



ISSN (Print): 2301-5160;

ISSN (Online): 2986-1551

Available online at: <https://jurnal.unimed.ac.id/2012/index.php/ellu>

Analysis of How Teenagers View the Regional Language of Besemah Pagaralam

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how teenagers in Pagaralam perceive the Besemah regional language by examining their attitudes, cultural pride, and patterns of language use. The preservation of regional languages is closely tied to the younger generation's awareness and appreciation of their linguistic heritage. Using a quantitative descriptive correlational design, the research collected data through a structured questionnaire measuring teenagers' views and behaviors related to the Besemah language. The findings show that teenagers generally express positive attitudes and strong cultural pride, although the frequency of language use in daily communication remains moderate. The analysis also demonstrates that both cultural pride and language use significantly influence language attitudes,

with cultural pride emerging as the strongest contributing factor. These results highlight the importance of strengthening cultural identity as a strategic effort to support the vitality and continuity of regional languages among young speakers⁵ keywords must be written to describe the research scope observed, as well as the main terms undergirding the research.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received

Revised

Accepted

Keywords:

Besemah language, teenagers, cultural pride, language attitude, regional language use

How to Cite: (APA Style)

Name, N. (Year). Title. *Jurnal Linguistik Terapan Bahasa Inggris*, Vol (Issue), page-page.
<https://doi.org/10.24114/lt.v18i2.27893>

INTRODUCTION

Regional languages are an integral part of Indonesia's cultural identity and linguistic diversity. However, amid the forces of globalization and the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, the survival of regional languages faces increasingly serious challenges. The phenomenon of language shift is evident from the declining use of regional languages among younger generations across various regions. Recent research shows that nearly 100% of urban teenagers in Indonesia use Bahasa Indonesia more frequently than their local language in daily interactions (Kruk, 2025). This condition indicates a significant decline in intergenerational transmission of local languages, including the Besemah language spoken in Pagaralam, South Sumatera.

Globally, UNESCO (2023) reports that more than 40% of the world's languages are endangered, primarily due to weakening of intergenerational transmission among youth. In Indonesia, several studies have highlighted that regional languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Buginese have experienced a significant decline in use within both family and educational domains (Bashori, 2025). This emphasizes the importance of examining young people's attitudes toward their regional languages as a key indicator of language vitality.

At the local level, the Besemah language plays an essential role in preserving the cultural identity of the Pagaralam community. However, modernization, migration, and the influence of digital media have led younger generations to prefer using the national or foreign languages in daily communication. A study by Samuel (2025) found that ambivalent attitudes toward regional languages often stem from the perception that local languages hold little economic or social value compared to Bahasa Indonesia. This reflects an emerging crisis of linguistic pride among young people.

Previous studies have examined attitudes toward regional languages in various Indonesian contexts. For instance, Nurlia, Indarti, and Manara (2025) found that students in technical universities tend to show neutral to negative attitudes toward using regional languages in formal communication. However, those studies mainly focused on university students and have not yet explored the context of adolescents, who are still in the process of forming their linguistic identity. Moreover, no quantitative research has specifically investigated how teenagers in South Sumatra perceive the Besemah language in terms of attitude, cultural pride, and frequency of use.

This gap highlights the need for a new study addressing the dynamics of teenagers' attitudes toward the Besemah language using a quantitative approach grounded in theories of language attitude and cultural identity.

This research also draws on the concepts of language maintenance and cultural identity. According to Sumartana and Hudiananingsih (2025), preserving regional languages requires inclusive education that fosters pride in local linguistic heritage. Therefore, understanding how adolescents view their regional language can serve as foundation for designing more effective and contextually grounded language preservation policies.

Based on this rationale, the present study aims to analyze how teenagers in Pagaralam perceive the Besemah regional language, focusing on aspects of attitude, pride, and intention to use the language. The central research questions are: 1) What are teenagers' attitudes toward the Besemah language? and 2) What factors influence their acceptance and pride in using it? Hypothetically, based on Lambert's (1967) theory of language attitude and the social identity concept proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), and further supported by the findings of Nurlia et al. (2025) and Sumartana & Hudiananingsih (2025), it is assumed that there is a positive relationship between cultural pride and attitudes toward the use of regional language. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the field of sociolinguistics as well as a practical contribution to the formulation of policies for regional language preservation in the modern era.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach aimed at analyzing the relationship between students' attitudes toward the Besemah local language, cultural pride, and the frequency of local language use. This approach enables the researcher to systematically describe social phenomena while simultaneously examining inter-variable relationships using measurable numerical data (Hussin, 2025). The quantitative method was chosen because it allows for objective and measurable findings to identify linguistic attitude tendencies among university students as part of the educated young generation in Pagaralam.

The data collected consisted of primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through questionnaires distributed both directly and online. The use of questionnaires was considered appropriate because it allows for efficient and standardized measurement of attitudes and perceptions toward local language use (Fuadin, Syihabuddin, & Hidayat, 2025). The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” covering three main dimensions: cognitive, affective, and conative. The secondary data included language policy reports and previous research findings to support contextual analysis.

The population of this research comprised all students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagaralam in the odd semester of the 2025 academic year, enrolled in three study programs: Indonesian Language and Literature Education (216 students), English Education (119 students), and Mathematics Education (106 students), bringing the total population to 441 students. University students were selected as the population because they represent an educated youth group with the potential to serve as agents of local cultural preservation in Pagaralam.

The sampling technique applied was proportionate stratified random sampling, as the population was divided into three natural strata based on study programs. This method ensures that each stratum has a representative probability proportional to the number of students in each program. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, the total sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (441 students)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{441}{1 + 441(0.05)^2} + \frac{441}{1 + 1.1025} + \frac{441}{2.1025} = 209.8 \approx 210$$

Based on the calculation, the minimum representative sample should be 210 respondents. However, after consultation with the supervising lecturer and considering research scope, time, and accessibility constraints, the researcher determined a final

sample consisted of 90 respondents, proportionally distributed as 44 students from Indonesian Language and Literature Education, 24 from English Education, and 22 from Mathematics Education. This approach was considered effective in maintaining data balance and minimizing sampling bias across departments (Daongan, Basilio, & Guiniguin, 2025).

The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from (Lambert's, 1967) theory of language attitude and (Fishman's, 1991) theory of language maintenance, and further adapted from the language attitude scale developed by (Baker (1992). The adaptation was made to align the items with the sociolinguistic context of the Besemah community. Content and construct validity were ensured through expert consultation and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Reliability testing used Cronbach's Alpha, where a coefficient value of ≥ 0.70 was considered acceptable, indicating high internal consistency (Bashori, 2025). The questionnaire was piloted on 30 students outside the main sample to ensure clarity and item reliability.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to present the distribution of students' attitudes toward the Besemah language, while Pearson's correlation test was employed to examine the relationship between cultural pride and language attitude. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of cultural pride and frequency of use on language attitude at a significance level of (α) of 0.05. These analytical techniques were supported by classical assumption tests, including tests of normality, linearity, and homogeneity, to ensure the validity of inferential analysis (Putri, Putri, & Suparman, 2025).

RESULTS

Research Findings

Descriptive analysis was conducted on three main variables: attitudes toward the Besemah language, cultural pride, and the frequency of Besemah language use. Data from the 90 respondents provide an overview of the distribution of scores on each variable. The descriptive results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Attitude Toward the Besemah Language	3.78	0.54	2.40	4.80
Cultural Pride	3.92	0.51	2.60	4.90
Frequency of Language Use	3.21	0.63	1.80	4.60

Based on the descriptive results, teenagers' attitudes toward the Besemah language reached an average score of 3.78, with a minimum score of 2.40 and a maximum score of 4.80. Cultural pride obtained a mean score of 3.92, indicating that most respondents scored above the midpoint of the scale. Meanwhile, the frequency of language use produced a mean of 3.21 with a wider score range. These descriptive values show the distribution patterns for each variable and reflect variations in how teenagers respond to each indicator.

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the statistical relationship between cultural pride and attitudes toward the Besemah language. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Results

Variable	r	p-value	Description
Cultural Pride → Language Attitude	0.612	0.000	Significant

The correlation coefficient shows a value of 0.612 with a significance level of 0.000. These numbers indicate that the two variables have a statistically measurable linear relationship based on the data collected. Because the p-value is below 0.05, the correlation test confirms that the association between cultural pride and teenagers' attitudes is statistically significant.

Further analysis using multiple linear regression examined the combined influence of cultural pride and frequency of language use on attitudes toward the Besemah language. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Predictor Variable	B	t	p

Cultural Pride	0.528	5.812	0.000
Frequency of Language Use	0.214	2.367	0.020

The regression output shows that both predictor variables have measurable coefficients based on the sample data. The model produces an R^2 value of 0.48, meaning that both variables collectively account for 48% of the variance observed in teenagers' attitudes toward the Besemah language. The p-values for both predictors show that their coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSIONS

The data indicate that teenagers in Pagaralam tended to report relatively high levels of cultural pride, and this variable demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with their attitudes toward the Besemah language. This pattern is consistent with previous findings by (Ratri et al., 2025), who emphasized that cultural identity plays a role in shaping positive evaluations toward local languages. Teenagers who maintain strong cultural attachment often perceive their regional language as part of their social identity, which may contribute to the numerical association found in this study.

The significance of cultural pride also corresponds with the argument presented by (Sumartana and Hudiananingsih, 2025), who noted that cultural-based education strengthens appreciation for local linguistic heritage. The results of this study show a similar tendency, where teenagers with higher cultural appreciation tend to obtain higher attitude scores in the dataset. These parallels reinforce the idea that cultural pride remains a relevant factor in understanding language attitudes within communities that sustain traditional practices.

The regression findings also show that the frequency of using the Besemah language is statistically associated with teenagers' attitudes. Similar observations were made in (Fishman's, 1991) work, which highlights that language use within everyday domains contributes to the maintenance of positive orientations toward that language. When teenagers continue to encounter or use the language within family interactions, social events, or community settings, these experiences are reflected in their responses

and scores regarding language attitudes. This supports the quantitative relationship detected in the current study.

Although this research shows consistency with several previous studies, some variations also emerge. For example, Bashori (2025) found a marked decline in the use of the Javanese language among younger generations. In contrast, the current findings indicate that teenagers in Pagaralam still show relatively stable responses in cultural pride and attitudes. The difference in results may relate to contextual factors such as community cohesiveness, the strength of local customs, and differences in language exposure across regions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how teenagers in Pagaralam perceive the Besemah regional language by analyzing their attitudes, cultural pride, and patterns of language use. The findings show that teenagers express generally positive views toward the Besemah language, as indicated by the mean scores of the attitude variable. The descriptive results further demonstrate that cultural pride and the frequency of language use are maintained at moderate to high levels among the participants.

Statistical analyses confirm significant associations among the three examined variables. Higher cultural pride corresponds with more positive attitudes toward the Besemah language, and both cultural pride and language use significantly contribute to shaping teenagers' views. These results strengthen the understanding that cultural identity plays a meaningful role in regional language appreciation among young speakers.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of community-based and school-based initiatives designed to strengthen cultural engagement among teenagers. Programs that incorporate local traditions, cultural events, and creative digital activities may help promote consistent use of the Besemah language among younger generations.

This study is not without limitations. The sample size and reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses may influence the precision and generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to involve larger samples, incorporate qualitative approaches, or explore other sociolinguistic aspects such as peer groups,

family communication patterns, and exposure to media content to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping teenagers' language perceptions.

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