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JANGER BANYUWANGI: LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF LOCAL CULTURE

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Abstract: Janger is one of Banyuwangi's traditional performing arts that displays a combination of music, dance, dialogue, and humor as a form of cultural expression of the Osing people. In practice, language functions not only as a means of communication between actors and audiences, but also as the main medium for conveying moral, social, and local wisdom values that are inherited across generations. This study aims to examine the function of language in Janger as a representation of the cultural identity of the Osing people, especially in the midst of social changes due to modernization and tourism. The research method used is qualitative with a literature study approach and in-depth interviews with several Janger art actors and local cultural figures. The results of the study show that the use of the Osing language in Janger has a central role in strengthening the identity and pride of the community. However, in its development, there has been adaptation through the insertion of Javanese and Indonesian languages so that the message is easier to receive to a wider audience, including tourists. This adaptation reflects an effort to maintain the show's relevance without losing its traditional meaning. The language in Janger has proven to have a dual function: as entertainment as well as an educational and reflective medium that strengthens social solidarity. Thus, Janger becomes an arena where the Osing language transforms, maintaining the roots of tradition, but also being open to change to answer the challenges of the times.
Keywords: *Janger; language; local culture; Osing; performances.*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional performing arts in Indonesia function not merely as entertainment but as cultural systems through which identity, collective memory, and social values are continuously produced and transmitted (Daryanti et al., 2025; Juwariyah et al., 2023; Lamont et al., 2024; Parani et al., 2024; Yatim et al., 2025). Embedded in local histories and social practices, these performances integrate language, music, movement, and symbolism to articulate meanings that bind communities across generations (Suwandana et al., 2025). One such tradition is Janger, a distinctive performing art of the Osing community in Banyuwangi, East Java, which combines dialogue, song, humor, dance, and local language as core expressive elements. More than a spectacle, Janger operates as a socio-cultural arena that sustains community solidarity and preserves Osing collective memory.

Historically, Janger emerged from the agrarian life of the Osing people, where artistic expression was inseparable from agricultural cycles, ritual practices, and communal gatherings. Previous studies demonstrate that Osing performing arts function as cultural expressions deeply rooted in local customs, symbols, and social relations, serving as media of identity formation and intergenerational communication (Kristiani et al., 2021; Onuoha, 2025). The continuity of Janger has been maintained through various art communities, such as Janger Madyo Utomo, which represents historical continuity, and Janger Krishna Buana, which reflects regeneration and innovation in response to contemporary contexts. These dynamics indicate that Janger is not a static tradition but a living cultural practice shaped by

social transformation.

Recent scholarship increasingly conceptualizes performing arts as cultural–semiotic systems in which meaning is produced through the interaction of language, bodily movement, music, and visual aesthetics. Within this perspective, culture itself operates as a system of signs embedded in social practices, linking symbolic expression with material and social realities (Glukhova, 2025; J. Q. Wang, 2024). Studies of traditional performances demonstrate that language—through dialogue, narrative, song, and humor—functions as a central symbolic resource for articulating moral values, cultural narratives, and collective identity (Jama & Menggo, 2023; Kumar et al., 2025; Prihatin & Supratno, 2025). Language in performance is therefore not merely communicative, but semiotic, shaping how cultural meanings are produced, interpreted, and remembered by performers and audiences.

At the same time, research on regional language sustainability highlights increasing challenges posed by globalization and modernization (Mukhamdanah et al., 2025; Raharjo et al., 2025; Venkateswarlu, 2025). The dominance of national and global languages in education, media, and economic life has weakened the intergenerational transmission of local languages, particularly among younger generations. While existing studies emphasize the importance of education, policy, and community initiatives in language revitalization, they rarely examine performing arts as living linguistic spaces where local languages are actively practiced, negotiated, and transformed (Zustiyantoro et al., 2025). Consequently, the role of performance as a site of linguistic continuity and change remains underexplored.

The expansion of tourism in Banyuwangi has further reshaped the form and function of traditional arts, including Janger. Cultural commodification has become a defining feature of this transformation, as performances are adapted to meet tourist expectations and market demands (Saefudin, 2024). Scholars note that this process involves continuous negotiation between cultural authenticity and economic sustainability, where sacred elements tend to be preserved while profane aspects—such as performance structure, duration, and language use—are modified to enhance accessibility(Jamil et al., 2024; Samadilashkariani & Engström, 2025; Wen et al., 2025). In this context, language emerges as a critical site of adaptation, with performers increasingly incorporating Javanese and Indonesian to reach wider audiences, while Osing language use becomes more selective and situational.

Banyuwangi's broader economic shift from agrarian livelihoods to industrial and tourism-oriented development has also repositioned local artists as cultural mediators and informal educators who represent Osing identity to local, national, and global audiences. Studies show that performing artists increasingly function as cultural ambassadors, preserving traditional knowledge while simultaneously adapting it to contemporary contexts (Ayu et al., 2025). However, this adaptation coincides with declining proficiency in classical Osing vocabulary among younger performers, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of Osing language use within performance.

Despite a growing body of research on Osing culture, Banyuwangi tourism, and traditional performing arts, existing studies remain largely descriptive and fragmented. Most scholarship focuses on ritual transformation, festivalization, tourism management, or educational integration, while paying limited attention to the linguistic dimension of performance. In particular, previous studies have not systematically examined how Osing language functions across different performative forms—such as dialogue, narrative, song, and humor—nor how linguistic adaptation reflects broader negotiations of identity under tourism expansion and youth language shift. Moreover, while semiotic approaches have been applied to other traditional performances, their application to Janger remains limited, leaving unexplored the analytical potential of semiotics to reveal how linguistic signs encode cultural values and mediate between tradition and modernity.

Addressing this gap, the present study positions Janger Banyuwangi as a linguistic–semiotic arena in which Osing cultural identity is negotiated through performance. By integrating semiotic analysis with in-depth interviews with Janger artists and cultural actors, this study offers original insights into which Osing linguistic elements are preserved, transformed, or marginalized in contemporary performances. In particular, the study highlights the persistence of Osing language in musical forms alongside its gradual displacement in dialogic interactions, revealing how performers strategically negotiate language choice to balance cultural authenticity and audience accessibility. Through this approach, the study contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on language, performing arts, and cultural sustainability, while demonstrating the role of traditional performance as a strategic medium for

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regional language revitalization in a tourism-driven sociocultural context.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with semiotic analysis to examine the signs, symbols, and meanings of language in the performance of Janger Banyuwangi. Semiotics is used to explore denotative (literal) and connotative (cultural-ideological) meanings, so that the Janger language can be understood as a cultural medium of the Osing community.

Informants were selected by *purposive sampling* which included: Janger artists, cultural experts/traditional leaders, local audiences, and cultural academics. The number of informants is determined until the data is saturated.

The main instrument is the researcher as *a human instrument*, supported by semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, audio-visual recordings, and cultural documents (manuscripts, poems).

The research stages include: (1) preliminary studies, (2) field observations, (3) in-depth interviews, (4) documentation, and (5) data validation by *triangulation*.

Data analysis followed the identification of signs (verbal/nonverbal language), denotative analysis, connotative analysis, and interpretation of meaning associated with cultural values and Osing identity. The analysis process is carried out in a continuous manner with data reduction, presentation, and verification techniques

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language structure in Janger Banyuwangi

The Osing language now faces a serious challenge from the dominance of Javanese and Indonesian languages in socio-economic communication. This preference, according to (Patawari & Mamonto, 2023), arises because mastery of the dominant language is considered to open up wider opportunities. This is in line with an interview with Revelation Bustono, art performer Janger, who emphasized that the use of the Osing language in performances is decreasing. The younger generation has difficulty mastering the classic Osing vocabulary, so Javanese ngoko and Indonesian are more often used on stage.



Figure 1. *The resource person, Wahyu Bustono, a perpetrator from the Janger Khrisna Buana Association, played the role of Dagelan*

Phenomenon *language mixing* became an adaptation strategy in Janger, where dialogue is now dominated by Javanese and Indonesian, while Osing only appears in certain parts such as tembang or humor. (Napitupulu & Situmorang, 2022) emphasized that digitalization and media have also accelerated the shift in communication patterns, including the use of traditional languages. The source said that this mixing was carried out so that the performance was accepted across generations, but indirectly eroded Osing's position.

Education is an important factor, but there is no formal system that supports the learning of the Osing language or classical Javanese literature ((Hiswara et al., 2023)). However, performing arts remain a space for cultural education. According to the source, the commitment of Janger artists to maintain the sustainability of Osing, supported by the community, festivals, and regional policies. (Meighan, 2021) affirming the involvement of the younger generation as the key to revitalizing minority languages. Thus, Janger still plays a role as a medium for preserving Osing's identity in the midst of globalization.

Types of speech: narrative, dialogical, musical

Narrative in Janger. Narrative is a form of speech that serves to convey stories, moral messages, or cultural values. In the art of Janger Banyuwangi, the narrative form is present through the storyline of the performance, where the characters bring to life stories full of the values of the life of the Osing people. As (Ramli et al., 2021) emphasizing that narrative not only conveys stories, but also becomes a means of cultural transmission between generations. Interview results with Revelation Bustono, the artist Janger, asserts that although the classical Osing vocabulary is increasingly less understood by the younger generation, the narrative flow of Janger is maintained. For example, stories of struggle, love, and friendship are still staged, although sometimes spoken in Javanese or Indonesian. This shows that the narrative function remains at the core of the show, despite the shift in language.

Dialogue in Janger. Dialogue is the main medium of interaction in Janger. Dialogue between characters not only conveys stories, but also means of humor, social satirism, and cultural criticism. (Rahmawanto & Rahyono, 2019) emphasizing that dialogue in the performing arts contains a variety of speech actions that maintain the harmony of communication. The resource person explained that the current Janger dialogue is more often used in Javanese ngoko and Indonesian, because it is easier for viewers of all ages to understand. However, on some occasions, the Osing language still appears in distinctive expressions or in certain scenes that require local authenticity. This dialogue is a compromise point between the preservation of regional languages and the need for audience adaptation.

Music in Janger. Musical speech, such as song and song, is the most consistent element of displaying the Osing language. As explained in the literature ((Drake et al., 2019); (Baronenko et al., 2023)), music and singing strengthen memory, foster collective emotions, and strengthen cultural identity. Interviews with the source material show that Janger songs are still thick with Osing language, even more dominant than narrative dialogue. This is because the song is considered more beautiful, has aesthetic value, and is still accepted by the audience even though Osing's vocabulary is difficult to fully understand. Thus, the Osing language actually survived more strongly in the musical form than in the dialogical form.

The relationship between narrative, dialogue, and music in Janger reinforce each other. The story (narrative) is conveyed through conversations between characters (dialogical), and embellished by songs (musical). Like (Pamungkas et al., 2023) He emphasized that the integration of this variety of speech is the key to preserving cultural heritage. The speakers underlined that despite the shift in language to Javanese and Indonesian in narrative and dialogue, music remains the last bastion of the Osing language. Therefore, these three forms of speech are not only a means of communication, but also an arena for negotiating Banyuwangi's cultural identity in the midst of globalization.

The results of the analysis show that in Janger Banyuwangi: (1) Narrative functions as a speaker of cultural values, even though the language is increasingly shifting to Java and Indonesia. (2) Dialogic became a space for cross-cultural interaction, with the Osing language appearing in a limited way. (3) Musical is the main medium of preservation of the Osing language, as it remains predominantly used in songs.

Thus, Janger not only retained the performing art form, but also became a vital space for negotiations between the Osing tradition and the influence of the dominant language.

Symbolism in diction, local metaphors, and humor
Symbolism in diction
The diction in the Janger performance not only serves as a conveyor of message, but also is full of symbolic meaning that strengthens the Osing cultural identity. The choice of words in the Osing song, for example, often reflects the close relationship of society with nature, spirituality, and social harmony. As is the case (Hallett & Degani, 2020) emphasizing that symbolic language shapes social perception, in Janger the use of certain Osing vocabulary emphasizes the value of togetherness and a sense of pride in local cultural roots. From the interview, Revelation Bustono revealed that although the classic Osing vocabulary is increasingly difficult to understand by the younger generation, some terms are still retained because they have symbolic meanings. For example, certain terms about nature or social life are left in their original Osing form so that cultural value is not lost. This diction functions not just as words, but as an identity marker that distinguishes Janger Banyuwangi from other performing arts.

Local metaphor
Local metaphors in Janger become a bridge between the life experiences of the Osing people with universal themes such as love, struggle, or friendship. In line with research (Jang et al., 2015)) and (YÜCEL & Birdir, 2022), this cultural metaphor holds a deep meaning rooted in collective memory. In the interview, the resource person explained that metaphors often appear in verse and dialogue between characters. For example, a local proverb or parable that compares the journey of human life to the flow of a river or crops. This kind of metaphor not only embellishes the language, but also binds the audience to the context of the agrarian and social life of the Banyuwangi people. This shows that the Janger language functions as an educational medium and strengthens cultural identity.

Humor
Humor in Janger serves a dual purpose: as entertainment and a means of social criticism. Gatlin & Wanzek (2017) emphasize that dialect-based humor creates a variety of acceptance, but that's precisely where Janger's strength lies—

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because Osing's humor is able to bring the audience together through shared cultural references. The results of the interviews show that the hilarious dialogue between the characters in Janger now uses a lot of Javanese or Indonesian languages, so that it can be understood by all circles. However, when Osing's idiom-based humor emerged, local audiences responded with a more intimate signature laugh. This kind of humor is not only funny, but also reflects the way the Osing people subtly criticize social phenomena—for example, satire on economic conditions, bureaucracy, or daily life.

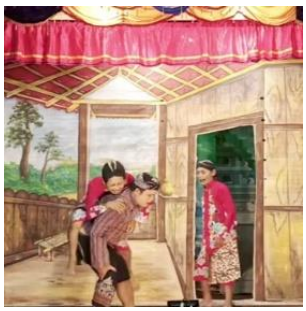


Figure 2. *Pak Edi plays a role in the Art of Janger Banji plays a comedian*

The relationship between symbolism in diction, local metaphors, and humor complements each other in Janger's performance. The three strengthen the function of language as a medium of local culture, maintaining Osing's identity in the midst of a shift towards Javanese and Indonesian. Symbolic diction presents cultural roots, local metaphors connect life experiences with universal values, while humor maintains social appeal and relevance. Thus, the results of the interviews confirm that the language in Janger is not only a means of communication, but a symbolic arena in which the identity, memory, and social criticism of the Osing people are realized.

Language as a medium of cultural heritage

Janger Banyuwangi functions as a medium of folklore transmission, moral teaching, as well as a marker of cultural identity. As stated by Purandina & AR (2022), folklore doubles as a means of language and moral values, this can be seen in Janger which contains legends, love stories, and stories of human relationships with nature. The speakers emphasized that the Osing language, although some classical terms are starting to be abandoned, is still maintained in the verses and dialogues to keep the folklore alive, in line with (Farisi et al., 2024) which emphasizes the importance of folklore in language education.

In addition, Janger folklore contains moral values. (Prihapsari et al., 2021) and (Sukmawan & Setyowati, 2017) Calling folklore full of ethical messages and environmental concerns. The resource person gave an example of social satire in humorous dialogue, such as criticism of village officials, the economy, and the behavior of young people. Thus, the Janger language serves as a "moral mirror" that instills good manners, togetherness, and love of tradition.

Folklore also maintains cultural identity (Zakirova et al., 2023). The resource person emphasized that even though Javanese and Indonesian are mixed, Osing is still the core of Janger. Local metaphors about nature and agrarian nature, as noted (Naufalia et al., 2022), representing Osing's identity.

Overall, the Janger language unites folklore, morals, and customs: maintaining the continuity of ancestral stories, instilling ethics through humor, and strengthening Banyuwangi's identity.

The Banyuwangi Janger performance is an important means in transmitting the collective memory of the Osing people. As explained (Wertsch, 2008) Collective memory is built through narrative. This is evident in Janger's dialogues and jokes which, according to the source, are not just entertainment, but store stories and collective experiences. Dialogue that satirizes village life and the behavior of the younger generation serves as moral education, in harmony with (Mellado et al., 2024) which emphasizes the role of dialogical interaction in validating identity. Thus, the Osing language in Janger binds the younger generation with the memory of their ancestors.

In addition to speech, the song Janger plays a role in strengthening cultural memory. (Brockmeier, 2010) emphasized that music has affective power, and the speaker explained that Janger poetry in the Osing language is full of natural, ancestry, and agrarian symbols. The metaphor of rice fields, rivers, and mountains teaches harmony with nature while strengthening cultural identity.

However, the interviews show a challenge: Javanese and Indonesian are increasingly dominant. However, in line with the (Cabillas, 2014), dialogue between tradition and contemporary context actually opens up opportunities for revitalization. The resource person assessed that digital media and documentation can introduce Janger to the younger generation without losing its local value.

Thus, the Osing language in Janger serves a dual function: as a transmission of collective

narratives and musical media that conveys moral values, cultural symbols, and Osing identity in the midst of globalization.

The language in Janger Banyuwangi plays an important role in strengthening community identity and solidarity. (Farisi et al., 2024)emphasizing that folklore strengthens language learning in a social context. This is seen in the speech and singing of Janger which, according to the source, is a means of inheriting local morals and wisdom. As one of the informants said, the joke dialogue between Janger actors often includes social innuendo and behavioral criticism, so that the Osing language functions as a "moral laboratory" (Mendelson-Maoz) where people negotiate shared values and identities.

The value of togetherness is also present in the lyrics of the song. (Situmorang & Sinaga, 2023)shows that folklore strengthens collective beliefs, in line with the speaker's explanation that Janger singing contains prayers, advice, and agrarian symbols that reflect mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and harmony with nature. (Widiastuti, 2019)affirming folklore as a forum for artistic expression that supports social stability, as evidenced by the function of Janger as a space for intergenerational togetherness.

The Osing language is also a tool of social solidarity. (Anggraeni et al., 2019) emphasizing folklore as a medium of moral education, and interviews show that Janger is still used in village events to educate the younger generation. Although Javanese and Indonesian languages are present, the informant emphasized that Osing remains the main identity marker. This is in line with (Suraya et al., 2021)which emphasizes the role of local languages in strengthening the function of folklore as a social unifier.

Thus, the Osing language in Janger has a dual function: to strengthen moral communication, reflect local wisdom, and maintain the solidarity of the Banyuwangi community in the midst of changing times.

Local language dynamics in the modern context

Adaptation of the Janger language amid the demands of commercialization and tourism

The language in Janger Banyuwangi functions to maintain cultural cohesion while adapting to the audience. (Ilham, 2018) noted that the structure of Janger allows for the integration of Osing, Javanese, and Indonesian. The interview confirms that bilingual practice is not just communication, but a strategy to keep the audience connected. However, the speakers emphasized that the Osing language remains the core of the performance, especially in poetry and prayer. If the core part is fully translated, according to the informant, "Osing's spirit will be lost."

Commercialization also influenced the form of Janger. (Ilham, 2021) He said the change was triggered by the market, in line with the findings of the interview that the duration is now shortened, costumes are embellished, and language is simplified for tourists. A Janger perpetrator said, "If it is for tourists... We take the core of the story, the music is amplified, and the language is made simple." Although it is profitable, some community leaders are worried that the philosophical meaning of Janger will be eroded.

Tourism has become a double-edged sword: providing income, but at the risk of turning Janger into just an entertainment spectacle. The resource person said that the Osing language, which used to be a means of moral education, now tends to be reduced to a cultural ornament. However, the interviews show that there is a collective awareness of maintaining authenticity. The cultural figure emphasized, "If it is not the Osing people who take care of it, Janger may soon belong to an outsider." The younger generation is encouraged to get involved through digital media and education in schools. With this strategy, Janger can balance the need for commercialization with the preservation of the Osing language and values.

The shift in the function of language: from sacred-communal to mass-entertainment

The shift in the function of language from a sacred-communal tool to a medium of mass entertainment represents the evolution of cultural narratives and social values. This transformation can be studied through a variety of perspectives, including globalization, technological advancements, and changing consumer preferences, which are reshaping how language is used in cultural products.

From sacred communication to mass media

Historically, language served as a medium in sacred rituals and communal bonds, reinforcing beliefs and shared identities. In many cultures, language is primarily used to convey spiritual teachings, moral values, and cultural heritage. (Yahya et al., 2021)emphasizes that Arabic, for example, traditionally has a sacred character in religious contexts, shaping its use in formal rituals and binding communities together. Similarly, in the Janger tradition in Banyuwangi, language was initially closely related to ritual functions,

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collective gatherings, and strengthening local values. Based on an interview with Bu Sri (Janger art performer in Banyuwangi, August 24, 2025), Janger does not solely function as entertainment, but also as a medium to convey social messages, moral teachings, and cultural criticism through the Osing language.



Figure 3. *The resource person was Sri Mushikawati's mother who played the role of a Female Janger from the Madyo Utomo Janger Association*

Dialogue in the performance acts as a "medium of inner communication of the Osing people," which affirms the sacred and communal function of language (Interview with Bu Sri, August 24, 2025). However, as mass media and tourism develop, the function of language in Janger has shifted. The results of the interviews show that the use of language is now often adjusted to the audience, including the use of Indonesian or Javanese to make it easier for tourists to understand (Interview with Pak Budi, Janger artist, August 24, 2025). This reflects the transition of Janger from the sacred and communal arena to the realm of mass entertainment that is open to a wider audience.



Figure 4. *Pak Budi in his role as the King in the show Janger Madyo Utomo*

Cultural and economic implications

The commercialization of language appears in various cultural contexts, where entertainment is the main means of cultural dissemination. (He et al., 2021) noted that the transformation of cultural spaces into mass entertainment arenas reflects the increasing role of the cultural industry in shaping urban culture. In Banyuwangi, this can be seen in Janger's adaptation into tourism and festivals. The interview data confirms that artists are now facing a dilemma: how to maintain the uniqueness of the Osing language while meeting market demands. According to Pak Ahmad (Banyuwangi cultural observer, August 25, 2025), the Osing language is sometimes combined with other languages for communicative purposes, but the risk is "the erosion of the Osing identity itself" (Interview with Pak Ahmad, August 25, 2025). This shift is in line with the argument (Lobo & Bhat, 2021) that cultural narratives are increasingly packaged to prioritize the value of entertainment and mass consumption rather than their original sacred functions.



Figure 5. *Ahmad Hafis Priyananta a young Janger in the Madyo Utomo Janger performance*

Resilience of cultural identity

Despite being commodified, language still has the potential to reflect and strengthen cultural identity. (H. Wang, 2024) It shows that fandom culture and audience participation allow people to reclaim identity through entertainment. In the context of Janger, the interview revealed that there is an awareness among art actors to maintain the spirit of the Osing language. For example, even though tourists understand Indonesian better, art actors still insert idioms, proverbs, and humor in the Osing language as markers of identity (Interview with Mrs. Sri, August 24, 2025).



Figure 6. *Sri Mushikawati's mother when playing the role of a female Janger*

Furthermore, Mrs. Sri emphasized that the

language in Janger is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of Osing's pride that must be passed on to the younger generation (Interview with Mrs. Sri, August 24, 2025). This process is in line with the idea (Peng, 2023)about "cultural translation," in which local languages are reinterpreted in modern entertainment formats without completely losing their traditional functions. The shift in the function of language from sacred-communal to mass entertainment in Janger Banyuwangi shows the complex interaction between cultural expression and commercial interests. Interviews with the speakers confirmed that although the language in Janger is now influenced by the demands of tourism and mass entertainment, language still plays an important role in maintaining the identity and solidarity of the Osing people. Balancing modern adaptation and preservation of traditional values, the use of language in Janger remains a bridge between the sacred past and the globally connected present.

Community response to language changes in performance

Society's response to language change in performance reflects the complex interplay between cultural evolution, identity reinforcement, and adaptation strategies in the face of external influences such as commercialization and tourism. This response highlights the dynamics of linguistic practice while affirming the importance of language as a communal heritage.

Cultural identity and language change

With the advent of commercialized performances, local communities are often faced with the dilemma of how to adapt their language practices to reach a wider audience. (Heller, 2010) discuss the commodification of language and its impact on cultural exchange, particularly the tension between maintaining authenticity and attracting tourists. The experience of the Osing people in the Janger performance reflects this phenomenon, where traditional narratives and language are at risk of being marginalized by the demands of mass entertainment. A number of local stakeholders also often express concerns about the preservation of cultural identity amid these changes. In the interview, Pak Ahmad (cultural observer, August 25, 2025) emphasized that the use of Indonesian or Javanese in Janger does make it easier for tourists to understand, but "there is a risk that Osing's identity will be further sidelined if the Osing language is only treated as a distraction." This shows the community's awareness of the importance of maintaining authenticity even though it has to adapt to market needs.

Community adaptation and participation

Along with the changing context of the show, the community's approach to the use of language in Janger has also evolved. Adaptation is seen in an effort to integrate contemporary language and themes while maintaining core traditional elements. For example, Pak Budi (artist Janger, August 24, 2025) revealed that "we often insert slang for young people on the sidelines of dialogue, so that they feel close, but we still include the idiom of Osing as a characteristic." This shows an adaptation strategy that not only adapts to the new generation, but also affirms local identity. In addition, successful adaptations typically involve the active participation of the community. By engaging local artists and younger generations in shaping the narrative and dialogue of the performance, the community creates an inclusive space that embraces innovation without abandoning tradition. Bu Sri (Janger artist, August 24, 2025) added that young people are now "more daring to experiment with the language in Janger, but they are also proud when they can use the vocabulary of Osing on stage." This shows the inheritance process that goes hand in hand with creativity.

Cultural mediation in the context of tourism

The role of tourism as a driver of linguistic change in Janger's performance also demands a critical response from the community. Although tourism can strengthen the local economy, there is a risk of simplification or even distortion of cultural meaning. Therefore, a communication strategy is needed that not only presents Janger as entertainment, but also as a means of cultural education. In this context, the idea of (Byram & Wagner, 2018) about language teaching as a contextual practice that encourages intercultural dialogue to be relevant. In a similar way, Janger can be used as a medium that not only entertains tourists, but also introduces the Osing language and local cultural values. Mr. Ahmad (August 25, 2025) suggests that each Janger performance "comes with a brief introduction to the meaning of the Osing vocabulary used, so that tourists learn something, not just watch the dance. Overall, the Osing community's response to the language change in the Janger performance is characterized by active involvement in maintaining a balance between adaptation and preservation. Through the integration of contemporary linguistic elements,

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the participation of the younger generation, and awareness of the impact of tourism, communities seek to maintain their cultural identity. This dynamic confirms that even though Janger is in an ever-changing linguistic landscape, the Osing people still have cultural resilience that allows them to maintain authenticity while adapting to the times.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that language in Janger performances functions as a central cultural mechanism through which the Osing community constructs, preserves, and negotiates its collective identity. Beyond its communicative role, the Osing language embedded in Janger narratives conveys moral values, historical consciousness, and local worldviews, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and intergenerational continuity. As an oral and performative tradition, Janger operates as a dynamic space for cultural transmission, allowing the community to maintain cultural resilience amid ongoing social and linguistic change.

The findings further highlight the importance of sustaining Janger through intergenerational engagement and institutional support. Actively involving younger generations in performance-based cultural practices is crucial for ensuring linguistic continuity, while supportive cultural policies from local governments and institutions can strengthen the revitalization of regional language–based performing arts. Together, these efforts position Janger not only as a heritage performance but also as a strategic medium for safeguarding the Osing language and sustaining cultural identity in contemporary contexts.

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