

## Potentials and Limitations of Bilingual Children's Storybooks for Javanese Language Revitalization: A Case Study of The East Java Language Center

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines strategies for revitalizing the Javanese language through a program to produce bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks by the East Java Language Center. Using qualitative methods and Wallace's revitalization theory, the study examines efforts to overcome the decline in the use of Javanese due to the dominance of Indonesian and weak family transmission. The bilingual storybooks developed combine local culture with a modern approach, including digital formats (flipbooks, audiobooks) and accessible formats (Braille). The results of the study show that these books are effective as a tool for reintroducing the Javanese language and cultural values to children in a fun way. This program supports literacy, strengthens intergenerational transmission, and expands access to the Javanese language in education and communities, while adapting to digital developments.

**Keywords:** *Javanese language revitalization, bilingual children's storybooks, intergenerational transmission, East Java Language Center, digital literacy*

### INTRODUCTION

Javanese is one of the regional languages with the largest number of speakers in Indonesia. Among its speakers, Javanese is a symbol of pride. Although it has more than 68 million speakers quantitatively, qualitatively, Javanese has experienced significant shifts and decline (Kurniasih, 2026). The functional presence of Javanese in everyday informal interactions continues to decline (Bashori 2025). There has been a significant decline in the

use of Javanese, especially among urban communities and younger generations living in urban areas (Kurniasih n.d.; Winda, A., Sakina, R., Inggris, P. B., Barat, J., Perkantoran, A., Pajajaran, P., & Barat 2025).

This phenomenon is influenced by various factors, such as the dominance of Indonesian in the education system and the media, the influence of the social environment, and the declining role of the family in passing on the Javanese language (Winda, A., Sakina, R., Inggris, P. B., Barat, J., Perkantoran, A., Pajajaran, P., & Barat, 2025). Young people generally find Javanese Krama difficult, so they prefer Indonesian, which is considered easier, more practical, modern, and suitable for cross-cultural communication (Noveintine 2025; Winda, A., Sakina, R., Inggris, P. B., Barat, J., Perkantoran, A., Pajajaran, P., & Barat 2025).

Similarly, in recreational reading activities, young people prefer to read novels, newspapers, and watch television in the national language (Bashori 2025). Javanese children and adolescents also tend to prefer Indonesian for digital activities, even when Javanese is available as an alternative. This indicates that the digital space has become a new arena that accelerates the decline in the frequency of regional language use among the younger generation (Udasmoro, W. 2023). Children who are digital natives access social media, online games, and entertainment content in Indonesian more often, so their recreational domain is rarely touched by Javanese. This phenomenon is a form of cultural pressure that occurs when the original language and cultural systems are considered less functional in meeting communication needs in the contemporary era (Wallace 1956).

The use of Javanese at the local level also faces various challenges. Young Javanese generally use Javanese only in certain contexts, such as interactions with parents or traditional events (Winda, A., Sakina, R., Inggris, P. B., Barat, J., Perkantoran, A., Pajajaran, P., & Barat, 2025). In addition, the way Javanese people speak Javanese is not uniform, even though they live in the same region. These differences range from dialects and subdialects to vocabulary and speech patterns (Saddhono, K., & Hartanto, 2021).

This shift not only affects the use of Javanese but also the identity and originality of the Javanese language as both a mother tongue and a culture that needs to be preserved. One of the impacts of the shift in the Javanese language among children is the emergence of hybrid words that show the morphological combination of Javanese and Indonesian, such as *mastekno* or *isikno* in everyday communication (Zen, E. L., & Apriana, n.d.).

Meanwhile, Javanese language learning in schools is still teacher-centered and has little impact on students' ability to use Javanese appropriately in everyday life. This is because Javanese language learning is more conventional and only emphasizes memorization of vocabulary and grammar, which actually hinders the growth of critical language awareness (Yulianto et al 2023). The decreasing intensity and originality of Javanese language usage not only affect the linguistic aspects of Javanese but also have the potential to erode the values and culture contained in the Javanese language. An example is the use of formal Javanese, which is closely related to the culture of politeness (Saddhono, K., & Hartanto, 2021; Yulianto et al., 2023). The most critical impact of this pressure is the disruption of intergenerational language transmission. Javanese is increasingly rarely used as the language of nurturing in urban and suburban Javanese families (Errington 1998).

Children grow up with much more dominant exposure to Indonesian and foreign languages through the media, formal education, and their social environment, resulting in a psychological distance from the language of their ancestors (Fishman, 1991). This condition has entered a stage of cultural distortion, where the loss of language proficiency has implications for the fading of understanding of the philosophical values, ethics (*unggah-ungguh*), and local wisdom contained within it (Geertz, 1960). If not intervened in, this cycle has the potential to lead to the threat of the extinction of the Javanese language in the coming generations.

This phenomenon has also been observed by the East Java Language Center, an institution whose tasks include protecting regional languages in East Java from the threat of extinction or loss of their social function. One of how the East Java Language Center is

revitalizing the Javanese language is through a program to produce bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks.

Based on this background, it is important to examine bilingual digital children's storybooks as an adaptive strategy for revitalizing the Javanese language in the modern era. This research is important in order to understand how modern instruments can be used to strengthen traditional foundations, while providing practical models that can be adopted by parents, educators, and policymakers in their efforts to preserve regional languages.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach that emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural contexts. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of participants holistically, which cannot be measured quantitatively (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). Within this framework, this study specifically applies an instrumental case study design, in which the bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybook program by the East Java Language Center was selected as a case that can provide insight into the practice of regional language revitalization in Indonesia (Yin 2018). Through a case study, researchers can deeply understand how this program is implemented in a real-world context, including its challenges and opportunities.

Furthermore, this approach also integrates a systematic thematic analysis framework, which enables researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes emerging from the data (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006). This thematic analysis framework helps organize rich and diverse data into meaningful findings and enhances the trustworthiness of the research results. Thus, this approach not only allows for in-depth exploration but also ensures that the data collection and analysis processes are conducted systematically, consistently, and in an academically accountable manner.

This study uses three main data collection techniques, each deliberately chosen to answer the formulated research questions. These three techniques are as follows:

### **1. *Social Media Documentation Study***

The researchers conducted passive observation of official posts by the East Java Language Center on Instagram and YouTube platforms during the 2021–2025 period. The data collected included writer selection announcements, book posters, documentation of readability test implementation, and audiobook/flipbook uploads. This documentation study was used to chronologically reconstruct the policies and activities implemented by the institution (Bowen 2009). Documentary sources are recognized as stable, non-reactive sources of evidence that provide historical context for a case study program (Yin 2018).

### **2. *Semi-Structured Interviews***

These interviews involved two important categories of informants: (a) the Head of the Expertise and Professional Services Group (KKLP) of the East Java Language Center, who is the policy-maker in this program; and (b) three selected writers of bilingual children's storybooks from the 2024–2025 cohort. These interviews aimed to deeply explore the program's objectives, implementation stages, success criteria, and field challenges. With a semi-structured approach, researchers can consistently ask core questions while still opening up space for the emergence of unexpected new insights from informants (Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, 2016).

### **3. *Participant Observation***

The technique used was full participant observation, in which the first researcher was directly involved as a participant in the writing competition and was successfully selected as one of the writers in 2025. The researcher followed the entire selection process, mentoring by the jury, manuscript revision, and collaboration with illustrators intensively. Participant observation provides deep access to the internal realities of the program that cannot be accessed from the outside, such as behind-the-scenes decision-making and the dynamics of relationships between writers, juries, and illustrators (Spradley 2016). Through the position as an insider, the researcher can directly understand the roles of actors and how manuscripts are adapted to meet established standards.

Validity in this study focuses on the aspect of credibility, i.e., the extent to which the findings reflect actual reality (trustworthiness). This study does not rely on a single source or method but applies comprehensive triangulation:

Source Triangulation Data from document studies (Instagram posts), interviews with the head of KKLP and writers, and participant observation notes were cross-compared to identify consistency or discrepancies (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, 2018). Method Triangulation: Three data collection techniques (documentation, interviews, observation) were used to answer the same research questions, thereby strengthening the validity of conclusions. Triangulation helps reduce bias that may arise from a single perspective (e.g., official reports or subjective narratives of informants) and strengthens the depth of analysis (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, 2018).

After the interviews were completed, the researcher confirmed the interview summary with the informants (the head of KKLP and the writers) to ensure that the researcher's interpretation aligned with their experiences. If discrepancies were found, the researcher revised the interpretation until mutual agreement was reached, so that the analysis results remained faithful to the participants' original meanings (Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, 2016). As explained in the method section, the researcher was aware of potential bias due to their position as a participant in the writing competition (insider). To address this bias, the researcher applied reflexivity through a daily research journal that recorded all methodological decisions, personal reflections, and interactions with research subjects (Ortlipp 2008).

The researcher also systematically stored all raw data (interview transcripts, screenshots of social media posts, field notes) as an audit trail, allowing for retracing and evaluation by third parties. This aligns with the principle of transferability, which requires process transparency (Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba 1985). The data collection process took place over a sufficiently long period (2021–2025), allowing the researcher to build trust with informants, understand the context deeply, and reduce the likelihood of bias from

participants (e.g., due to reactivity). The extended data scope also helped capture various dynamics that occurred gradually throughout this revitalization program.

With the systematic application of a qualitative approach and comprehensive validity and reliability strategies, this study is able to provide a credible and trustworthy picture of the bilingual children's storybook program as an instrument for Javanese language revitalization, while also serving as a model for subsequent research in the field of regional language revitalization.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

Bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) storybooks can be analyzed as a strategy or instrument in several stages of the Wallace model. Starting from the basic planning stage, the material development stage, and the implementation stage. In general, the purpose of procuring bilingual children's storybooks is to provide enjoyable, high-quality reading material to support the National Literacy Movement. In the local context, this program also aims to protect regional languages for the younger generation as an effort to preserve regional languages and provide material for the revitalization of regional languages with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) content that incorporates Javanese localities.

At this stage, the East Java Language Center analyzed the need for bilingual children's storybooks and established the goal of using them as a strategic medium for revitalizing regional languages, especially Javanese. Bilingual picture storybooks were chosen as a strategy because they are attractive to children and are commonly used as learning media in schools. The use of bilingual picture storybooks also supports literacy goals and introduces moral values in Javanese culture contained in the stories.

This strategy did not just appear out of nowhere, but can be understood as a planned response to the threat of a decline in Javanese speakers, especially among Javanese children living in urban areas, as well as to preserve the purity of the Javanese language itself.

Efforts to revitalize the Javanese language by the East Java Language Center through the publication of bilingual children's storybooks (Javanese-Indonesian) have been ongoing

since 2021. By 2025, the East Java Language Center will have produced 375 bilingual children's storybooks. This revitalization effort includes a series of planned stages, including the selection of authors, the selection of illustrators, manuscript guidance and revision, manuscript translation and review, manuscript illustration, proofreading, readability testing, publication, book distribution, and book review.

In the writer selection stage, the East Java Language Center published a writer selection announcement on its social media. This selection was open to anyone with an East Java resident ID card. In 2025, the East Java Language Center held two stages of writer selection. Namely, a selection for bilingual children's story writers (East Javanese regional language-Indonesian), and a selection for children's story writers in regional languages (Javanese, Madurese, and the Javanese dialect). This is because these three regional languages are still generally used by the local community in East Java, even though the number of speakers continues to decline, especially among young people.

Each author who submits their manuscript is welcome to choose one of these regional languages. Manuscripts written in the East Javanese dialect are the most commonly submitted. In addition to using a regional language in their manuscripts, authors are also required to incorporate the cultural values and local wisdom of East Java into their manuscripts. Children's stories must also include one of the specified themes, namely STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics). In 2025, out of approximately 600 manuscripts received by the committee, fewer than 120 manuscripts passed the selection process. The large number of manuscripts submitted shows that there is still considerable enthusiasm among the people of East Java for writing manuscripts in the East Javanese regional language.



Figure 1.

Flyer for the 2025 Bilingual Children's Story Writer Selection

Source: Instagram Balai Bahasa Jawa Timur

Authors whose manuscripts are selected will then receive guidance from a panel of judges consisting of expert children's story writers. The authors are then given time to revise their manuscripts based on the judges' feedback so that the manuscripts are more on target. In 2023-2024, the manuscripts are written for readers aged 7-9 years. In 2025, the bilingual children's stories are aimed at readers aged 10 to 13 years.

While the authors were revising their manuscripts, the East Java Language Center selected translators. As with the author selection process, the translator selection process also aimed to select translators for three regional languages in East Java, namely Javanese, Madurese, and Using Javanese. These selected translators would then edit the manuscripts from the perspective of regional language translation.

The translation process is not merely a process of language conversion, but also a means of transferring knowledge, facilitating intercultural dialogue, strengthening linguistic diplomacy, preserving and passing on literary works, and supporting scientific research and publication. Translators are not merely people who can speak regional languages and improve vocabulary. More than that, translators are guardians of meaning and narrators of civilization.



Figure 2.

Flyer for the 2025 Regional Language Children's Story Translator Selection.

Source: Instagram Balai Bahasa Jawa Timur

As with most children's stories, bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's stories are also accompanied by illustrations. Therefore, these manuscripts also require supporting illustrations. This is where illustrators play a role in adding images to the manuscript according to the author's description and instructions.

Through a combination of text and pictures, these illustrated children's storybooks not only serve as a means of entertainment but also become an important tool in shaping children's character, moral values, and perspective on the world around them (Nikolajeva, M., & Scott, 2006).

The pictures in bilingual children's storybooks also serve to reinforce the local Javanese cultural values described in the text. Some Javanese vocabulary words, attitudes, or events may not be easily understood by urban Javanese children. However, this obstacle can be overcome with visualizations in the form of pictures. Thus, the synergy between the Javanese text and the supporting illustrations is very meaningful for child readers.

### ***Material Development Stage***

This stage can be considered the core stage of revitalization research. How bilingual children's storybooks (Javanese-Indonesian) are created and developed is the core activity of this stage. In this stage, the East Java Language Center develops bilingual children's storybooks following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Book Center based on applicable grade level rules.

At this stage, each selected author receives assistance from expert writers or children's book experts and expert Javanese translators to produce bilingual children's story manuscripts that are appropriate for the children's reading level and suitable for publication. Each author also collaborates with an illustrator to determine the characters, various graphic elements, and layout design to produce children's storybooks that are interesting, educational, and ready for publication.

The guidance provided by expert writers ensures that each manuscript tells the story of the daily lives of Javanese children. The stories must be written from the perspective of children who are innocent, imaginative, and creative, while remaining educational and containing Javanese cultural morals.

For example, in a book titled Beni lan Wesi Sembrani, which tells the story of a careless boy named Beni who accidentally drops his mother's sewing machine screw into a crack in the floor of their house. The story goes that his mother needs the screw to sew colorful fabric as decorations for the village cleaning ceremony. The book describes the various ways Beni tried to retrieve his mother's screw until he came up with the idea of pulling it out with his iron bar.

Table 1.

Javanese-Indonesian text in the book Beni lan Wesi Sembrani  
(example on cover, pages 1, 2, 3, 13, 15, 17, 19) by Sri Widjowati Kinasih

Pages	Javanese text	Indonesian Text
1	<i>Sasi Sura wis teka. Sesu king kampunge Beni bakal ana Bersih Desa.</i>	<i>Bulan Muharram sudah tiba. Besok di kampung Beni akan ada perayaan Bersih Desa.</i>
2	<i>Nalika mulih sekolah, Beni sengkut milih dolanan.</i>	<i>Saat pulang sekolah, Beni sibuk membeli mainan.</i>
3	<i>Kandane sing bakulan, dolanan sing dicekel Beni arane wesi sembrani.</i>	<i>Kata sang penjual, mainan yang dibeli Beni namanya Besi Berani.</i>
13	<i>Ibu ngutus Beni ganti klambi. Nanging Beni sembrana. Beni ndeleh topine ing mesin jahite Ibu.</i>  <i>Sekrup-sekrup mesin jahite Ibu tiba. Siji lo ... Ladalah! Sekrup sing siji nyepit ing</i>	<i>Ibu meminta Beni ganti baju. Namun, Beni ceroboh. Beni</i>  <i>meletakkan topinya di mesin jahit Ibu.</i> <i>Sekrup-sekrup mesin jahit Ibu jatuh.</i>

	<i>tengah keramik.</i>	<i>Satu ... du ... Aduh! Satu sekrup Ibu masuk di cela keramik.</i>
15	<i>Piye yen nganggo potlot? Tetep ora bisa. Beni sumpeg. Rekadayane ora ana sing kasil. Padahal kain-kain kuwi sesuk kudu wis dipasang ing jodhang.</i>	<i>Bagaimana jika pakai pensil? Tetap tidak bisa. Beni kesal. Usahanya gagal. Padahal kain warna-warni itu menunggu dijahit Ibu.</i>
17	<i>Beni nemplekake wesi sembrani ing keramik, papane sekrup kecepit. Horee! Sekrupe kanthel.</i>	<i>Beni menggunakan besi beraninya untuk mengambil sekrup di celah lantai keramik. Horee! Berhasil!</i>
19	<i>Beni wis ora sabar masang kain ing jodhang. Bersih Desa ing kampunge Beni bakal rame lan nengsemake.</i>	<i>Beni sudah tidak sabar ingin menghias tandu dengan kain warna-warni hasil jahitan Ibu. Perayaan Bersih Desa di kampung Beni pasti akan seru.</i>

The introduction of Bersih Desa in this story shows that Javanese culture can be incorporated into bilingual children's storybooks without losing its educational and local elements. The choice of Beni as a careless character shows that bilingual storybooks also understand that children are not always good and sweet, but also appear natural with an inherent innocence. Stories and characters like this are necessary to ensure that bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks are not limited to young readers.

Figure 3.

*Beni lan Wesi Sembrani* bilingual children's storybook (example on cover, pages 1, 2, 3, 13, 15, 17, 19) by Sri Widyowati Kinasih



Through the use of bilingualism (Javanese-Indonesian) in this book, children are invited to learn more about the *Bersih Desa* tradition, which is widely practiced in a number of cities in Java every 1 *Muharram*. Although it does not discuss the *Bersih Desa* celebration in depth, children can learn about symbols such as colorful flags that are elements of the story. Simple scientific elements, such as how magnets work, are also incorporated into the story and integrated with Javanese culture and language.

The same is true in the book *Ayo Pethik Godhonge* (Let's Pick the Leaves). In this book, young readers are introduced to various leaves that can be used as motifs and natural dyes for fabric. Children not only increase their Javanese vocabulary related to leaves that they often encounter but are not yet familiar with, but they also

learn simple science in Javanese. This combination of science and environmental knowledge is appealing to children, especially when presented in Javanese.

**Table 2.**

Javanese-Indonesian text in the book *Ayo Pethik Godhonge* (example on cover page, pages 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, 19) by Musrifah

Pages	Javanese Text	Indonesian Text
5	<i>Godhong jati ngasilake warna abang</i>	<i>Daun jati menghasilkan warna merah</i>
6	<i>Godhong jarak uga bisa. Werna ijone padhang. Sst ... ati-ati.</i>	<i>Daun jarak juga bisa. Warna hijaunya cerah.</i>
8	<i>Hweeek ... kecuut! Jupuk godhonge wae. Godhong belimbing wuluh ngasilake warna putih.</i>	<i>Hweeek ... masam sekali! Ambil daunnya saja. Daun belimbing wuluh menghasilkan warna putih.</i>
13	<i>Angkat lan beber kaine. Nata godhong mumpung kain isih mamel. Nata, nata, nata. Nata sing apik</i>	<i>Angkat kain dan bentangkan. Tata daun selagi kain masih basah. Tata, tata, tata. Tata yang bagus.</i>
14	<i>Banjur kaine ditutup nganggo kain putih lan plastik.</i>	<i>Setelah itu kainnya ditutup dengan kain putih dan plastik.</i>
16	<i>Gulungan kain banjur ditalini sing rapet lan dikukus rong jam.</i>	<i>Gulungan kain kemudian diikat erat-erat dan di kukus selama dua jam</i>
19	<i>Woow ... kain ecoprint gawenane awake dhewe apik tenan.</i>	<i>Woow ... kain ecoprint buatan kami bagus sekali.</i>

The use of short, simple sentences accompanied by Indonesian translations makes it easier for children to understand the meaning of each Javanese word, compare it with Indonesian, and understand the story. Attractive visualizations of various characters, graphics, and colors make this bilingual picture book even more appealing to children.



Figure 4.

Bilingual children's storybook *Ayo Pethik Godhonge* (example on cover, pages 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 18, 19) by Musrifah.

The use of the Javanese language integrated with the story and daily life of children in bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) storybooks is in line with early childhood literacy theory, which states that children learn most effectively through contextual, meaningful, and enjoyable media, such as stories and pictures (Meyrowitz 1985). In other words, picture storybooks are not just reading material, but a powerful pedagogical tool to approach children's world in a way they like, so that the process of introducing and learning their mother tongue does not feel forced.

### **Readability Test**

To ensure that the entire process of producing bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks is acceptable to the target readers, a readability test was conducted. Readability testing is understood as an objective effort to assess the level of difficulty of a text based on the internal characteristics of the text, with the main objective of matching the text to the abilities of the target readers (Yusuf, F. N., & Sukyadi, 2024). Theoretically,

readability testing is in line with cognitive learning theory, which ensures that the text is in the optimal readability zone for the target audience, not too easy that it bores children and not too difficult that it frustrates them.

In 2025, the East Java Language Center conducted readability tests on seventh graders because it was in line with bilingual children's storybooks that year, which were intended for level C readers, also known as intermediate readers. Intermediate readers are aged 10-13 years old. At this level, readers are able to read texts fluently. This readability test was conducted in several schools in East Java at different times.



**Figure 5.**

Readability test of bilingual children's stories (Javanese Indonesian).

Source: Instagram Balai Bahasa Jawa Timur

Technically, readability testing is conducted by printing a limited number of copies of the manuscript and giving them to a number of target readers to observe their responses and assess the level of difficulty of the text. The children read together in the classroom, accompanied by their teachers and the East Java Language Center team.

Readability testing ensures that the Javanese language used is still accessible and not difficult for children to understand. Given that the Javanese language used in this bilingual children's storybook is not formal language, which is synonymous with norms of politeness and therefore only intended for older people, but rather the everyday language of Javanese children, it is more functional and familiar to children.

Readability testing also helps to ensure that the linguistic complexity in both languages, Javanese and Indonesian, is balanced and appropriate for the age of the target readers. This prevents a situation where one language version is too easy while the other is too difficult, which could frustrate children or cause them to lose interest in one of the languages. Therefore, in this bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybook, the Javanese and Indonesian texts are placed side by side and in sequence, making it easier for children to compare the texts if they encounter difficulties.

### ***Digital Version of Bilingual Children's Storybooks***

It is undeniable that the digital era has opened up new opportunities for designing adaptive revitalization strategies. The alpha generation, which is the target of revitalization, is digital natives who are familiar with interactive and multimedia content (Prensky 2001). Research shows that digital media, especially bilingual digital children's storybooks, can be an effective educational tool for creating a more enjoyable Javanese language learning experience (Tunkiel, K. A., & Bus, 2022; Verhallen, M. J. A. J., Bus, A. G., & Jong, 2006). Therefore, a revitalization movement is needed that consciously and systematically utilizes this opportunity to create a more satisfying culture for the young Javanese generation (Wallace 1956).

Digital bilingual Javanese-Indonesian children's storybooks are a cultural invention that responds to these challenges. The bilingual approach serves as a bridge of understanding, reducing the anxiety of children and parents who may not be fluent in Javanese, while strengthening conceptual understanding in both languages (Palmer, D. K., Strong, K. A., Baker, C., & Wright, 2017). Story content that contains Javanese cultural values and contexts plays a role in reintroducing elements of Javanese culture into children's mindsets (Wallace 1956).

Responding to digital developments in various forms that touch on literacy, the East Java Language Center also converted bilingual children's storybooks into flip books and audiobooks. An example is a bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybook titled *Cokelat Saka Lempung (chocolate from clay)*.



Figure 6.

Audiobook-flipbook presentation of the children's storybook *Cokelat Saka Lempung* in three languages (Javanese-Indonesian-English)

Source: Youtube Balai Bahasa Jawa Timur

The digitalization of the bilingual book entitled *Cokelat Saka Lempung* enables multimodal presentations in which Javanese-Indonesian texts can be reinforced with audio narration, animation, and interactivity that reduce cognitive load. When text, images, and audio are presented simultaneously on a visual screen, children can build connections between verbal language and visual representations (Mayer 2021). Thus, children can see the text, hear the pronunciation, and understand the cultural context simultaneously. The digitization of books also allows for dynamic adaptation based on children's understanding. Personalized digital books can adjust the level of language difficulty, provide timely vocabulary support, and respect children's linguistic heritage (Ciesielska, M., Kucirkova, N.,

& Thomson, 2025). Features such as pop-up dictionaries, interactive pronunciation, and language level options (ngoko/krama) can be customized.

Bilingual children's storybooks (Javanese-Indonesian) on digital platforms can also transform bilingual books from static parallel texts into dynamic spaces where children can creatively explore the boundaries of language. This is in line with the linguistic perspective in the bilingual approach (García & Wei, 2023, p. 112). For example, children can tap on Javanese words to see their Indonesian translations, or vice versa, creating a natural metalinguistic bridge. In addition, the digitization of regional language content is, after all, an attractive medium for children. Digital versions of bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks can also serve two functions at once. Namely, making heritage languages appear 'cool' to the younger generation and fulfilling curriculum requirements (Nugraheni 2022). The digital format also allows for wider distribution and greater accessibility for the Javanese language outside its geographical area. Javanese children's stories can ultimately be accessed by anyone interested in the Javanese language, anywhere, even by those who are not Javanese.

### ***Implementation Stage***

The East Java Language Center regularly monitors and utilizes bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks in a number of public elementary schools in East Java. This activity aims to ensure that the bilingual children's storybooks that have been distributed are actually used in student literacy activities. The East Java Language Center team also reads bilingual storybooks with students, fills out book utilization evaluation instruments, discusses the application of reading materials in the classroom, and documents literacy practices in the classroom.

This monitoring was also carried out to ensure that the distribution of bilingual children's storybooks was actually utilized in the target schools and had a real impact on increasing students' interest in the Javanese language as well as improving literacy culture at the elementary school level. This activity also encouraged the use of bilingual children's storybooks with stories that were more relevant to the language and culture of local children

and communities, more visually appealing, thereby supporting more enjoyable learning for elementary school students.

This step demonstrates the advantages of revitalizing the Javanese language through bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks when viewed from the perspective of implementation in Wallace's theory. The fact that these bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's storybooks are also distributed and used in schools and places where children gather (such as libraries, reading communities, reading corners, or studios) demonstrates a deep understanding of the linguistic realm.

Language revitalization should indeed reclaim important domains in people's lives (Fishman, 1991). The formal education domain, such as schools, and the informal community domain are two main pillars for shaping language habits in the younger generation. By placing Javanese storybooks there, the initiators of revitalization actively create a positive "contact zone" between children and the Javanese language outside the home, which may already be dominated by Indonesian. This is an effort to expand the function of the Javanese language from merely a ritual or formal language to a language of literacy and everyday language for children.

Thus, this strategy forms a compact revitalization cycle. In terms of materials, it provides content that is appropriate for children's psychological development and interests (Morrow & Gambrell, 2019). In terms of implementation, it places these materials in strategic locations where children's interaction with the target language can occur repeatedly and in a structured manner (Wallace, 1956). This combination directly targets the most important factor in the survival of a language, namely intergenerational transmission. When children begin to recognize, understand, and eventually enjoy stories in Javanese through these books, they build emotional and cognitive connections with the language. This is the foundation that will enable them to want and be able to use Javanese in the future, thereby breaking the chain of language decline. Therefore, although it may seem simple, this bilingual children's storybook initiative is a brilliant practical application of language planning theory, with great potential to inject new vitality into the Javanese

language. In addition, bilingual children's storybooks (Javanese-Indonesian) are also used in the East.

The Java Language Center helps young people with disabilities. Namely, they are used in theatrical performances by the deaf community and as material for producing Braille versions of children's storybooks. This effort emphasizes that access to cultural materials in accessible formats is a basic right of every person. When blind children are not given access to the linguistic materials of their ancestral culture, they can experience double marginalization—both as people with disabilities and as linguistic minorities within their own communities (Connor, 2018). Bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) Braille children's storybooks are a tool for breaking this cycle of double marginalization.

To date, the East Java Language Center has published more than 90 bilingual children's storybooks in Braille, which are now officially in use at two special education schools and three reading communities.

**Figure 7.**



Use of bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) children's story braille books. Source: Youtube Balai Bahasa Jawa Timur

Thus, bilingual (Javanese-Indonesian) braille children's storybooks not only teach language but also develop basic cognitive abilities. Access to cultural materials in accessible formats is also important for the identity formation of persons with disabilities. Javanese blind children who access cultural stories in braille show stronger cultural identity and self-esteem compared to those who are only exposed to Indonesian materials (Wijayanto & Sari, 2023, p. 45).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn. First, the East Java Language Center's bilingual Javanese-Indonesian children's storybook program systematically reflects Wallace's (1956) revitalization stages (planning, material development, readability testing, digitization, implementation), but is weak in the long-term adaptation phase due to a lack of impact evaluation data.

Second, from the perspective of Fishman's (1991) intergenerational transmission, these books have the potential to be an effective tool due to their use of the ngoko language, engaging illustrations, and side-by-side translation. However, successful transmission depends heavily on the active involvement of parents and teachers, which has not been optimally developed.

Third, the program's weaknesses and challenges include: (a) a low manuscript approval rate (20%) without a capacity-building program; (b) no quantitative data on readability testing results; (c) digitization without access and impact data; (d) the digital divide in rural areas; and (e) monitoring has not yet produced measurable evaluation reports.

Recommendations for future research: longitudinal studies with pre-test post-test designs are needed to measure improvements in Javanese vocabulary and comprehension, comparative studies with similar revitalization programs in other regions, and research on the effectiveness of interactive features in digital versions.

This program not only focuses on providing materials but also involves a systematic process—from author selection, mentoring, readability testing, to implementation in schools and communities. This is in line with revitalization theory, which emphasizes the importance of planning, implementation, and intergenerational transmission in language preservation.

Thus, bilingual children's storybooks serve as a cultural bridge connecting the younger generation with the linguistic and cultural heritage of Java. This initiative not only strengthens linguistic identity but also opens up opportunities for the Javanese language to remain relevant and alive in the digital age. The continuation and expansion of similar

programs in various fields is expected to be a strategic step in preventing the extinction of the Javanese language and restoring its function in everyday life.

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