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MAINTAINING AND INHERITING DIALECTAL TRADITIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF LANGUAGE ECOLOGY

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Abstract: This study investigates the challenges and strategies for preserving and passing down local dialects in South Sumatra, focusing on language ecology. Findings from interviews, field observations, and local document analysis reveal a significant decline in dialect usage, largely confined to informal family interactions, while Bahasa Indonesia and English dominate educational and professional contexts. Social and linguistic changes, influenced by urbanization and migration, further marginalize dialects. The study identifies several strategies for preserving dialects, including incorporating dialects into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, dialect digitization, media development, and community involvement. EFL teachers can use local dialects to teach English, integrating cultural elements such as folk tales to enhance students' language skills and promote linguistic diversity. Despite the challenges posed by globalization, these localized approaches can help maintain dialects in South Sumatra. The research provides valuable insights into the preservation of dialects in the region and offers practical implications for EFL education to support linguistic and cultural heritage.
Keywords: *language ecology; dialect culture; protection; inheritance; English foreign language.*

INTRODUCTION

Dialect culture is one of the most valuable linguistic and cultural heritages, reflecting the historical, geographical, and social development of a community (Vintoniak et al., 2024; Han, 2023; Martínez, 2024). In Indonesia, especially in South Sumatra, local dialects such as Palembang Malay, Ogan, Komering, and Musi play an essential role in reflecting cultural identity and preserving traditional values. These dialects contain unique phonological systems, lexical resources, and cultural expressions that serve as markers of local wisdom and social cohesion (Tanhar et al., 2022; Kartikasari et al., 2020; Hetilaniar et al., 2023). Local dialects in Indonesia not only reflect linguistic variation but also serve as a tool for intergenerational connection, preserving local wisdom and regional culture (Irvan, 2024; Ahmadi et al., 2024; Putri, 2024; Dacholfany, 2020).

However, amid globalization and modernization, dialect culture faces an unprecedented crisis of marginalization and decline, similar to many other places around the world (Vyas, 2024; Sun et al., 2023; Mohyeddin, 2024). The spread of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, as the primary medium of education, media, and inter-ethnic communication has gradually reduced the use of local dialects. Sari et al. (2025) explains that in many regions of Indonesia, including South Sumatra, Bahasa Indonesia dominates daily life, leading to a significant decline in the use of regional languages, particularly among younger generations. Urbanization and modernization in Palembang and other areas of South Sumatra have further accelerated this decline, creating an urgent need to preserve and transmit these dialect traditions to future generations. Urbanization causes shifts in language practices, as speakers of local dialects feel pressured to adapt to the wider standard language, Bahasa Indonesia (Pepinsky et al., 2024; Abatahian et al., 2021; Yunidar, 2025; Ahmed, 2024). The dominance of standard language in education, media, and public communication further reduces the number of

dialect speakers, especially among younger generations who are increasingly exposed to Bahasa Indonesia in both formal and informal settings. This situation leads to a sharp decline in the intergenerational transmission of dialects, which threatens not only linguistic diversity but also the cultural values embedded within dialect traditions (Evizariza, 2024; Irsan, 2019; Joshi et al., 2024).

The challenges faced by dialect culture in South Sumatra are multidimensional. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the decline in dialect speakers is closely tied to urbanization and migration, which push people to adopt the standard language in order to integrate into new social environments. Wicaksono (2024) adds that migration to large cities in Indonesia, including Palembang, accelerates the adoption of the standard language, impacting the survival of local languages. Additionally, environmental changes brought about by modernization, such as the transformation of urban planning, public spaces, and modes of transportation, have reduced the natural contexts where dialects once thrived (Panamuan et al., 2025; Ratningsih et al., 2024; Nasution & Nirmala, 2022). Changes in public spaces and the use of language in formal settings, such as in offices or schools, are increasingly dominated by Bahasa Indonesia, which further limits opportunities for dialect use (Sagala & Riyadi, 2020; Alfien & Rakhmawati, 2024).

Increased reliance on standardized language in public signage, official communication, and social interactions weakens the ecological balance of dialects. Maharani et al. (2025) states that media and digital platforms play a significant role in reinforcing the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the primary language of communication, while dialects are often overlooked or viewed as less relevant in modern contexts. At the same time, dialects are often perceived as rural or less prestigious compared to the standard language, which pressures individuals to shift their language use for professional advancement and social recognition (Irsan, 2019; Joshi et al., 2024; Shen, 2025). Media and digital platforms further strengthen this perception by prioritizing the standard language, which is considered more modern and widely understood by the public (Wahyuanto, 2025; Yunidar, 2025; Widayanthi & Wulandari, 2025). As a result, dialect culture is increasingly losing its visibility, cultural identity, and vitality in contemporary society.

From a language ecology perspective, dialects are an integral part of the linguistic ecosystem, which consists of various languages and varieties interacting in dynamic balance. Just as biodiversity is crucial for the sustainability of ecological systems, linguistic diversity is vital for the richness and resilience of cultural systems. The decline of linguistic diversity disrupts cultural ecology, as language plays a crucial role in preserving collective memory, identity, and social cohesion (Nagao, 2023; Khasinah et al., 2024; Susandhika, 2022). The decline of dialects not only threatens the survival of linguistic forms but also disrupts the cultural ecology that sustains collective memory, identity, and social cohesion (Bate, 2020; Hariati, 2025; Nasarudin et al., 2025). Therefore, preserving dialect culture is not only about conserving a linguistic code but also about maintaining cultural diversity, promoting intergenerational heritage, and strengthening local identity in the face of globalization (Angkasaa et al., 2023; Hijeat & Al-Bazzaz, 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2024).

In the context of English Language Teaching (EFL), understanding and preserving local dialects plays a crucial role in enhancing multilingualism and cultural awareness in the classroom (Ratri et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025; Irvan, 2024; Arhire, 2023; Mckinney et al., 2024). Integrating local dialects into EFL instruction can enrich linguistic diversity and cultural inclusivity, which are essential for comprehensive language education (Lukman, 2021; Kartikasari et al., 2020; Joshi et al., 2024). The maintenance of dialects can also deepen students' understanding of language structures and strengthen their connection to their cultural heritage, which contributes to better learning outcomes and engagement in language learning.

EFL educators can incorporate local dialects into the curriculum by using them as teaching resources for contrastive analysis, where students compare their local dialects to English to understand structural differences and similarities. For instance, Palembang Malay can be explored as a resource for teaching vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and pronunciation, allowing students to relate English to their native dialects, enhancing their linguistic awareness and multilingual competencies. Practical strategies for teachers include using local folklore, proverbs, and stories in dialects to teach language skills, as these cultural elements can make learning English more engaging and meaningful for students (Angelina & Handayani, 2025; Marwa et al., 2021).

Furthermore, EFL policies and practices in

Indonesia should integrate local language ecology into the broader educational framework. This includes developing policies that acknowledge the role of dialects in enriching linguistic diversity and supporting language revitalization initiatives in the classroom. By doing so, teachers and administrators can create a more inclusive and diverse learning environment that respects and integrates local cultural identities while fostering proficiency in English.

This research aims to analyze the issues facing dialect culture in the increasingly globalized language environment, focusing on the declining number of speakers, the transformation of language environments, the reduction of dialect use in various contexts, shifts in cultural identity, and the impact of media. Using the framework of language ecology, this study highlights the interdependence between dialects, cultural practices, and social environments in South Sumatra. The ultimate goal is to provide strategies and countermeasures for maintaining and inheriting dialect traditions in a sustainable way, thereby contributing to the enrichment of linguistic diversity and revitalizing cultural heritage in Indonesia. Recognizing the vital role of dialects in EFL pedagogy, this study offers a unique contribution by proposing the integration of dialect ecology into language education policies, which not only preserves cultural heritage but also supports proficiency in English. Unlike previous research, such as that by Pepinsky et al. (2024) and Sari et al. (2025), which focus separately on documenting dialects or preservation strategies, this study advocates for the direct application of language ecology theory in the context of English language education, identifying both challenges and opportunities faced by key stakeholders in the effort to preserve dialects in Indonesia.

The question research is: How do teachers, students, and community members in South Sumatra perceive the role of local dialects within the ecology of English language education, and what practical strategies emerge from these perceptions?

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the framework of language ecology as its theoretical foundation. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring socio-cultural phenomena related to the preservation and transmission of dialect culture in the context of modernization and globalization.

This research was conducted in South Sumatra, focusing on the continuity of local dialects such as Palembang Malay, Ogan, Komering, and Musi. The region was selected because it has become one of the centers of economic growth and rapid urbanization, which has significantly altered patterns of language use in daily life. In addition, the increasing number of migrants, particularly from the Chinese community, has influenced the dynamics of language use in this area. The interaction between local communities and newcomers has led to a shift in language preference, where Indonesian and the languages of migrant communities increasingly dominate public spaces, while the use of local dialects has gradually declined.

The research subjects include native speakers of local dialects across generations (older and younger speakers), cultural figures, educators, and migrant communities who are engaged in daily social interaction. This composition allows the study to capture a comprehensive picture of the patterns of dialect transmission, perceptions of the value of local dialects, and the challenges arising from language contact between indigenous South Sumatran communities and migrants.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to select subjects relevant to the focus of this study. Participants were chosen based on the following criteria:

Age: Participants include both young (under 30) and older (over 50) speakers to explore differences in language use and perceptions of dialects.

Social Background: Indigenous communities (native dialect speakers) and migrant communities (especially from the Chinese community) to examine the dynamics of language shift.

Education and Occupation: Educators, cultural figures, and members of the general public who are involved in social interactions in public spaces.

Below is a demographic overview of the participants involved in this study:

Table 1. *Demographic overview of the participants*

Participant Group	Number of Participants	Age Group	Social Background
Local Dialect Speakers	10	50+ years	Indigenous South Sumatran communities
Young Local Dialect	10	18-30 years	Indigenous South Sumatran

Speakers			communities
Migrant Community (Chinese)	5	18-60 years	Migrant community
Educators and Cultural Figures	5	30-60 years	Teachers and cultural figures

In-depth interviews: conducted with dialect speakers across generations to examine patterns of transmission, usage, and perceptions of the dialects (Kvale, 2021).

Participant observation: the researcher directly observes the use of dialects in social domains such as family, local communities, and cultural activities (Van Maanen, 2025).

Documentation and literature analysis: collecting data from documents, media, and previous research related to dialect conditions and language ecology.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on patterns of dialect use, factors contributing to their decline, and strategies employed by communities to preserve them (Susanto et al., 2023). The results of the analysis were then interpreted through the perspective of language ecology to understand how dialects interact with their social, cultural, and modern media environments (Han, 2023; Goatly, 2022).

To ensure validity, the study applies triangulation of sources and methods by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, discussions with language experts and cultural figures were conducted to strengthen the credibility of the research findings.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved the following steps: (1) Familiarization with Data: The researcher read interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents in-depth to understand the context and meaning within the collected data. (2) Coding the Data: Important quotes related to dialect use, perceptions of dialects, and factors contributing to their decline were marked for coding. (3) Identifying Key Themes: Major themes were identified from the data, such as "Language Shift," "The Role of Media in Dialect Preservation," and "Intergenerational Dialect Transmission." (4) Analysis and Interpretation: The identified themes were interpreted through the lens of language ecology theory to understand how dialects interact with their social, cultural, and modern media environments.

The researcher's positionality is significant in this study as it concerns cultural identity and dialects. As an individual from outside South Sumatra, the researcher is aware of potential biases in perceiving local dialects and the influence of media. Therefore, the researcher has made efforts to remain objective and reflective throughout the study. The researcher also engaged in discussions with language experts and cultural figures to enrich the perspectives and ensure that the interpretation of the data remains valid and credible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview result

The findings of this study reveal several key challenges and potential strategies related to the preservation and inheritance of dialectal traditions in South Sumatra, particularly within the framework of language ecology. Data obtained from interviews with dialect speakers, field observations, and analysis of local documents provide a clear picture of the current situation of dialects in this region.

Declining number of speakers

A central finding of this study is the significant decline in the number of dialect speakers, which has become an urgent issue. Interviews with dialect speakers across Palembang, Ogan, and Musi reveal that the use of dialects is largely limited to informal family settings, while Bahasa Indonesia dominates in schools, workplaces, and public communication. The perception that Bahasa Indonesia and English are more useful for academic and professional advancement has contributed to this decline.

Key Theme: "Language Prestige Economy" One participant, Mr. AD, a Palembang dialect speaker, noted:

> "Nowadays, young people rarely speak in dialect. They still use it at home, but at school and work, they prefer Bahasa Indonesia or even English."

This reflects the notion of "language prestige economy," where dialects are viewed as less valuable in formal or professional contexts, making younger generations reluctant to maintain their use.

Changes in social and linguistic environment

Field observations highlight that traditional social spaces where dialects once thrived, such as local markets, community gatherings, and cultural

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festivals, have diminished. In urbanized areas like Palembang, the presence of migrant communities especially the Chinese community has shifted the linguistic ecology, resulting in the widespread use of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin in public spaces.

Key Theme: "Urbanization and Language Shift"

Mrs. SR, an active community member in Palembang, explained:

> "In the past, when going to the market or cultural festivals, we would often hear people talking in dialect. Now, people are more likely to speak in a mix of Bahasa Indonesia, English, or even Mandarin."

The shift towards dominant languages in urban spaces highlights the broader impact of urbanization and globalization on the preservation of local dialects.

Reduced functional roles of dialects

In the education sector, observations in several elementary schools in Palembang reveal that the use of dialects is not encouraged. Teachers often view dialects as informal and less appropriate for formal learning contexts.

Key Theme: "Home-School Dichotomy"

A teacher at SMA Negeri 3 Palembang explained:

> "We prioritize Bahasa Indonesia and English according to the context, as they are considered more suitable for formal learning. Dialects are seen as less relevant."

This reflects a dichotomy between the home (where dialects are still used) and school environments, where the emphasis on standardized languages limits the functional role of dialects in education.

Changes in cultural identity

Many young speakers in South Sumatra acknowledge that dialects are part of their cultural heritage, but they prefer to use Bahasa Indonesia and English in daily life. They associate the latter languages with modernity, mobility, and social prestige, which further diminishes the cultural attachment to local dialects.

Key Theme: "Cultural Shifts and Language Identity"

AM, a student fluent in the Komering dialect but preferring Bahasa Indonesia or English outside the home, said:

> "At home, I still use the dialect, but outside, I use Bahasa Indonesia or English for communication. It feels more suitable for the professional world."

This reflects the erosion of cultural attachment to dialects, where language use is increasingly disconnected from cultural identity.

Media impact on dialects

The analysis of media content shows that mainstream media in South Sumatra predominantly use Bahasa Indonesia, often mixed with English. Television, radio, and digital platforms rarely feature programs in local dialects, leading to further diminishing dialect exposure among younger generations.

Key Theme: "Media and Language Ecology"

Mr. JY, a cultural observer, noted:

> "We've tried to include dialects in our cultural performances, but in mainstream media, there's almost nothing. Young people prefer watching programs in Bahasa Indonesia or foreign shows."

This points to how media consumption shapes language preferences, reinforcing the dominance of standardized languages and reducing the role of dialects in public discourse.

Strategies for dialect preservation and inheritance

Based on interviews, field observations, and document analysis, several strategies were identified to preserve and inherit dialect traditions in South Sumatra:

Dialect education

Introducing dialect education in schools, such as through storytelling competitions or cultural programs, can motivate younger generations to appreciate and use local dialects.

Key Theme: "Dialect Education as Empowerment"

As the principal of SMA Negeri 3 Palembang stated:

> "We want to hold a storytelling competition using the local dialect so that children can learn about and take pride in their language. Not only that, as teachers, we also want to start using the local dialect as a resource for teaching English."

This strategy positions dialect education as an empowering tool that bridges local language

preservation with formal education.

Dialect digitization
Digitizing dialects through online platforms and language learning applications can help preserve them by documenting linguistic data and making it accessible to younger generations.

Key Theme: "Digital Preservation of Language"
RA, a local activist, shared:

> "We've started recording folk tales in the Komering dialect and sharing them on YouTube. Many young people are interested in learning, and we also add English subtitles so that South Sumatra's local culture can be seen by people outside the country."

By leveraging digital platforms, local dialects can reach a global audience, while also engaging younger generations with their heritage.

Dialect research and protection
Dialect research is vital for documentation and protection. The establishment of institutions dedicated to dialect research would further support the systematic documentation and preservation of dialects.

Key Theme: "Institutional Support for Dialect Preservation"

Mr. DD, a local dialect researcher, emphasized:

> "The local government should support dialect research by establishing a dedicated institution focused on documenting local languages. Dialects are valuable cultural heritage. Without proper documentation, we will lose much important information for future generations."

Establishing formal research institutions will provide institutional backing for dialect preservation efforts.

Dialect media development
Developing media that uses dialects, such as local radio shows or TV programs, can effectively introduce dialects to a wider audience and raise awareness about their importance.

Key Theme: "Media as a Vehicle for Language Revitalization"

Mrs. SK, a cultural observer in Palembang, said:

> "Media based on dialects, such as radio programs using local languages, are very important to introduce dialects to a wider audience. Social media campaigns can be an effective way to attract young people's attention so that they can see the importance of preserving this language."

Media campaigns can create platforms for dialect use in mainstream culture.

Increasing the role of parents
Parents play a crucial role in transmitting dialects to their children through daily conversation and cultural activities like storytelling or singing in the dialect.

Key Theme: "Parental Role in Language Transmission"

Mrs. R, a housewife in Palembang, shared:

> "As parents, we have a big responsibility to teach our children about the dialect. I always try to speak to my children in the dialect daily and even teach them songs and folk tales in our local language. In this way, I hope they will feel proud and continue to preserve the language."

Parents are seen as the primary agents in maintaining dialect use across generations.

Establishing dialect communities
Creating communities centered around dialects can serve as cultural hubs for the preservation and promotion of dialects through arts events or competitions.

Key Theme: "Community-based Language Preservation"

Mr. JY, a community leader, emphasized:

> "We have formed a dialect community as a cultural center here, a place where people can gather, share stories, and celebrate our language. We also often hold arts events, such as drama and music, all in the local dialect. This is our way to ensure that this language stays alive among the community, especially young people."

By establishing dialect communities, these spaces can serve as a platform for language revitalization.

The findings in South Sumatra highlight that while globalization and urbanization pose significant challenges to the survival of local dialects, strategies such as dialect education, digitization, media development, and community involvement can help preserve and pass on dialect traditions. Through these efforts, local dialects can continue to thrive within an increasingly

modernized and globalized social and cultural landscape.

Observational results

The observation conducted across various regions in South Sumatra, particularly in Palembang, Ogan, and Musi, revealed significant shifts in the use of local dialects, highlighting the growing marginalization of these dialects in public spaces and the increasing dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English.

Family and informal settings

In family settings, dialects continue to be used, particularly among older generations. However, even in these environments, younger speakers tend to switch to Bahasa Indonesia when communicating with peers or when engaging in discussions related to schoolwork or professional aspirations. This shift is particularly noticeable in urbanized areas like Palembang, where young people, even within their homes, view Bahasa Indonesia as a more practical language for their future.

For example, in an observation of a family gathering in Palembang, an elderly family member initiated a conversation in the Palembang dialect. However, the younger family members, while understanding the dialect, responded in Bahasa Indonesia. This exchange was not based on a lack of understanding, but rather a preference for a language they deemed more modern and socially advantageous. This interaction illustrates the ongoing shift in linguistic practices, where dialects are often relegated to informal, familial contexts, and more prestigious languages dominate public and professional discourse.

Schools and workplaces

In educational settings, particularly in primary and secondary schools, the use of dialects is noticeably absent. Teachers and students primarily use Bahasa Indonesia for formal interactions, and English is favored in subjects related to international curriculum or foreign languages. Observations in several classrooms in Palembang revealed that students are not encouraged to speak in their local dialects, as teachers view it as informal or unprofessional. One observation in an eighth-grade classroom at SMP Negeri 6 Palembang showed that when a student used the Palembang dialect in a group discussion, their classmates immediately switched to Bahasa Indonesia, and the teacher gently reminded them to use the national language for the sake of clarity and respect for formal learning.

Traditional markets and cultural festivals

Once vibrant spaces for dialect use, traditional markets and cultural festivals now largely feature interactions in Bahasa Indonesia, and in some cases, English. In Palembang's 16 Ilir Market, a historically important site for the local community, the atmosphere was dominated by the use of Bahasa Indonesia. While older vendors still used the Palembang dialect when speaking to fellow locals, interactions with younger shoppers who were more inclined to speak in Bahasa Indonesia or English reflected a broader trend of linguistic shift. Additionally, the presence of migrant communities, including the Chinese community, further contributed to this change. Vendors from Chinese backgrounds were observed switching between Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, and English depending on the customer’s language preference, creating a linguistically hybrid environment that marginalized local dialects.

At cultural festivals, which once showcased local dialects through performances, storytelling, and music, there was a noticeable shift towards incorporating Bahasa Indonesia and even English. A particular event, the "Festival of South Sumatran Culture," which traditionally included performances in local dialects, featured mostly Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of performance, with a few segments in English to attract a broader audience. Interviews with cultural figures confirmed that the festival’s organizers had shifted to these languages to make the events more accessible to a wider, younger, and more cosmopolitan audience.

Influence of migrant communities

The influx of migrant communities, especially from the Chinese diaspora, has accelerated the shift towards Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin in public spaces. In a neighborhood in Palembang with a significant Chinese community, it was observed that public interactions, including those in markets, restaurants, and even community meetings, were conducted in a mix of Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. Dialects, especially those spoken by indigenous South Sumatran communities, were noticeably absent from these interactions. This reflects how the language ecology in South Sumatra has been shaped by globalization and migration, where local dialects are gradually being displaced by languages associated with economic opportunity,

social prestige, and cultural integration.

The observational results reveal that globalization and urbanization have significantly altered the linguistic ecology of South Sumatra. Traditional spaces where local dialects once thrived such as family settings, markets, cultural festivals, and schools are increasingly dominated by Bahasa Indonesia, English, and even Mandarin. This shift is driven by factors such as social prestige, economic opportunity, and the influence of migrant communities, which have contributed to the decline of dialect usage in both public and private spheres. The interactions observed, particularly in family settings, educational institutions, and cultural events, underscore the complex dynamics of language use in a rapidly modernizing region.

Local document

Documents obtained from the South Sumatra Department of Education and annual reports from local media provide a clear picture of the institutionalized marginalization of local dialects. A critical analysis of these documents reveals not only the prioritization of Bahasa Indonesia and English but also the discursive framing of language as a tool for modernization, economic mobility, and social prestige, while local dialects are framed as informal or irrelevant in formal contexts.

Educational policy documents

The policy documents from the South Sumatra Department of Education emphasize that Bahasa Indonesia is the primary language of instruction in schools. While this is consistent with national language policies aimed at fostering unity and national identity, the documents also reflect a broader ideological framework that associates Bahasa Indonesia with modernity and academic success. English is similarly positioned as an essential language for international communication and professional advancement. However, there is no mention of local dialects in the curriculum, reflecting a significant gap in the education policy regarding cultural and linguistic diversity.

The lack of integration of local dialects into the curriculum can be interpreted as a reflection of the dominant perception that they are unnecessary for formal education and professional development. This positioning of Bahasa Indonesia and English as "prestigious" languages, while relegating local dialects to informal, family, or community settings, reinforces the social hierarchy that devalues local languages in favor of those deemed "international" or "standardized." The discourse in these educational policies suggests a belief that learning local dialects is not aligned with academic or professional goals, contributing to the perception that they are outdated or impractical for students' futures.

Media documents

The media documents, including reports from local television and radio stations, show a similar trend of sidelining local dialects. These stations overwhelmingly feature content in Bahasa Indonesia, with some programs incorporating English to cater to a more cosmopolitan audience. The use of local dialects in media programming is minimal, further reflecting the marginalization of these languages in public life. The dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English in the media reinforces their status as the "lingua franca" of modern communication, which is increasingly associated with power, influence, and economic opportunity.

The limited representation of local dialects in the media can be seen as part of a broader discursive framing that positions local languages as non-mainstream and unsuitable for mass communication. This is a significant factor in the decline of dialect usage, as media consumption plays a crucial role in shaping public attitudes and language preferences. By predominantly using Bahasa Indonesia and English, media institutions contribute to the diminishing visibility of local dialects, creating a feedback loop where the absence of these languages in public discourse further erodes their use and value.

Reports from the Palembang city government

Documents from the Palembang City Government indicate that the use of local dialects is rarely encountered in official public events. Instead, Bahasa Indonesia and English have become the default languages for official communication. This reflects the broader institutionalization of Bahasa Indonesia and English as the preferred languages in both formal and informal settings. The reports suggest that the city's language policies are in line with national objectives to promote Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language and to encourage the use of English for global communication.

The framing of Bahasa Indonesia and English as the dominant languages in these official documents suggests an implicit belief that these languages are necessary for progress, modernity,

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and social mobility. In contrast, local dialects are largely invisible in these official contexts, which not only diminishes their social value but also contributes to their gradual disappearance in the public sphere. The lack of space for local dialects in official events is indicative of the larger cultural shift towards the standardization of language use, which prioritizes languages that are seen as essential for participation in a globalized world.

The critical analysis of local documents reveals a consistent discursive framing that marginalizes local dialects while elevating Bahasa Indonesia and English as the languages of modernity, economic opportunity, and social mobility. The educational, media, and governmental documents collectively suggest that local dialects are seen as outdated, informal, and irrelevant in formal, academic, and professional contexts. This institutionalized framing contributes to the erosion of local dialects, reinforcing the dominance of languages associated with power and progress, while further sidelining the cultural and linguistic heritage of South Sumatra.

This study identifies several key challenges faced by local dialects in South Sumatra, as well as potential strategies that can be applied to preserve and pass down dialect traditions. This discussion will cover the main findings based on the data obtained, contrast these findings with relevant literature, and offer more localized recommendations, with a focus on concrete steps relevant to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching.

Stigmatization of dialects in educational settings: An ecological analysis

One of the key findings of this study is the stigmatization of local dialects in South Sumatra's educational settings, where dialects are seen as informal and less relevant for academic and professional contexts. In this environment, Bahasa Indonesia and English are viewed as essential for upward mobility and professional success, while local dialects are relegated to informal, familial contexts. This reflects a broader societal trend in Indonesia, where regional languages are often marginalized in favor of standardized languages that are seen as more prestigious.

Key Ecological Theme: "Competitive Language Ecology in Schools"

The concept of "competitive language ecology" can be used to explain the dynamics at play. In this ecological system, Bahasa Indonesia and English are dominant, serving as the "prestige languages" associated with formal education, professional success, and social mobility. Dialects, in contrast, are increasingly viewed as barriers to success, reinforcing the perception that local languages are inferior. This is comparable to the concept of "Ibuisme Negara" (State Motherism), which suggests that national and formal languages are promoted as instruments of power and control, positioning local dialects as subaltern and marginal.

As noted in the interviews, the priority given to Bahasa Indonesia and English often reflects the teachers' beliefs in the superiority of these languages in formal learning contexts. This is akin to the findings in Siregar (2023) and Bhakti (2020), which indicate that regional languages in Indonesia are often seen as obstacles to academic and professional success. The implications for EFL pedagogy here are significant: to challenge this institutionalized ideology, EFL teachers can use local dialects as linguistic resources for teaching English, fostering both linguistic diversity and cultural pride among students.

Changes in social and linguistic environments: Ecological dynamics of migration and urbanization

Social and linguistic changes due to migration and urbanization have played a significant role in altering language use in South Sumatra. With the growing influx of migrants, particularly from the Chinese community, local dialects have increasingly been displaced by Bahasa Indonesia and English in public spaces.

Key Ecological Theme: "Urbanization and Language Shift"

Urbanization leads to a shift in the linguistic ecology of a region, with more socially dominant languages (Bahasa Indonesia and English) overtaking local dialects in public and professional settings. This mirrors findings in China, where migration to urban centers has led to the dominance of Mandarin, pushing local dialects to the periphery (Huang & Chen, 2024).

To address this, the ecological dynamics suggest that EFL pedagogy could benefit from incorporating linguistic diversity into teaching practices. By encouraging students to compare local dialects with English, EFL teachers can help students develop not only their English skills but also an understanding of how languages interact within different social and cultural environments.

Decreased functional role of dialects in the professional world: ideological constraints

In South Sumatra, dialects are often viewed as incompatible with professional norms. Dialect speakers fear that using their local dialects in the workplace may harm their professional image, reflecting a broader societal bias against regional languages in formal settings.

Key Ecological Theme: "The Ideological Ecology of Professionalism"
The ideological ecology in professional settings dictates that standardized languages like Bahasa Indonesia and English are more prestigious and appropriate for formal communication. This reinforces the concept of "linguistic capital," where certain languages are valued more highly than others in the workplace. This dynamic is observed across Southeast Asia, where regional languages are often sidelined in favor of global or national languages (Abidin, 2020).

To address this, EFL pedagogy can include teaching students about code-switching and the strategic use of local dialects and English in different contexts. Through contrastive analysis, students can learn when and how to use dialects in informal settings, while understanding the role of English in professional environments. This approach aligns with the principles of "multilingualism as an asset," which posits that linguistic diversity, including dialects, can enhance communication skills and cultural awareness.

Changes in cultural and linguistic identity: the role of language in social mobility
The erosion of linguistic identity, where young speakers associate Bahasa Indonesia and English with modernity and social mobility, is a major finding. This shift in identity reflects broader socio-cultural changes where local dialects are viewed as less relevant to the globalized, professional world.

Key Ecological Theme: "Linguistic Identity and Social Prestige"

This phenomenon highlights the role of language in shaping identity within the framework of social prestige. As seen in other regions, including Bali and China, local dialects are increasingly viewed as symbols of tradition rather than modernity, with national languages (Bahasa Indonesia) and international languages (English) positioned as tools for social advancement (Sari et al., 2025; Terezawati et al., 2025).

In response to this shift, EFL teachers can help students develop a sense of pride in their linguistic heritage by integrating local dialects into English lessons. For example, teachers can use dialects as tools for exploring linguistic identity, helping students understand that regional and international languages can coexist and complement each other.

Media impact on dialects: the dominance of standardized languages in mass media
The media landscape in South Sumatra is dominated by Bahasa Indonesia and English, with minimal representation of local dialects. This further reinforces the marginalization of dialects, particularly among younger generations who consume media primarily in these languages.

Key Ecological Theme: "Media Ecology and Language Representation"

The concept of "media ecology" explains how media platforms shape and reinforce language preferences. In South Sumatra, the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English in the media leads to a reduced role for local dialects, which are seen as less suitable for mass consumption. As Kaharuddin et al. (2024) suggest, the infiltration of foreign elements in media content weakens the visibility of regional languages, making them less relevant to modern audiences.

To address this, EFL teachers can collaborate with local media to create content that uses local dialects, such as storytelling or digital media with English subtitles. This approach not only introduces students to the dialect but also promotes language revitalization through modern media platforms, making learning more authentic and contextually relevant.

Increased role of parents and communities: the importance of local language transmission
The involvement of parents and local communities in preserving dialects is crucial. Parents who actively speak to their children in local dialects and engage in cultural practices help ensure that these languages are passed down to future generations.

Key Ecological Theme: "The Family and Community as Linguistic Ecosystems"
The family and local communities serve as critical "linguistic ecosystems" where languages are nurtured and transmitted. In the context of South Sumatra, the role of parents and community leaders is fundamental in ensuring that dialects remain alive in daily interactions. Without the active participation of families, the use of dialects is at risk of disappearing.

EFL teachers can support this by encouraging parental involvement in language education, integrating local dialects into learning materials,

and fostering community-based language initiatives. This collaboration between schools, parents, and local communities creates a more supportive and inclusive language learning environment.

This study highlights the need for an ecological approach to EFL pedagogy that not only emphasizes the acquisition of English but also integrates local linguistic and cultural elements. By incorporating local dialects into the English curriculum, EFL teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of their linguistic identity while improving their English skills. This approach supports the preservation of cultural heritage and provides a more holistic and inclusive language learning experience.

EFL teachers can use a variety of strategies, such as integrating folk tales, using media in local dialects, and encouraging intergenerational language transmission, to bridge the gap between local dialects and global languages. By fostering linguistic diversity in the classroom, teachers can contribute to the preservation of local dialects while promoting proficiency in English.

In conclusion, while local dialects in South Sumatra face significant challenges due to the effects of globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of standardized languages, there are concrete strategies that can help preserve these dialects. By applying an ecological approach to EFL pedagogy, integrating local dialects into the curriculum, and encouraging the involvement of parents and communities, dialect traditions can be preserved and passed down to future generations. The government and educational institutions must collaborate to create policies that support the preservation of local dialects, ensuring that linguistic diversity remains a vital part of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies the key challenges faced by local dialects in South Sumatra and potential strategies that can be applied to preserve and pass down dialect traditions. One of the main findings of this research is the decline in the number of dialect speakers, with dialect usage now largely confined to informal family interactions, while Bahasa Indonesia and English dominate in schools, workplaces, and public spaces. Social and linguistic changes caused by urbanization and migration, including the influx of migrant communities such as the Chinese community, have also influenced the linguistic landscape, leading to the use of Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin in public spaces. In education and the professional world, the functional role of dialects is diminishing as they are seen as informal and less relevant. Furthermore, many young people in South Sumatra prefer to use Bahasa Indonesia or English because they associate these languages with modernity, social mobility, and prestige, while local dialects are viewed as less suitable for the professional world. The media also plays a significant role in reinforcing the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and English, with very few programs featuring local dialects, thus reducing exposure for younger generations.

The implications of these findings for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) policy and practice are significant. One approach is to integrate local dialects into the EFL curriculum. EFL teachers can use local dialects as a resource for teaching, such as by incorporating Palembang folk tales into the local content curriculum, which would enhance students' English skills while also preserving local culture. Additionally, dialect digitization through online platforms or language learning applications can help preserve dialects by documenting linguistic data, such as phonetics and grammatical structures, making it accessible to younger generations. The involvement of parents in teaching dialects at home and the development of dialect-based media, such as radio programs or TV shows, can also be effective in introducing dialects to a wider audience. These steps can help preserve and pass on local dialects to future generations, despite the pressures of globalization and urbanization.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that local dialects in South Sumatra face significant challenges due to the dominance of standard languages and the social changes occurring in the region. However, through localized approaches such as integrating dialects into EFL teaching, digitization, and the active involvement of parents and communities, dialect traditions can be preserved. The government and education sectors must collaborate to create policies that support the preservation of local dialects, considering the social, cultural, and legal conditions in Indonesia. With these efforts, local dialects can continue to thrive amidst globalization and modernization.

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