

Assessing the Contribution of “the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival” to Balinese Language Maintenance

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Abstract: In response to concerns over the decline of regional languages, the Government of Bali Province has organized the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival (Balinese Language Month Festival) annually since 2019 to revitalize the Balinese language and encourage its everyday use. This study assesses the festival’s contribution to language maintenance by examining participants’ perceptions, language practices, and the role of government policy. Employing a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, data were collected from 180 participants across Bali through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Quantitative findings indicate strong awareness and positive attitudes toward the Balinese language, while qualitative findings reveal that language use remains largely situational and concentrated during the festival period. These findings suggest a disparity between positive perceptions and sustained everyday language use. The study posits that the festival serves as an important policy instrument for language maintenance, although its impact on daily linguistic practices remains limited.

Keywords: Balinese language; Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival; government language policy; language maintenance

1. Introduction

Language and culture are fundamental components in the formation of community identity (Zia & Fatima, 2025). In the context of Bali, the Balinese language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for transmitting values, traditions, ethnic identity, and local wisdom (Putra et al., 2025). The decline in intergenerational transmission and the diminishing daily use of Balinese, particularly among younger generations, have raised significant concerns about the sustainability of the Balinese language and culture

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(Prilyasinta & Purnawan, 2025). Data from Indonesia’s Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS, 2020) reveal a declining trend in regional language usage among younger generations. Only approximately 61.7% of the post-Generation Z generation and 69.9% of Generation Z continue to utilize regional languages in daily communication, in contrast to more than 80% among older generations. This indicates a tendency toward reduced engagement of younger generations in the use of regional languages. In addition to globalization and the dominance of English, the increasing adoption of Indonesian as the national language also contributes to the shrinking domains of Balinese. As noted by I Wayan Pastika (2013), Indonesian language is increasingly employed not only in formal education and administration but also in family and community interactions. Consequently, the strengthening of Indonesian in both formal and informal sectors reduces the everyday functional space of Balinese and presents an internal structural challenge to its preservation.

In response to the challenges of preserving the Balinese language and culture, the Provincial Government of Bali has implemented a comprehensive policy framework aimed at language preservation and revitalization. This framework encompasses regulatory frameworks, educational initiatives, and community-based cultural programs that collectively enhance the utilization of the Balinese language across formal and informal contexts. Notably, one of the pivotal initiatives within this policy framework is the annual Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, which is held every February. This cultural program serves as a cornerstone of efforts to safeguard and promote the Balinese language, script, and literature. The festival was officially inaugurated following the promulgation of Bali Governor Regulation Number 80 of 2018 and commenced its inaugural implementation in 2019. Consequently, by 2026, the festival has been held eight consecutive times.

The Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival serves as a platform for the appreciation, education, and revitalization of the Balinese language. It actively engages the community, traditional villages, schools, and cultural institutions through a diverse range of activities, including language seminars and discussions (*widya tula*), workshops (*kriya loka*), exhibitions of Balinese script and literature, traditional art performances, and various language competitions (*wimbakara*). These competitions encompass Balinese script writing, lontar manuscript writing, lontar reading, textual singing and interpretation, Balinese-language speeches, Balinese-language debates, storytelling, and religious discourse. The festival targets participants from diverse age groups and social backgrounds, from elementary school students to traditional leaders and the general public who attend the event. As a government-initiated and consistently implemented cultural program, the Balinese Language Month Festival functions as a strategic

instrument in sustaining the Balinese language while simultaneously preserving local cultural values, ensuring their vibrancy and relevance in contemporary Balinese society (Suputra, 2020).

Since its inception in 2019, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival has undergone significant development in both its scope and execution. While its early editions were primarily confined to the provincial level, more recent iterations, particularly in 2025 and 2026, have expanded to regency, district, and customary village (*desa adat*) levels, thereby facilitating greater community participation. The festival's expansion is also evident in the increasing number of participants over time. Official records indicate that the number of competition participants increased from 245 people in 2019 to 1,168 in 2026, with fluctuations throughout the years but an overall upward trend. This growth signifies not only the broadening reach of the festival but also the strengthening of community engagement and institutional support in its implementation.

This study investigates the contribution of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival to the preservation of the Balinese language in response to the increasing influence of Indonesian and foreign languages across various domains in Bali, including education, digital communication, tourism, and everyday social interactions. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of public perceptions and the role of the government in positioning the festival as a cultural policy instrument for language preservation. Previous studies on language preservation have primarily focused on the roles of family, formal education, and community groups (Haerani & Putra, 2021; Alike et al., 2017; Bai, 2016). However, research on government-driven cultural festivals as strategies for language preservation remains limited, particularly in the context of Indonesia's regional languages. Furthermore, studies that examine participants' perceptions in relation to policy implementation and actual language use within a single analytical framework are still rare. This study therefore provides an assessment of the festival's contribution to language preservation by analyzing participants' perceptions, policy implementation by the Provincial Government of Bali, and language use practices during the festival.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Preservation and Contemporary Challenges

Language maintenance encompasses the concerted efforts of a community to preserve the utilization of its native language amidst the influence of a dominant language (Fishman, 2012). In numerous contexts, regional and minority languages encounter escalating challenges due to the pervasive adoption of dominant languages in communication, education, and media. It is pertinent to acknowledge that such pressures are not exclusively a contemporary

phenomenon but are also rooted in historical processes, including colonial language policies and the promotion of national languages during the post-independence era. For instance, in Indonesia, the reinforcement of Indonesian as the national language has significantly contributed to the shaping of language usage across formal and informal domains.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that language shift occurs when local languages experience a decline in usage, particularly among younger generations. According to UNESCO (2023), approximately 40% of the world’s over 6,700 languages are at risk of extinction due to a decrease in active speakers. One key indicator of this decline is the reduction in language use across social and educational domains. Furthermore, Shen (2024) illustrates how the influence of dominant languages in global contexts contributes to the diminishing vitality of Indigenous languages. Similarly, Marimuthu (2025) emphasizes that inadequate language policies further undermine the capacity of local languages to thrive in broader social contexts. In addition, studies on family language practices underscore the significance of intergenerational support in preserving heritage languages (Fatima & Nadeem, 2025). These studies collectively suggest that language maintenance necessitates sustained and coordinated support from various stakeholders, including government policy, education, community engagement, and family-level practices. Such support is crucial for ensuring long-term intergenerational transmission and the sustained use of local languages in everyday life.

2.2 Regional Languages and Cultural Identity

Regional languages play a fundamental role in preserving cultural identity and sustaining local values. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for transmitting knowledge, traditions, and the meaning systems of the communities that use it. Studies in sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology underscore the direct implications of the weakening of regional languages for the erosion of local identity and cultural expression (Kramsch, 2014). Recent research suggests that regional languages function as markers of collective identity and as social capital that enhances community cohesion, particularly within multicultural communities and indigenous societies (Massuannan, 2025). However, the forces of globalization and the dominance of national and global languages have accelerated language shift, particularly among younger generations, resulting in the diminished use of regional languages in social and cultural domains (Kasiyarno & Apriyanto, 2025).

In the context of Bali, the Balinese language serves as a fundamental pillar of Balinese identity. It functions as an ethnic marker that distinguishes

Balinese people from other ethnic groups in Indonesia. The Balinese language is not only used for communication, but also plays an essential role in traditional ceremonies, classical literature, and religious practices to transmit cultural values and ancestral heritage across generations (Widiatmika et al., 2025). Furthermore, the system of *angguh-ungguh basa* (speech levels), which regulates language use according to social hierarchy, age, and respect, reflects the traditional social structure and ethical values of Balinese society (Arnawa et al., 2022). The language also holds strong religious significance, particularly in Hindu rituals and sacred traditions that incorporate elements of Kawi and Sanskrit (Suweta et al., 2022). Therefore, its maintenance cannot be separated from the preservation of Balinese culture and identity as a whole. These studies suggest that the preservation of regional languages requires deliberate and continuous efforts to sustain their functional use across social, cultural, religious, and intergenerational domains amid increasing global pressures.

2.3 Cultural Festivals as a Strategy for Language Maintenance

Numerous studies have demonstrated that cultural festivals serve not only as venues for entertainment and tourism but also as strategic mechanisms for the preservation and revitalization of regional languages. This is achieved through heightened public awareness, community involvement, and the reinforcement of local identity pride (Hakim et al., 2025). This phenomenon is particularly evident when such activities incorporate traditional linguistic practices into programs that engage younger generations and native speaker groups, a process commonly referred to as language maintenance through community engagement.

Empirical research on the role of intangible cultural components such as music, dance, rituals, and traditional narratives that frequently appear in festivals demonstrates that synergistic efforts between cultural practices and language preservation policies make a significant contribution to sustaining the social functions of endangered languages and reinforcing community identity cohesion (Gwerevende et al., 2023). However, although the literature extensively discusses the relationship between cultural festivals and the preservation of traditions, studies that explicitly evaluate cultural festivals as policy instruments for language maintenance remain relatively limited. This indicates the need for further research that integrates language vitality frameworks with assessments of the impact of festivals on language use across broader sociocultural domains (Ahmadu & Idris, 2025). In addition, in practice, festivals that support local linguistic expression, for example through narrative performances, language workshops, and traditional art exhibitions, serve as important moments for expanding the domains of regional language

use beyond domestic and ritual contexts. In doing so, they help slow language shift and promote intergenerational continuity within contemporary cultural contexts.

2.4 The Role of Government Policy in the Preservation of Regional Languages

Government policy assumes a strategic role in facilitating the preservation of regional languages through the formulation of regulations, the allocation of resources, and the implementation of coordinated cultural programs. These interventions contribute to the enhancement of the position of regional languages within the public sphere, formal education, and mass communication media. May (2013) posits that linguistically responsive policies can augment language vitality and broaden the domains of utilization of minority languages, particularly when supported by inclusive implementation mechanisms and active participation from local communities. In both global and national contexts, several countries have integrated regional language preservation into legal and educational frameworks, for instance through bilingual curricula, funding for revitalization programs, and support for regional language media, all of which demonstrate positive effects on the preservation of endangered languages (Hinton & Hale, 2013).

In Indonesia, the protection of regional languages is regulated through various national and local regulations, including Law No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, State Emblem, and National Anthem, as well as regional regulations that promote the teaching of local languages in primary schools and the promotion of local culture within communities (Pamungkas, 2019). In Bali, these efforts are further reinforced through Bali Provincial Regulation No. 1 of 2018 and Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018 concerning the protection and utilization of the Balinese language, script, and literature. These regulations include the establishment of institutional programs such as the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, support for Balinese language agencies, and appreciation initiatives for Balinese-language literary writers and cultural figures. However, implementation often encounters significant challenges, such as low levels of community participation, limited resources, and a lack of innovative, sustainable, and evidence-based programs.

These constraints, in turn, restrict the effectiveness of such policies at the grassroots level. Therefore, empirical studies that assess both the successes and obstacles of local government language policies, particularly in terms of their practical implementation and their impact on language use in educational, media, and social domains, are urgently required to formulate more effective and context-sensitive policy recommendations that align with local sociocultural dynamics. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of

regional language preservation ultimately depends not only on the existence of formal regulations, but also on the consistency of policy implementation and its capacity to expand and sustain language use across educational, media, and everyday social domains.

2.5 Research Gap and Urgency of the Study

Based on the literature review presented above, it can be concluded that while research on the maintenance of regional languages has advanced significantly, most studies still emphasize the roles of families, formal education, and local communities as the primary agents of language preservation. Studies that explicitly position cultural festivals as instruments of government policy for the maintenance of regional languages and cultures remain limited, particularly within the Indonesian regional language context. Furthermore, existing literature tends to examine cultural festivals from cultural, tourism, or creative economy perspectives in isolation, without integrating the dimensions of language policy, public perception, and youth engagement within a comprehensive analytical framework.

These limitations highlight a research gap in comprehending how government-initiated and government-supported cultural festivals can serve as strategic mechanisms for both language preservation and cultural safeguarding amidst the pressures of globalization. Consequently, this study demonstrates academic urgency and conceptual novelty by examining the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival as a case study that integrates analyses of government policy, community perceptions, and youth participation in a comprehensive endeavor to sustain the Balinese language and culture in the era of globalization.

3. Method and Theory

3.1 Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach utilizing a sequential explanatory design. In this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed initially, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. This approach is employed to assess the impact of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival as a government policy instrument for language maintenance. The study examines participants' perceptions, language use practices, and policy implementation. The use of a mixed-methods design enables quantitative data to provide measurable evidence of perception trends and perceived effectiveness. Qualitative data further elucidate and contextualize these findings within broader social and policy frameworks.

The initial phase of the study is the quantitative phase, which seeks to ascertain public and youth perceptions of the effectiveness of the Bulan

Bahasa Bali Festival in augmenting awareness, attitudes, and the utilization of the Balinese language. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire was meticulously designed to assess three primary dimensions: (1) awareness of the objectives and significance of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, (2) attitudes towards the utilization of the Balinese language as a component of cultural identity, and (3) the application of the Balinese language in daily life. Each item was evaluated on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The instrument was distributed to individuals who had participated in or been directly exposed to the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival. A total of 180 respondents participated in the survey. Respondents were selected using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, based on their involvement in or familiarity with the festival as well as accessibility considerations. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean values, and response distributions, to describe general trends in participants’ perceptions of the festival. A map was developed by the authors to illustrate the distribution of respondents across nine administrative regions in Bali Province (Figure 1).

Research Area and Respondent Distribution in Bali Province

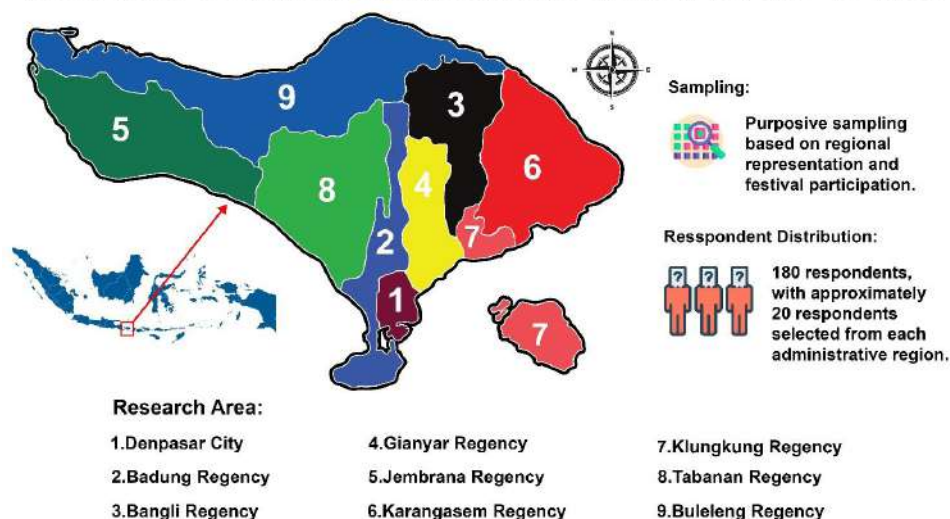


Figure 1. Research area and respondent distribution in Bali Province (Source: Developed by the authors, 2026).

This study encompassed 180 respondents from eight regencies and one municipality in Bali Province: Jembrana, Tabanan, Badung, Gianyar, Klungkung, Bangli, Karangasem, and Buleleng Regencies, as well as Denpasar City, which

operates across all administrative levels through a tiered system from local to provincial stages. This ensures broad geographical representation.

The questionnaires were distributed online via the Google Forms platform and shared with participants through community networks and festival-related groups. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics, encompassing mean Likert scores, percentages, and response distributions, as well as the Perception Index (PI) to assess participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival in language preservation. The Perception Index was computed using the following formula:

$$IP = \frac{\sum (f_i \times s_i)}{N \times S_{\max}} \times 100$$

Explanation:

f_i = frequency of responses for each answer category

s_i = answer score (1–5 on the Likert scale)

N = number of respondents

$S_{\max}$ = maximum score on the Likert scale (5)

The PI ranges from 0 to 100 and is categorized into four interpretative groups: very low (0–25), low (26–50), high (51–75), and very high (76–100). The utilization of this index serves to provide a succinct and easily comprehensible quantitative summary of respondents' perceptual inclinations, while simultaneously facilitating the integration of quantitative findings with qualitative insights during the subsequent analysis phase.

The second phase of the study involves a qualitative phase aimed at elucidating and interpreting the quantitative findings in greater depth. During this phase, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with local policymakers, festival organizers, cultural figures, and representatives of younger generations. A total of 12 informants were interviewed, selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, or participation in the Balinese Language Month Festival. The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or online using the Balinese language, as it facilitated participants, particularly cultural figures and local community members, in expressing their perspectives, cultural experiences, and language practices more naturally and contextually. All interviews centered on participants' perspectives regarding the festival's role in language maintenance, policy implementation, and its impact on language use practices. Additionally, direct observations were conducted during the implementation of the Balinese Language Month Festival to investigate

practices of Balinese language use, levels of community participation, and the dynamics of social interaction within festival activities. Documentary analysis of government regulations, activity reports, promotional materials, and media archives was also employed as supporting data to enhance the policy analysis.

The questionnaire comprised 18 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale, distributed across three dimensions: participants’ perceptions of the festival’s efficacy (8 items), language usage practices during the festival (5 items), and opinions on government policy implementation (5 items). Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in an integrated manner. The results of descriptive statistical analysis from the quantitative phase served as the foundation for determining the focus of the qualitative analysis. Subsequently, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis through stages of coding, categorization, and interpretation of key themes related to the role of government policy, festival effectiveness, and language usage practices. Data integration was conducted at the interpretation stage by comparing and linking quantitative and qualitative findings to generate complementary and convergent conclusions.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed several strategies, including face validity testing of the questionnaire instrument, descriptive assessment of internal consistency, and triangulation of methods and data sources. In the qualitative phase, data credibility was enhanced through limited member checking and peer debriefing. Through this mixed-methods approach, the study is anticipated to provide a more comprehensive, objective, and evidence-based understanding of the effectiveness of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival as a strategy for the preservation of the Balinese language and culture.

3.2 Theory

The primary theoretical framework employed in this study is the theory of language maintenance as proposed by Fishman (1991, 2012). This theory posits that the sustainability of a language is significantly influenced by the expansion and continuity of its domains of use within social life, encompassing family, education, ritual practices, and public spaces. In the context of this study, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival is conceptualized as an initiative aimed at expanding the domains of Balinese language utilization into public and cultural spaces that serve both symbolic and practical purposes. Consequently, this expansion contributes to the enhancement of the social functions of the Balinese language amidst the prevailing dominance of national and global languages. Fishman’s domain framework serves as a guiding principle for the analysis of festival activities across family, educational, and public domains.

Furthermore, this study utilizes the theory of language attitudes, which asserts that speakers' positive attitudes towards their mother tongue are instrumental in its sustained usage (Garrett, 2010). Public and youth perceptions of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival serve as indicators of language attitudes, encompassing cognitive dimensions (knowledge and awareness), affective dimensions (pride and emotional attachment), and conative dimensions (the inclination to employ the Balinese language). This theory holds particular relevance to the quantitative approach employed in this study, particularly in the measurement of perceptions through questionnaires and the Perception Index.

Another theoretical framework that underpins this study is language policy and planning theory. This theory posits that the government acts as a strategic actor in the preservation of minority languages through regulations, programs, and cultural interventions (May, 2013). The Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival is analyzed as an implementation of a culture-based language policy that operates in a top-down manner in terms of formulation and funding, while simultaneously incorporating bottom-up community participation. This theoretical perspective serves as the foundation for the qualitative analysis of the role of the Provincial Government of Bali, policy legitimacy, and the effectiveness of policy implementation at the social level.

Furthermore, this study adopts the perspective of cultural festivals as social practices and instruments of cultural preservation. It views festivals not merely as ceremonial events but as spaces for the production of meaning, identity, and living cultural practices (Getz, 2010). Within this framework, festivals are understood as media for intergenerational cultural transmission and as vehicles for language revitalization through participatory experiences. This perspective supports the use of observation and interviews in the qualitative phase to examine the dynamics of Balinese language use during the festival.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives aligns with the sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach employed in this study. Quantitative theories, such as language maintenance and language attitudes, are utilized to quantify general trends in public perceptions. Conversely, theories of language policy and cultural festivals are employed to interpret and enhance the findings through qualitative data. Through this integrated theoretical framework, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how the Balinese Language Month Festival functions as a policy mechanism, a cultural practice, and a social space in efforts to preserve the Balinese language and culture in the era of globalization. Concurrently, these perspectives facilitate a multi-level analysis that links policy design, cultural practice, and language behavior.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This section presents the findings on the role of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival in supporting the maintenance of the Balinese language. It specifically focuses on participants’ perceptions, language use practices, and government policy. The results are organized into three main subsections. Section 4.1.1 presents the quantitative findings on participants’ perceptions, followed by qualitative findings in Section 4.1.2 on language use practices during the festival. Section 4.1.3 examines the role of government policy in positioning the festival as a language maintenance strategy. Collectively, these findings provide an assessment of the festival’s effectiveness in supporting the maintenance of the Balinese language.

4.1.1 Presents the Quantitative Findings on Participants’ Perceptions

This subsection presents the quantitative findings on participants’ perceptions of the 2025 Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, based on responses from 180 participants representing eight regencies and one municipality in Bali Province. This regional coverage reflects the province-wide implementation of the festival across multiple administrative levels, from local to provincial contexts. Prior to examining participants’ perceptions, it is crucial to contextualize the analysis within the broader framework of festival participation. Participation data indicate that the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival has experienced a general increase in the number of participants over time, rising from 245 participants in 2019 to 1,168 participants in 2026, despite some fluctuations across years (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Participants in Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival 2019–2026

Year	Number of Participants	Number of Competitions	Prize Amount (IDR)
2019	245	12	72,000,000
2020	660	17	169,500,000
2021	1,019	17	123,000,000
2022	600	10	81,000,000
2023	693	17	163,000,000
2024	852	17	175,000,000
2025	805	17	195,000,000
2026	1,168	17	369,000,000

Source: Compiled from interviews and observations conducted by the author with the Bali Provincial Government (2019–2026)

The overall upward trend signifies the expanding reach of the festival, as well as the strengthening of institutional support for its implementation across Bali. The extensive scope of implementation is further substantiated by participation data from 2025, which reveal a substantial level of community involvement. In that year, the festival engaged 1,487 of 1,500 customary villages (*desa adat*) and 667 of 716 villages/urban wards across Bali. Participation also extended to the education sector, with 131 of 152 senior high schools, as well as all vocational and special schools, organizing festival-related activities. Additionally, 12 provincial-level competitions involved 805 participants (Koran Jakarta, 2025).

The findings reveal that all respondents exhibited a substantial level of awareness regarding the existence and objectives of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival. Notably, no respondents were categorized into the very low or low perception levels, suggesting that the festival is well comprehended and favorably received by participants. This observation underscores the festival's efficacy in promoting language-related policies and augmenting public awareness of the significance of the Balinese language.

In terms of attitudes, respondents expressed strongly positive views toward the use of the Balinese language, particularly in cultural, artistic, and ceremonial contexts. These responses indicate a high level of appreciation of the Balinese language within its traditional domains. Such positive attitudes may reflect a sense of cultural attachment and identity associated with the language. However, it should be noted that this interpretation is based on self-reported perceptions rather than direct measurement of language behavior. At the same time, responses indicate that the use of the Balinese language in everyday life remains relatively limited. Many respondents reported a tendency to use Indonesian or foreign languages more frequently in informal and digital interactions, indicating a gap between positive attitudes and actual language practices.

To provide a more comprehensive quantitative overview, these dimensions were integrated into a Perception Index (PI). The analysis reveals an average Likert score of 4.03, which corresponds to a PI score of 80.6, placing it within the very high category. The distribution of respondents based on the Perception Index categories is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents’ Perception Index toward the Bali Language Month Festival

Perception Index Category	PI Score Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Low	0–25	0	0
Low	26–50	0	0
High	51–75	108	60.0
Very High	76–100	72	40.0
Total		180	100

Based on Table 2, all respondents are categorized within the high and very high perception categories, with 60.0% in the high category and 40.0% in the very high category. Notably, no respondents fall into the low or very low categories, indicating a consistently positive perception of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival among participants.

These findings suggest that the festival has been effective in strengthening awareness and fostering positive attitudes toward the Balinese language. However, as indicated in the previous analysis, this positive perception is not always accompanied by consistent language use in everyday contexts, particularly among younger generations.

Overall, while the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival demonstrates a strong impact at the level of perception and attitude, further efforts are required to translate this positive orientation into sustained language practices beyond the festival context.

4.1.2 Language Use Practices during the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival: Insights from Interviews and Observations

During the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, language use practices are demonstrated through a variety of competitive and participatory activities aimed at fostering the active utilization of the Balinese language. These activities encompass diverse language-based competitions, including storytelling (*mesatua*), speech contests (*pidarta*), poetry reading (*mabebasan*), and traditional dialogue performances. Each of these activities necessitates active participation in formal and performative contexts, thereby promoting the effective use of Balinese.



Figure 2. Balinese script writing competition (*nyurat aksara Bali*) (Source: Documentation of the Bali Provincial Government, 2025).

Among these activities, the Balinese script writing competition (*nyurat aksara Bali*) stands out as a particularly significant practice of language preservation (Figure 2). It not only requires linguistic competence but also literacy in the traditional writing system. As depicted in Figure 2, participants engage in writing Balinese script in a structured and formal setting, showcasing both technical proficiency and cultural knowledge. This activity exemplifies the ongoing transmission of Balinese script literacy, which is an integral aspect of sustaining the language beyond oral transmission.

Observations indicate that participants, including younger generations, exhibit a high level of engagement and concentration during the competition. This suggests that the festival serves as an effective space for practicing and reinforcing the use of the Balinese language in its written form. Additionally, interview data reveal that such competitions are perceived not only as evaluative events but also as meaningful learning experiences that encourage participants to deepen their understanding of Balinese language and script. Overall, these findings underscore the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival's role as a practical platform for language use, where linguistic knowledge is actively performed, practiced, and transmitted across generations.

The participation of younger generations in the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival transcends formal competition participation, encompassing interactive and guided learning experiences. As depicted in Figure 3, young participants engage

in small-group, hands-on activities under the supervision of an instructor, exemplifying a collaborative and participatory learning environment.



Figure 3. Youth engagement in guided, small-group cultural activities during the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, illustrating intergenerational transmission of language and cultural knowledge (Source: Author’s documentation, 2025).

This setting exemplifies the process of intergenerational transmission, wherein cultural knowledge and language practices are imparted through direct interaction. The presence of an adult facilitator guiding the activity underscores the pivotal role of mentorship in facilitating the acquisition of both linguistic and cultural competencies among younger participants.

Observations reveal that such activities cultivate active engagement, curiosity, and peer interaction, fostering a conducive learning environment. Interview data further suggests that these informal and semi-structured activities are perceived as more accessible and enjoyable, particularly for younger participants, in contrast to formal competition settings. This indicates that the sustainability of the Balinese language relies not solely on formal performance spaces but also on continuous, guided practice embedded within everyday social learning contexts.

Beyond formal competitions, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival also promotes the utilization of the Balinese language in interactive and communal environments. As depicted in Figure 4, participants engage in group-based activities, such as cultural workshops where students collaboratively prepare lontar leaves as a traditional medium for Balinese script writing. In these settings, participants interact using the Balinese language through guided instructions, peer discussions, and collaborative tasks related to the preparation process. These interactions involve practical language use, including asking and responding to questions, providing instructions, and discussing procedural steps in Balinese, thereby fostering spontaneous and communicative language use. The circular formation and participatory nature of the activity signify a dialogic and inclusive form of language use, enabling participants to actively negotiate meaning in real-time social interaction (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Communicative use of the Balinese language in a group-based interactive activity during the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, illustrating spontaneous and participatory language practices (Source: Author's documentation, 2025).

Observations indicate that such activities foster a more relaxed and supportive atmosphere compared to formal competitions, facilitating participants, particularly younger generations, in confidently utilizing the

Balinese language. The incorporation of gestures, expressions, and collective responses further exemplifies the seamless integration of linguistic and cultural practices within a natural setting.

Interview data also suggests that participants perceive these interactive activities as more engaging and less intimidating than formal events, thereby encouraging more frequent language usage. This underscores the festival’s dual role as a formal platform for language performance and a social space that normalizes the everyday use of the Balinese language within the community. Institutional support, particularly from the Provincial Government of Bali, is instrumental in the organization and legitimization of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival as a formal language policy initiative. As depicted in Figure 5, the presence of an official jury panel and the acknowledgment of competition winners signify a structured and hierarchical evaluation system. In this system, participants represent their respective regions at the provincial level.



Figure 5. Winners of the Balinese-language *Dharmawacana* competition at the provincial level, accompanied by the official jury panel, illustrating institutional recognition and the role of the Provincial Government of Bali in organizing the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival. (Source: Documentation of the Bali Provincial Government, 2025).

This formal arrangement illustrates the multifaceted nature of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival. Beyond its primary focus on language, it serves as a comprehensive cultural event that fosters cultural identity. Within this framework, the festival also operates as an institutionalized mechanism for language preservation. The involvement of the provincial government ensures standardization, coordination, and continuity of the program across all regencies and municipalities. Furthermore, the selection process from local to provincial levels reinforces a sense of regional representation and collective participation in safeguarding the Balinese language.

The observational findings presented in Figures 2–5 are further substantiated by insights gained from interviews with prominent cultural and academic figures who were instrumental in the formulation and implementation of the Bulan Bahasa Bali policy. I Nyoman Suarka, a professor at Udayana University, cultural practitioner, and advocate for the Balinese language, as well as one of the key individuals responsible for the establishment of the Bulan Bahasa Bali program, underscores that the festival serves as a tangible manifestation of Bali Provincial Regulation No. 1 of 2018, which pertains to the promotion of the Balinese language, literature, and script. He emphasizes that:

Bulan Bahasa Bali serves as an effort to strengthen the existence of the Balinese language and script, while also promoting the development of Balinese script toward digitalization, enabling broader dissemination, particularly among younger generations (Interview with Professor I Nyoman Suarka, 3 February 2026).

This viewpoint aligns with field observations indicating that festival activities, encompassing scriptwriting competitions and interactive group practices, offer structured and socially supported environments conducive to language use.

Similarly, Professor I Made Surada emphasizes that the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival should be primarily understood as a cultural space that reinforces collective identity and transmits cultural values across generations, rather than merely as an annual ceremonial event. Within this broader cultural framework, the festival can also be viewed as a strategic instrument for sustaining Balinese civilization. He conceptualizes language as “a home of meaning through which values, ethics, cosmology, and collective worldviews are transmitted across generations,” (Interview with Professor I Made Surada, 3 February 2026) implying that language maintenance is inseparable from cultural continuity. However, he also cautions that the effectiveness of such initiatives depends on their ability to transcend symbolic and ceremonial dimensions toward more substantive efforts, including enhancing Balinese script literacy, innovating

language pedagogy, and fostering contemporary forms of Balinese cultural expression.

Despite these positive evaluations, the qualitative findings also indicate inconsistencies in the implementation of several festival activities. Although the festival is designed to promote cultural and linguistic values through specific themes, participants observed that these themes were not always consistently reflected in the competitions and evaluation processes. As one participant observed:

In several competitions, the implementation does not always align with the intended theme. For example, in a geguritan competition with the theme Atma Kerti, some winning works were not clearly related to the theme” (Interview with Gede Agus Budiadnyana, 35 years old, annual festival participant, 25 March 2026)

Identifying inconsistencies in the implementation of festival activities at the local level.

In everyday interactions, particularly in informal and digital contexts, Indonesian and foreign languages continue to dominate. This pattern reflects a disparity between the intensive language use observed during festival activities and the relatively limited integration of Balinese into daily communicative practices. Another participant also noted that the organization of the festival is sometimes “*inconsistent across administrative levels, making it challenging to ensure a structured progression from village to provincial stages*” (Interview with Diah Nirmala, 33 years old, annual festival participant, 25 March 2026). Furthermore, some participants reported that their involvement was occasionally compulsory rather than voluntary, which may hinder meaningful engagement.

Field observations further substantiate this finding by illustrating that the intensity of Balinese language usage varies across different activity types. As observed in formal competitions, guided learning sessions, and institutional events, language use is consistently high due to structured expectations and cultural framing. Conversely, informal interactions and peripheral activities exhibit less frequent use of Balinese, particularly among younger participants. This suggests that the festival effectively establishes an intensive yet situational domain of language practice, which has not yet been fully internalized into everyday communication.

In summary, these findings suggest that the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival serves as an effective platform for enhancing the visibility, legitimacy, and practice of the Balinese language in public and cultural domains, while also reinforcing its role as a marker of cultural identity. However, its impact remains largely episodic, relying on the temporal momentum of the event and strong

institutional support. Furthermore, qualitative evidence from participants indicates that the effectiveness of the festival is also influenced by challenges in implementation, including inconsistencies in competition management, uneven organizational coordination, and varying levels of participant engagement. These factors suggest that, beyond its symbolic and institutional success, the festival has not yet fully achieved sustained integration of the Balinese language into everyday communicative practices.

To enhance the sustainability of language maintenance, the festival's impact should be extended through ongoing engagement in community, educational, and digital environments. In accordance with Fishman's theory of language maintenance, this study elucidates that while the festival broadens the functional domains of the Balinese language, its long-term sustainability ultimately hinges on its consistent utilization in everyday social interactions beyond ceremonial and institutional contexts.

4.1.3 Government Policy and the Implementation of Bulan Bahasa Bali as a Language Maintenance Strategy

The implementation of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival exemplifies the proactive role of the Bali Provincial Government in promoting the utilization of the Balinese language within public and cultural spheres. Based on interviews conducted with policymakers, organizers, and cultural figures, the festival is comprehended not only as a formal policy initiative, but also as a practical mechanism for fostering language usage in structured social contexts. This initiative is supported by Governor Regulation No. 80 of 2018, which provides the legal and institutional foundation for its implementation. Nevertheless, the mere existence of formal regulations does not automatically ensure the efficacy of language preservation efforts.

The findings indicate that policy implementation continues to encounter several practical challenges, including inconsistencies in festival organization across administrative levels, varying levels of community participation, and disparities in local institutional capacity. These conditions suggest that the success of the policy is contingent not only on regulatory support, but also on sustained community engagement and the capacity of local stakeholders to translate policy objectives into meaningful language practices. Informants emphasized that this policy framework facilitates coordination across administrative levels and supports the organization of festival activities at the village, district, and provincial levels. However, they also acknowledged that the effectiveness of this policy is dependent on its local implementation, particularly in terms of consistency, participant engagement, and alignment with community needs.

Building upon these findings, the implementation of this policy is top-down in terms of formulation and budgeting. In practice, however, it involves a wide range of actors, including *desa adat* (customary villages), educational institutions, cultural communities, and younger generations. This pattern reflects a language policy model that combines a structural, state-led approach with bottom-up community participation. In terms of funding, the implementation of Bulan Bahasa Bali at the village level is primarily supported by financial assistance from the Bali Provincial Government, particularly through grant schemes such as Bantuan Keuangan Khusus (Special Financial Assistance or BKK). However, the amount of funding allocated to each *desa adat* varies and is not uniformly standardized, depending on local conditions and the scale of activities. In some cases, delays in the disbursement of provincial funds have even affected the implementation of festival activities at the village level. Within the framework of language policy and planning theory, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival can be understood as a policy intervention aimed at expanding the domains of Balinese language use, particularly in public spaces, non-formal education, and cultural expression domains that were previously largely confined to domestic and ritual contexts.

Despite the positive outcomes of the interview, several challenges persist in the implementation of policies at the local level. Funding constraints, coupled with limitations in human resources and local management capacity, pose significant obstacles to the long-term sustainability of the festival’s impact. Furthermore, while community participation in the festival is relatively high, the regular and sustained use of the Balinese language beyond the festival period remains limited, particularly among younger generations. This situation suggests that, although the festival effectively creates symbolic and performative spaces for the Balinese language, it has not yet fully succeeded in embedding its usage within everyday communication practices.

In summary, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival can be regarded as an effective policy strategy for expanding and legitimizing the use of the Balinese language in public and cultural spheres. However, its long-term impact hinges on stronger and more sustainable policy support. Consistent with the findings in the preceding subsection, language maintenance is not solely determined by the intensity of festival-based interventions but also by the extent to which language use is integrated into formal education, media, and daily social interaction, as elucidated in Fishman’s framework. With such reinforcement, government policy can serve not only as a facilitator of cultural activities but also as a pivotal driver in sustaining the vitality of the Balinese language in contemporary society.

4.2 Discussion

The generally positive perception of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival, particularly among its participants, underscores the significance of attitudinal support in language preservation endeavors. Positive attitudes towards the Balinese language contribute to heightened awareness and symbolic attachment, which are often regarded as pivotal elements in sustaining local languages. This pattern aligns with the findings of Marhum et al. (2023) in their study titled “Language Education Policy and Local Language Maintenance as Cultural Sustainability in Central Sulawesi.” This study emphasizes that positive public perceptions of local languages and awareness of the threat of language extinction are crucial factors in the success of language preservation as a component of cultural sustainability. In the context of Central Sulawesi, public awareness fosters synergy among educational policies, cultural activities, and community participation. This comparison reinforces the present study’s finding that robust public perceptions of the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival constitute an important form of social capital in supporting language policy, despite the fact that such positive perceptions have not yet fully translated into consistent language-use practices in daily life.

From a language-use practices perspective, interview and observational data indicate that the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival has created an intensive environment for the use of the Balinese language during structured activities, such as competitions, artistic performances, and language-related discussions. However, the use of Balinese tends to be situational and diminishes outside the festival context. This finding aligns with the sociolinguistic perspective proposed by Hidayat and Jannah (2023) in “Local Language Maintenance: A Cultural and Sociolinguistic Perspective,” which emphasizes that language maintenance depends not only on the presence of cultural symbols but also on the sustainability of language practices across diverse social domains. Their study highlights that cultural activities, including festivals, play an important role as catalysts for language revitalization but must be followed by the expansion of language use into non-ceremonial domains in order for a language to survive functionally.

Consequently, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival can be understood as an initial space for the formation of language practices, but it has not yet fully succeeded in internalizing the Balinese language into the everyday communication of younger generations. This argument is further supported by Tangkas and Suari (2023), who demonstrate that the use of Balinese in digital media platforms, such as YouTube, enables the language to function beyond ceremonial settings and enter everyday communicative and entertainment domains, particularly among younger audiences. This finding suggests that the sustainability of

festival-based language practices may be strengthened when they are connected to contemporary media spaces that resonate with daily linguistic habits. This condition reflects the findings of Yonhartini et al. (2023), who argue that the maintenance of the Balinese language remains strongest in cultural and ritual domains, while its use in daily interpersonal communication continues to face pressure from dominant languages. Her study reinforces the present finding that without reinforcement in everyday social domains, cultural events such as festivals tend to produce situational rather than habitual language use.

In the context of festivals as policy instruments and cultural practices, the findings of this study align with Franklin et al.’s (2022) research in “The Adelaide Festival and the Development of Arts in Adelaide.” While focusing on the arts rather than language, this study demonstrates that institutionalized festivals can enhance cultural visibility and public participation. However, their impact may be transient if they are not integrated into everyday community practices. Similarly, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival has successfully increased the public presence of the Balinese language, yet its contribution to long-term language preservation remains limited when language use is predominantly confined to ceremonial and festival contexts rather than being sustained in daily communication. This suggests that symbolic cultural events alone are insufficient without broader community-based language practices and intergenerational transmission.

From a language policy perspective, the findings of this study align with Wilson (2024) in “Language Policy and Its Influence on Language Maintenance among Indigenous Communities in New Zealand,” which emphasizes that the success of language maintenance is largely determined by the consistency of government policies, institutional support, and active community engagement. In the context of Bali, however, this dynamic is more complex, as language maintenance is also deeply shaped by the role of traditional institutions. As argued by Arka (2011), the sustainability of the Balinese language depends not only on formal policy interventions but also on the active involvement of *desa adat* and cultural practices that regulate language use within community life.

In the New Zealand context, the formal recognition of Indigenous languages and their integration into education, media, and public spaces have sustainably expanded domains of language use. Compared to this context, the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival demonstrates the government’s role as a facilitator and driver of culture-based language policy; however, its impact remains more pronounced in symbolic and cultural domains than in everyday communicative practices. This suggests that festival-based policies need to be complemented by other structural strategies such as strengthening formal education, Balinese-language media, and digital spaces so that language maintenance does not

remain temporary. This finding is consistent with Pastika et al. (2023), who emphasize that the protection of the Balinese language requires deliberate state intervention through legal frameworks, such as the Bali Provincial Regulation No. 1 of 2018. However, they also caution that language policies risk losing their effectiveness if they remain normative and symbolic without sustained implementation across education, literacy practices, and public communication.

Beyond comparisons with policy and cultural festival studies, the findings of this research can be further enriched through a multilayered sociopolitical perspective, as proposed by Zuo and Wang (2025) in “Ethnic Minority Language Maintenance from a Sociopolitical Multilayered Perspective: The Mongolian Case in Northeast China”. Their study demonstrates that minority language maintenance cannot be separated from the interaction among state policies, power dynamics, educational institutions, and community-level social practices. In the case of the Mongolian language in China, despite formal recognition, political, economic, and dominant-language pressures constrain the expansion of language-use domains in everyday life. This finding aligns with the present study, which reveals that while the *Bulan Bahasa Bali* Festival is supported by local government policy, it still encounters challenges in institutionalizing the use of the Balinese language beyond symbolic and cultural domains. This comparison reinforces the argument that the success of language policy is not solely determined by the existence of regulations or cultural programs, but by the capacity of such policies to penetrate multiple social layers and sustain language practices across domains.

A distinct yet complementary perspective is presented by Dubinina et al. (2025) in their study titled “The Dynamics of Russian Language Maintenance in the U.S.-Based Russophone Diaspora.” This research elucidates the intricate interplay between identity, emotion, and language practices within diaspora communities. The study reveals that Russian language maintenance in the United States unfolds under ambiguous circumstances, where the language serves as a symbolic representation of cultural heritage. However, its utilization is often restricted to specific spaces and lacks consistent preservation in public life. While the diaspora context diverges from the local context of Bali, this finding holds relevance for the present study, particularly in elucidating the disparity between positive attitudes and actual Balinese language usage among younger generations. Analogous to Russophone diaspora communities, Balinese youth demonstrate pride and symbolic affiliation with the Balinese language, yet encounter dominant-language pressures that curtail its use in everyday interactions. This comparison reinforces the argument that language maintenance is frequently emotionally and identity-driven, necessitating structural support to ensure its functional viability.

Furthermore, the systematic review conducted by Gu et al. (2025) in “A Systematic Review of Family Language Policy Studies from 2008 to 2024” offers a crucial micro-level perspective for comprehending the limitations of festival-based and public policy interventions. The study underscores that the family constitutes the most pivotal domain in preserving language maintenance, as language practices within the domestic environment exert a significant influence on the linguistic proficiency and habitual language usage of younger generations. This insight holds substantial relevance for the current study, which demonstrates that the heightened Balinese language utilization during the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival does not fully persist in daily life. This implies that festival-based and public-space policy interventions must be supplemented by strengthened family-level language policies and early education initiatives, thereby ensuring that the expansion of language-use domains transcends cultural spaces and is also embedded within domestic practices.

In summary, the discussion suggests that the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival serves as an effective cultural policy instrument, particularly in raising awareness, cultivating positive attitudes, and increasing the visibility of the Balinese language in public and cultural spheres. However, this effectiveness is largely contingent upon the context, as the use of the Balinese language tends to diminish outside the festival setting and has not yet been fully integrated into everyday communicative practices. Nevertheless, as evidenced by international research on language policy in New Zealand, Mongolian language preservation in China, Russian diaspora language dynamics, and family language policy, sustainable language preservation cannot solely rely on symbolic or ceremonial interventions.

The persistent disparity between positive attitudes and everyday language-use practices, particularly among younger generations, underscores a global challenge in language maintenance, where dominant-language pressures, sociopolitical dynamics, and inadequate reinforcement of domestic domains hinder the expansion of language-use domains. Consequently, Balinese language maintenance through the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival should be comprehended as a component of a multifaceted strategy that encompasses government policy, cultural practices, formal education, family roles, and the utilization of media and digital spaces. Such integration is crucial to ensure that the expansion of Balinese language-use domains does not persist as a transient cultural phenomenon but evolves into sustainable language practices within the social fabric of Balinese society, as articulated in Fishman’s framework of language maintenance. This finding elucidates that while the festival successfully functions as a symbolic and institutional mechanism of language maintenance, its long-term efficacy hinges on the expansion of language use into everyday social domains.

5. Conclusion

The quantitative findings reveal a remarkably high level of participant perception, indicating that the festival has successfully generated strong attitudinal support for the Balinese language. Quantitative data from 180 respondents demonstrate a very high level of perception, with a mean Likert score of 4.03 and a Perception Index (PI) of 80.6, confirming the strong positive reception of the festival among participants. However, qualitative evidence suggests that this positive perception does not fully translate into sustained language use. While the intensity of Balinese language use increases during festival activities, its use in everyday contexts, particularly among younger generations, remains limited and situational. This indicates that the impact of the festival is primarily event-driven rather than behaviorally embedded in daily communication.

These findings position the Bulan Bahasa Bali Festival as a significant catalyst for promoting language awareness and engagement, while also highlighting its limitations in fostering long-term language maintenance. To achieve more sustainable outcomes, language use should be extended beyond festival contexts into everyday social domains, including family, education, and digital environments. This study has several limitations. The sample is restricted to active festival participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader Balinese community. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for an assessment of long-term impacts. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt longitudinal approaches and involve more diverse participant groups. Further studies should also explore the role of family practices, formal education, and digital media in supporting sustained Balinese language use.

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Disclaimer on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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