



Barriers to Local Language Preservation : Insights from English Teachers in the Luwu Context

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Abstract

The prominence of English as a global lingua franca has posed challenges to the preservation of local languages, including the Luwu language in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. As an essential part of cultural identity, the Luwu language is increasingly marginalized due to the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English in formal education. This study examines the challenges faced by English teachers in balancing global linguistic demands with preserving the Luwu language. Using Fishman's Language Shift and Maintenance and Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy as frameworks, this research explores the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of two English teachers in Luwu. The study, conducted through semi-structured interviews, reveals significant challenges, including limited institutional support, a curriculum prioritizing global languages, and the impact of digital media that diminishes students' exposure to the Luwu language. Teachers employ strategies like integrating Luwu vocabulary into English lessons, fostering both cultural awareness and biliteracy. However, these efforts are constrained by a lack of professional development, resources, and formal guidelines for incorporating local languages into teaching. The findings underscore the importance of institutional and policy support in sustaining local languages. While Indonesia's muatan lokal policy provides a framework for regional language inclusion, inconsistent implementation and resource gaps hinder its effectiveness. This study advocates for enhanced collaboration among schools, local governments, and communities to develop sustainable language preservation programs. By addressing these challenges, the Luwu language can remain a vital aspect of cultural heritage and identity, ensuring its continuity for future generations.

Keywords: *Luwu Language Preservation, English Teachers, Multilingual Education, Language Shift*

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the dominance of international languages, particularly English, has significantly influenced the educational landscape worldwide (Al-Issa & Mirhosseini, 2019). As a global lingua franca, English is regarded as essential for economic, academic, and cultural opportunities (John P. O'Regan, 2021; Salomone & Salomone, 2022). However, its growing prominence poses a significant challenge to the preservation of local languages, which are essential to cultural identity, heritage, and intergenerational knowledge transmission (Sarah Hopkyns, 2020; Shen & Gao, 2019; Zainuddin et al., 2024). In many multilingual societies, including Indonesia, this has led to a gradual decline in the use of indigenous languages, often overshadowed by national and international linguistic priorities (Balazs Huszka et al., 2024; Zein et al., 2020).

Indonesia, known for its linguistic diversity with over 700 local languages, faces an alarming rate of language extinction (Balazs Huszka et al., 2024; Rohmah & Widya Nur Wijayanti, 2023). UNESCO categorizes many of these languages as endangered, primarily due to reduced intergenerational transmission and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language (Andriyanti, 2019; Balazs Huszka et al., 2024; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022; Purwani et al., 2024). Among these is the Luwu language, spoken by communities in South Sulawesi. The Luwu language, which embodies the rich cultural heritage and identity of the region, is increasingly marginalized, especially in educational contexts where Bahasa Indonesia and English are prioritized (Surahim & Ramli, 2023; Thayyib, 2021).

The role of educators, particularly English teachers, becomes crucial in this context. English teachers occupy a unique position as they are tasked with equipping students with global competencies while also addressing the local community's need to preserve linguistic heritage (Abdulla & Alkaabi, 2023; Ansó Ros et al., 2024; Zein et al., 2020). However, this dual responsibility often creates challenges. Teachers may face pressure to meet curriculum standards that prioritize English and Bahasa Indonesia, leaving little room to integrate or promote the use of local languages like Luwu in the classroom. These challenges reflect broader barriers to local language preservation, which merit deeper exploration.

This study draws on theory of Language Shift and Maintenance, which explains how languages face decline due to sociopolitical, economic, and educational pressures (Fishman, 2012). It also incorporates theory Continua of Bilingualism, which emphasizes the importance of integrating local and global languages within educational practices to foster multilingualism (Nancy H. Hornberger, 2013). Using these frameworks, the study examines the barriers faced

by English teachers in preserving the Luwu language, focusing on their experiences, perceptions, and strategies.

This study addresses the question: How do English teachers in Luwu navigate the dual challenge of teaching a global language while contributing to the preservation of the Luwu language? It aims to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of English teachers, focusing on barriers to local language preservation and potential solutions.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for the Luwu language but also for similar contexts worldwide where local languages are at risk due to globalization. This research offers practical insights for educators and policymakers, suggesting strategies to harmonize the teaching of global and local languages within multilingual education systems. Such efforts can contribute to sustaining linguistic diversity while preparing students for global challenges.

While previous studies have examined the marginalization of indigenous languages in Indonesia, few have focused specifically on the Luwu language and the role of English teachers in this process. This study bridges that gap by applying Fishman's Language Shift and Maintenance theory and Hornberger's Continua of Bilinguality to the unique context of Luwu. It highlights the dual responsibility of English teachers to foster global competencies while preserving local linguistic heritage. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical data, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in balancing linguistic diversity and globalization.

Literature Review

Language Shift and Maintenance

Fishman (2012) describes *language shift* as a sociolinguistic process where minority languages are gradually replaced by dominant languages due to sociopolitical, economic, and educational pressures. This phenomenon often occurs in multilingual societies where certain languages are perceived as offering greater social or economic mobility (Preece, 2019; Uriarte & Sperlich, 2021). In Indonesia, this shift is evident in the declining use of local languages like Luwu, as Bahasa Indonesia and English take precedence in formal education and daily communication (Budiono & Jaya, 2024; Masruddin & Abduh, 2024; Surahim & Ramli, 2023). The decline in intergenerational transmission of local languages is a critical factor contributing to their marginalization, especially in rural areas where the younger generation is more exposed to dominant languages through education and media.

In the context of the Luwu language, urbanization and modernization have further exacerbated its decline. Masruddin & Abduh (2024) highlights that many families prioritize Bahasa Indonesia for its perceived utility in national and

academic settings, leaving local languages like Luwu sidelined. Moreover, the dominance of English in the global landscape places additional pressure on local languages, as schools and parents often prioritize English proficiency over the maintenance of indigenous languages.

Teachers, especially English teachers, are at the center of this linguistic shift. They are tasked with preparing students for a globalized world while also being expected to support local cultural preservation (Zein, 2019; Zein et al., 2020). However, without adequate training or resources, teachers often struggle to integrate local languages into their teaching practices (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Gkonou & Miller, 2021; Zein et al., 2020). Fishman's framework emphasizes the need for institutional and community-level support to counteract language shift, which is particularly relevant to the challenges faced by teachers in Luwu.

Multilingual Education and Teachers' Roles

Hornberger's (2022) *Continua of Biliteracy* offers a valuable framework for understanding how local and dominant languages can coexist in educational settings. This approach highlights the potential for biliteracy—proficiency in both a local and a dominant language—when local languages are meaningfully integrated into the curriculum (Alshamsi & Alsheikh, 2020; Hornberger, 2022; Kirsch & Hornberger, 2024). For English teachers in Luwu, this framework suggests that lessons can incorporate elements of the Luwu language and culture to foster student engagement and cultural identity while building English proficiency.

Jaya et al. (2024) found that integrating local languages into classrooms in Indonesia significantly enhances students' understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage. For example, using local proverbs, idioms, or stories in English lessons not only enriches learning but also helps students see the value of their native language (Hidayah et al., 2024; Jaya et al., 2024; Ramli et al., 2024). However, such practices require creativity and commitment from teachers, as well as institutional backing to develop relevant materials and allocate time for bilingual activities.

Despite its benefits, teachers face numerous obstacles in promoting multilingual education. Rohmah & Widya Nur Wijayanti (2023) points out that rigid national curricula leave little flexibility for teachers to incorporate local languages. In addition, many teachers in rural areas, like those in Luwu, lack access to training programs that equip them with the skills to manage multilingual classrooms. Kieran & Anderson (2019) emphasize the importance of culturally responsive teaching, where educators integrate students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into the learning process. However, this approach is often underutilized due to systemic barriers, leaving teachers underprepared to act as effective cultural mediators (Fränkel et al., 2023; Hutchison & McAlister-Shields,

2020; Kieran & Anderson, 2019).

Policy Gaps and Institutional Challenges

Although Indonesia's language policy acknowledges the importance of local languages as part of its cultural heritage, the practical implementation of this policy in schools remains inconsistent (Lee et al., 2023; Mauziyyah et al., 2024; Zein et al., 2020). Local languages like Luwu are often excluded from formal education due to a lack of structured guidelines and resources. This policy gap disproportionately affects rural regions like Luwu, where schools are already under-resourced, and teachers must rely on their own initiatives to support language preservation.

Surahim & Ramli (2023) note that many schools in Sulawesi, including those in Luwu, lack bilingual or multilingual teaching materials that incorporate local languages. Furthermore, there is little professional development available for teachers to help them integrate local languages into their teaching practices effectively. As a result, many teachers feel ill-equipped to balance the demands of teaching English and preserving the Luwu language, leading to the gradual erosion of local linguistic heritage in educational settings.

Institutional support is essential to bridge these gaps. Policymakers must prioritize the inclusion of local languages in national curricula and provide training programs that empower teachers to implement multilingual education effectively. Huszka et al. (2024) emphasize that when teachers are given the tools and support needed, they can play a pivotal role in preserving local languages while still meeting the demands of national and global education systems. For regions like Luwu, localized strategies, such as developing bilingual teaching materials and fostering collaborations between schools and communities, can help ensure that the Luwu language remains a vibrant part of students' linguistic repertoire.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the challenges faced by English teachers in preserving the Luwu language within the classroom context. A case study approach was employed to provide a detailed understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives (Hignett & McDermott, 2015). This method allows for an in-depth examination of specific phenomena within their real-life settings, which is particularly relevant for capturing the nuanced challenges encountered by teachers in a multilingual environment like Luwu.

The participants were two English teachers from schools in the Luwu region, South Sulawesi. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their active teaching roles, familiarity with the Luwu language, and willingness to share their experiences. Teacher A has over 10 years of teaching experience and holds a master's degree in English education, while Teacher B has 5 years of teaching

experience and a bachelor's degree in education. Both teachers work in schools with distinct environments, one urban and one rural, to provide diverse perspectives.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses while ensuring that key topics were covered. The interviews were guided by questions developed from Fishman's (2012) *Language Shift and Maintenance* and Hornberger's (2022) *Continua of Biliteracy*. The questions explored themes such as the importance of the Luwu language, challenges in integrating it into English teaching, strategies employed to preserve the language, and perceptions of institutional and community support. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, and the sessions were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. This involved familiarizing with the transcripts by reading them multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Key phrases and ideas were coded, and recurring patterns were identified. The codes were then grouped into broader themes, such as "challenges in integrating local languages," "teacher strategies," and "institutional barriers." The themes were interpreted in the context of the theoretical frameworks to connect the findings with existing literature.

Ethical considerations were integral to the study. Participants were informed about the research objectives and provided written consent before participating in the interviews. Their identities were anonymized in transcripts and reports to ensure confidentiality. Participants were also given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any obligation or consequences.

By adopting a qualitative methodology with a focus on semi-structured interviews, this study captures the nuanced experiences of English teachers navigating the dual challenge of teaching a global language while preserving a local one. The methods employed ensure the validity and depth of the findings, contributing to a better understanding of the complexities of multilingual education in Luwu.

Results

Challenges in Language Preservation

This study revealed that the Luwu language holds an important role in students' lives as part of their cultural identity and local heritage. Teacher A emphasized the significance of the Luwu language in strengthening local culture while highlighting the need for balance with national and international languages. They stated:

"The Luwu language is very important in students' lives, particularly in the

context of cultural preservation and strengthening local identity. However, it is also important to integrate this language in balance with Indonesian and international languages to equip students with language skills needed in today's global era."

Teacher B agreed, saying:

"The Luwu language is quite important for students in school because it is their mother tongue. It also helps them communicate more easily using the Luwu language."

However, both teachers acknowledged that the use of the Luwu language in schools is increasingly limited. Teacher A noted that at their school, policies prioritize the use of Arabic and English, leaving little room for the Luwu language. They explained:

"In our school, official policies focus more on using Arabic and English as the primary languages for teaching and communication. However, preserving the Luwu language is still respected and considered important as part of the local cultural identity."

Teacher B added that while the use of the Luwu language is not prohibited, it is rarely found in school activities:

"At our school, students are required to speak Arabic and English, so the use of the Luwu language in the school environment is rare."

Strategies Employed by Teachers

Despite the challenges, both teachers employed creative strategies to support the Luwu language. Teacher B actively integrates Luwu vocabulary into English lessons, explaining:

"I integrate the Luwu language into English learning by introducing vocabulary. When students are taught English vocabulary, I also provide the equivalent in the Luwu language."

This strategy not only helps students connect new concepts with familiar language but also promotes the preservation of the Luwu language. On the other hand, Teacher A has not yet implemented similar strategies but recognizes their potential:

"I have not used media or materials to combine English and Luwu, but it is an interesting idea with potential to enrich learning."

Institutional and Policy Challenges

National and local policies play a crucial role in supporting or hindering the preservation of the Luwu language. Teacher A pointed out that while the national curriculum provides opportunities through local content, the allocated time for regional languages remains very limited. They said:

"The national curriculum can pose challenges to preserving the Luwu language

because the allocated time for regional languages is limited, given the main focus on core subjects. However, the local content policy provides opportunities to teach the Luwu language in schools, provided there is support from local governments and communities."

Teacher B observed that their school adopts a more flexible policy:

"We have a policy of not prohibiting the use of the Luwu language among teachers and students, so that the native language remains preserved and used."

While this policy does not actively promote the Luwu language, its permissiveness creates a space for its preservation. Both teachers have high hopes for the future of the Luwu language. Teacher A expressed:

"I hope the younger generation can love, understand, and use the Luwu language in their daily lives. This language is expected to remain alive as a cultural identity, actively passed down, and a source of pride for the people of Luwu."

Teacher B added:

"I hope the younger generation appreciates, loves, practices, and preserves the Luwu language, and does not feel ashamed to use it in daily life."

Teacher A suggested formal support from the government and schools:

"The government can incorporate the Luwu language into the local curriculum, allocate funding for developing teaching materials, and organize cultural festivals. Schools can create an environment that supports the use of the Luwu language through daily activities, competitions, and collaboration with local communities."

Teacher B emphasized the importance of freedom to use the Luwu language:

"By not restricting the use of the Luwu language in educational and work environments, it will help its preservation."

Before presenting the comparative analysis in table format, it is important to synthesize the main themes derived from the findings. The table below organizes key aspects of language preservation efforts, contextual differences, and institutional challenges faced by the two participants. This structured summary highlights both commonalities and contrasts in their experiences, providing a clearer understanding of the factors influencing the integration of the Luwu language in educational settings.

Table 1. Visualization of Findings

Theme	Teacher A (Urban)	Teacher B (Rural)
Language Usage	Limited by policy prioritizing Arabic/English	Informal opportunities available
Preservation Strategies	Interest in folklore-based materials	Integration of Luwu vocabulary
Institutional Support	Insufficient time and resources	Flexible but unstructured resources
Digital Media Impact	Reduces local language exposure	Presents both challenges and opportunities

These findings provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in integrating the Luwu language within educational settings, offering insights into potential areas for policy and practice improvement.

Discussions

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in preserving the Luwu language within the educational context. These insights are framed around three key aspects: challenges in language preservation, strategies employed by teachers, and the role of institutional and policy support.

Challenges in Language Preservation

The Luwu language faces significant challenges in its preservation, primarily due to the prioritization of Arabic and English in educational settings. This aligns with Fishman's (2012) theory of *Language Shift*, which explains how minority languages are often displaced in favor of dominant ones when educational policies prioritize global and national languages. In this study, the focus on English and Arabic in schools has reduced the space for the Luwu language in formal education, leaving it excluded from structured learning activities. Such exclusion diminishes students' opportunities to engage with their native language in a systematic way, accelerating its decline.

Additionally, the influence of modern technology exacerbates this marginalization. The widespread consumption of digital content in dominant languages exposes younger generations to alternative linguistic norms that often overshadow local languages (Cladis, 2020; Siregar, 2023; Welply, 2023). For example, many students are more familiar with Malay from popular media than

with Luwu, which further erodes their connection to their linguistic heritage. This finding aligns with Cladis's (2020) observation that digital and media trends are powerful forces in shaping language preferences among the youth, especially in rural and multilingual contexts.

Another significant challenge is the lack of institutional emphasis on language preservation within the school environment. While cultural activities may informally support the use of local languages, they are often insufficient to counteract the dominance of national and international curricula. The limited time allocation for regional languages under the *muatan lokal* policy reflects broader systemic challenges in Indonesia, where cultural preservation often takes a backseat to academic and economic priorities (Ansó Ros et al., 2024; Bai & Yuan, 2019; Budiono & Jaya, 2024).

These challenges collectively lead to a gradual weakening of the intergenerational transmission of the Luwu language. As younger generations become less exposed to their native language in formal and informal settings, its role in their cultural and linguistic identity diminishes (Lagunas, 2019; Rohmadi et al., 2023; Rohmah & Widya Nur Wijayanti, 2023). Without consistent reinforcement, the Luwu language risks becoming less relevant to future generations, further accelerating its marginalization.

Strategies Employed by Teachers

Despite the challenges, teachers in this study have employed creative strategies to preserve the Luwu language in their classrooms. One notable approach is the integration of Luwu vocabulary into English lessons, which aligns with Hornberger's (2022) *Continua of Biliteracy*. This strategy leverages students' existing knowledge of their local language to enhance their understanding of new concepts in English (Hidayah et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024). By providing equivalent terms in Luwu, teachers help students build linguistic connections that reinforce both languages simultaneously, fostering a sense of linguistic and cultural pride (Budiono & Jaya, 2024; Hidayah et al., 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2024).

This approach not only aids students in grasping new material but also serves as a bridge between global and local contexts. By incorporating the Luwu language into their teaching, educators validate its importance, encouraging students to view it as a valuable aspect of their education (Lestari et al., 2024; Masruddin & Abduh, 2024; Thayyib, 2021). This dual focus on local and global languages demonstrates how regional languages can complement, rather than compete with, the teaching of international languages like English (Azis, 2023; Sah & Li, 2022; Zein, 2019; Zein et al., 2020).

However, the implementation of such strategies is often hindered by practical barriers. Teachers in resource-limited settings frequently lack access to

professional training that would equip them to manage multilingual classrooms effectively. The absence of bilingual teaching materials further restricts their ability to create meaningful connections between the Luwu language and other subjects. This highlights the need for systemic interventions to support teachers in their efforts to integrate local languages into the curriculum (Beaudrie et al., 2021; da Silva et al., 2023; Kalinowski et al., 2019).

Despite these limitations, the commitment of teachers to preserving the Luwu language is evident. Their efforts to use culturally relevant examples in teaching not only help maintain the language but also promote a sense of belonging among students. However, for these strategies to have a lasting impact, they must be complemented by institutional support in the form of training programs, resource allocation, and formal recognition of local languages within the curriculum (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Liu & Fang, 2022).

The Role of Institutional and Policy Support

Institutional and policy support emerges as a critical factor in sustaining local languages. While Indonesia's national curriculum provides opportunities for local content through *muatan lokal*, its implementation varies widely and often lacks sufficient resources and guidance. This creates a gap between policy intentions and practical outcomes, limiting the integration of the Luwu language into formal education.

The findings indicate that schools with permissive policies—those that allow the use of local languages—create informal spaces for the Luwu language to thrive. However, such approaches lack the structure needed for sustainable preservation. To address this, localized curriculum adjustments that formally incorporate the Luwu language, along with the development of bilingual teaching materials, are essential. This aligns with recommendations by Ramli et al. (2024) for integrating local languages into educational frameworks to reinforce their relevance and visibility.

Collaboration between schools, local governments, and cultural organizations is also vital. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, local language competitions, and community-based learning activities can enhance the Luwu language's presence in both educational and social contexts. These efforts would not only support linguistic diversity but also foster a sense of cultural identity among students and the broader community (Budiono & Jaya, 2024; Lestari et al., 2024; Surahim & Ramli, 2023).

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant challenges and opportunities in preserving the Luwu language within educational contexts, particularly through the experiences of English teachers. The findings reveal that while the Luwu

language holds cultural and linguistic importance as part of students' identity, its preservation is hindered by several factors. These include the prioritization of Arabic and English in the curriculum, limited institutional support, and the growing influence of digital media that exposes younger generations to dominant languages.

Despite these challenges, teachers have shown commendable efforts in preserving the Luwu language through creative strategies such as integrating Luwu vocabulary into English lessons. This approach not only facilitates students' understanding of new linguistic concepts but also fosters a sense of pride in their local heritage. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is often constrained by a lack of resources, professional training, and systemic support.

The role of institutional and policy support emerges as a critical factor in sustaining local languages. While Indonesia's *muatan lokal* policy provides a platform for regional languages, its inconsistent implementation and limited resources reduce its impact. To address this, there is a need for stronger collaboration between schools, local governments, and cultural organizations to create structured and sustainable programs for language preservation.

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