighting the importance of community involvement and intergenerational transmission. Their proposed solutions, such as using technology and organizing cultural events, align with Language Revitalization Theory, which emphasizes adapting modern tools to sustain endangered languages. These efforts also connect to Ecological Linguistics, viewing language as part of a socio-cultural ecosystem requiring collaborative efforts to thrive amidst social change.

The in-depth interviews provided a different view of Dayak Desa language use among young Dayak Desa speakers, which largely confirmed the survey findings. Most respondents claimed to be fluent in the language. However, the scope for using the language is narrowing. They claimed that there is pressure from the wider environment to use languages other than Dayak Desa, especially when they interact socially in the campus environment. The teenagers admitted that they prefer to use Dayak language even though they come from the same background. The survey results revealed that there is no formal place to learn local languages, they learn the language from generation to generation, meaning they learn Dayak Desa language non-formally. The teenagers claimed that the use of multilingualism on campus was not seen as having an adverse effect on their Dayak Desa language proficiency. Interviews revealed that young Dayak Desars view their language as a core part of their identity, distinguishing them from other Dayak groups. Despite challenges, they express a strong desire to preserve it, often using it in family settings, though less frequently in wider social contexts where Bahasa Indonesia is favoured. This shift is partly due to their pluralistic living environment and an education system that emphasises Indonesian from an early age. The interviews also revealed that the younger generation is very concerned about the existence of the Dayak Desa language, they realise how important it is to maintain the continuity of this language in the future. They hope that relevant parties can use technological media as a means of learning the Dayak Desa language. Support in the form of special learning materials for the language and the organisation of cultural events are also considered important to promote

and maintain the language. In general, the findings from the interviews show a tendency of concern from the younger generation for the existence of the Dayak Desa language in the future. The interview findings also indicate a high desire from the younger generation to preserve the language, and support from relevant parties is needed so that this language can survive in the future and can continue to be used by future generations.

Based on the findings in this study, the following are some efforts that can be made as a form of support for the preservation of the language. First, the development of technology-based Dayak Desa language media or teaching materials. The government and related parties can collaborate with several communities that are competent in their fields to create Dayak Desa language teaching materials using digital platforms. This makes it easier for the younger generation to learn the language easily anywhere and anytime. Second, the integration of Dayak Desa language into the school curriculum. Dayak Desa language can be used as one of the language options that can be included in local content lessons, of course with consideration in schools that have a large population of Dayak Desa. The next step is to organise cultural and language events. Cultural events or festivals are one of the efforts that can be made by the government and the cultural community to appreciate the existence and diversity of culture, especially Dayak Desa culture. Furthermore, increasing language opportunities in public spaces. Educational environments and campuses can provide space for language learning by organising extracurricular activities such as Dayak language study groups. The last recommendation is government support for language revitalisation. Local governments and related parties are expected to pay more attention in terms of policies and funding for language revitalisation programmes. This can be in the form of developing media and teaching materials, research related to Dayak Desa culture, training in Dayak Desa language, and providing facilities and infrastructure that support Dayak Desa language learning. Acknowledging study limitations, such as sample biases, adds credibility. Recommendations include developing digital teaching materials, incorporating Dayak Desa in curricula, organizing cultural events, creating language

opportunities in public spaces, and securing government support for policies and resources. These steps aim to balance modernization with cultural preservation, fostering sustainable language vitality.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study highlights how Dayak Desa language is used and what kind of presence it has among Dayak adolescents. This research revealed that the use of Dayak Desa language is in a concerning or alarming position. It is undeniable that the number of speakers of the language is decreasing. Although the younger generation realises the importance of the language as their cultural and ethnic identity, this study provides the fact that there is a downward trend in the ability, frequency, and scope of the use of the village Dayak language. This is influenced by several factors such as: social, educational and psychological factors. Social aspects have a considerable impact on the decline in the use of Dayak Desa language. The pluralistic environment and the dominance of the use of Indonesian in the campus environment and other public environments make them prefer not to use local languages even though they interact with people who come from the same background. According to the respondents, the use of Indonesian in campus or public environments is considered more practical and certainly will not cause miscommunication. This research shows a positive attitude from the younger generation in preserving their mother tongue. Almost all respondents agreed that the Dayak Desa language must be preserved so that it continues to survive into the future. The findings also reveal several psychological factors shaping the attitudes and behaviours of the younger generation toward the Dayak Desa language. Many respondents view the language as a core part of their cultural identity, reflecting pride and a sense of belonging to their ethnic roots. However, some experience hesitation or embarrassment in using the language, particularly in public or diverse social settings, due to a lack of confidence or fear of judgment. Family influence plays a critical role, with parents who consistently use the language fostering fluency, while mixed linguistic backgrounds or preferences for Indonesian diminish it. Despite these challenges, respondents express a strong

emotional attachment and sense of responsibility toward preserving the language for future generations. They demonstrate cognitive flexibility in navigating multilingual environments and are motivated to promote the language through modern tools like social media. This combination of identity, confidence, familial impact, and proactive motivation highlights the psychological complexities of language retention and revitalization.

The young generation provided recommendations as an effort to preserve the language through the development of technology-based Dayak Desa language learning media and resources, organising cultural events, especially Dayak Desa culture so that many young people can be involved in these cultural events so that they can generate high interest in learning the language. Including learning about Dayak Desa culture in the school curriculum is also highly expected by the younger generation so that they can also learn the language formally. The need for teacher training and the development of appropriate teaching materials is critical for the successful preservation and revitalization of the Dayak Desa language. Teacher training programs should focus on equipping educators with the necessary skills to teach the language effectively, including innovative methods for incorporating cultural elements and addressing the challenges of multilingual classrooms. Such training should also emphasize the integration of technology in language instruction, enabling teachers to create and utilize digital resources that appeal to the younger generation.

Additionally, the development of high-quality teaching materials tailored to the Dayak Desa language is essential. These materials should include culturally relevant content, such as traditional stories, proverbs, and rituals, to foster a deep connection to the language and its heritage. Collaboration with local communities, linguists, and curriculum developers is vital to ensure the accuracy, authenticity, and practicality of these resources. By addressing these needs, teachers will be better prepared to inspire and engage students in learning the Dayak Desa language, ultimately contributing to its preservation and ongoing vitality. Support from many parties is very important for the sustainability and existence of the Dayak Desa language in the future. In the future, the language will not only be an

ethnic characteristic but can contribute to national cultural diversity that can continue to be developed and become the pride of the nation.

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