THE USE OF ENGLISH IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LOCAL CULTURE AND WISDOM IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the role of the English language in social media in supporting the preservation of local culture and wisdom in Indonesia. English, which serves as a global communication tool, is a strategic means for Indonesian people to promote local culture in the international arena. However, the use of English in the context of local culture also presents challenges, such as the risk of cultural homogenization and the decline in the use of regional languages. This study used a qualitative approach with a survey method for social media users, especially the younger generation. The survey was conducted to understand the motivations, perceptions, and impacts on cultural awareness for the younger generation towards the use of English for cultural preservation. There were 108 respondents who were the younger generation involved in this study. The results of the study indicate that the use of English in social media can be an effective tool to introduce local culture to a global audience. Posts that use English tend to be more accessible and understood by the international community, thus increasing the opportunity for promoting local culture. However, this study also found that the success of cultural promotion through English is highly dependent on how local cultural elements are represented authentically and consistently. In addition, there is an urgent need to ensure that the use of English does not replace regional languages, but rather supports the revitalization of local languages through a collaborative approach. This study concludes that the use of English on social media has great potential in preserving local culture and wisdom in Indonesia if carried out with the right strategy. Policy recommendations and media strategies are also formulated to maximize the positive impact of this phenomenon.

Keywords: *English language, social media, cultural preservation, local wisdom*

INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by rapid globalization and digital interconnectivity, social media has emerged as a dynamic space for cultural interaction, identity formation, and knowledge exchange. Indonesia, as one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world, faces both opportunities and challenges in preserving its local cultures and traditional wisdom. With over 700 languages and countless ethnic groups, Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage is rich but also vulnerable to marginalization in the face of modernity and global cultural influences. The rise of English as a global lingua franca has significantly shaped the way individuals, communities, and institutions communicate in digital spaces, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook.

The use of English in social media, especially among Indonesian youth and cultural advocates, is not merely a means of global communication but also a strategic tool for cultural promotion and preservation. By using English to narrate traditional customs, promote local arts, or document indigenous knowledge, Indonesians are increasingly reaching global audiences who may not otherwise have access to these cultural insights. This digital strategy amplifies the visibility of local cultures, opening up possibilities for cross-cultural appreciation, academic research, tourism, and international collaboration (Susanto & Rahmah, 2021). For example, cultural festivals, traditional crafts, culinary practices, and oral histories that are documented and shared in English can generate global interest while fostering national pride.

However, the interplay between English and local culture is complex. While the use of English allows for broader outreach, there is a risk that oversimplification, cultural misrepresentation, or the loss of linguistic nuances could dilute the authenticity of local wisdom. Moreover, there exists a tension between embracing a global language and maintaining the vitality of indigenous languages, many of which are endangered due to lack of use in formal and digital domains (Mustafa, 2019). Thus, the challenge lies in balancing global engagement with local integrity.

This article explores the dual role of English in the Indonesian social media landscape: as a medium for communicating and preserving cultural identity, and as a potential threat to local linguistic diversity. It aims to investigate how Indonesian social media users utilize English to promote local culture and traditional knowledge, the motivations behind this linguistic choice, and the implications for cultural sustainability. By examining case studies, user practices, and digital content, this study sheds light on how digital literacy, language awareness, and cultural sensitivity can contribute to the preservation of Indonesia's cultural heritage in a globalized world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Z Generation

Generation Z (Generation Z) was born between 1995 and 2012 and is the descendant of Generation Y or Millennials (1981-1996) and Generation X (1965-1980). They are exposed to the internet, mobile systems (Francis &Hoefel, 2018), social networks and the internet (Francis &Hoefel, 2018; Singh &Dangmei, 2016). They are considered the most ethnically diverse and technologically sophisticated generation (Harber, 2011). Nevertheless, on the other hand, one phenomenon that occurs is that globalization and technological development has given to the millennial generation. This generation uses much technology both in the field of information and communication (Ardi & Putri, 2020).

Local Wisdom

Albantani and Madkur (2018) argue that local wisdom needs to be in instructional activities of foreign language teaching, even though they need to learn foreign languages, they would not lose their real identity. The features of local wisdom are: 1) Able to withstand foreign cultures 2) Having the ability to accommodate the elements of foreign cultures 3) Having the ability to integrate elements of foreign culture into the native culture 4) Having the ability to control 5) Being able to give direction to the development of culture. Local wisdom is a form of intelligence of the ancestors that usually takes the form of thoughts, rules, language, even physical things in the form of traditional house buildings, as well as tools for survival (Amsyah & Juanda, 2022).

Culture Preservation

According to Smith (2006), cultural heritage encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects, including traditions, languages, rituals, and knowledge systems that define a community's identity. These intangible elements are particularly vulnerable in the digital age, where dominant narratives can overshadow minority cultures. In Indonesia, cultural preservation efforts are increasingly adopting digital platforms to document and share local traditions, arts, and indigenous knowledge. As observed by Heryanto (2010), the intersection of media and identity in post-authoritarian Indonesia has allowed for a more democratic and diverse expression of culture, enabling communities to reclaim and redefine their cultural narratives. Social media, in particular, provides an accessible medium through which younger generations can engage with, reinterpret, and disseminate their cultural heritage.

In Indonesia, where many local languages are at risk of extinction, digital tools have been used to create online dictionaries, storytelling videos, and multilingual content to revitalize endangered languages (Zainuddin & Imran, 2021). Moreover, scholars have debated whether the use of English in cultural promotion enhances or threatens cultural authenticity. While English enables cross-cultural communication and global outreach, there is concern that it may lead to homogenization or the loss of local nuance. Warschauer, El Said, and Zohry (2002) caution that without conscious efforts to contextualize and adapt global tools to local values, digital platforms may inadvertently prioritize dominant cultural narratives.

Language in Social Media

According to Androutsopoulos (2014), language in social media is characterized by its hybridity, informality, and multimodality, allowing users to combine written text, images, audio, and video to construct meaning and social presence. These platforms create participatory environments where users can experiment with language, blend codes, and adopt global linguistic styles while still embedding local cultural references.

In the Indonesian context, language use on social media reflects broader social dynamics and power relations. Studies by Nugroho and Suryanto (2018) show that Indonesian youth use English on social media to express modernity, global connectivity, and cosmopolitan identity, while still maintaining Bahasa Indonesia or local dialects for intimacy, solidarity, or cultural expression. This form of "translocal linguistic practice" indicates that language choice online is not random but is closely tied to users' self-representation and social goals.

Furthermore, social media has encouraged the emergence of new linguistic styles and digital vernaculars. As Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) note, features such as abbreviations, emojis, hashtags, and memes are part of an evolving digital discourse that reshapes how language is used for interaction, humor, and activism. These stylistic innovations challenge traditional linguistic norms and demonstrate how language adapts in response to technological affordances and user creativity.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a survey method for social media users, especially the younger generation. The survey was conducted to understand the motivations, perceptions, and impacts on cultural awareness for the younger generation towards the use of English for cultural preservation. There were 108 respondents who were the younger generation involved in this study.

FINDINGS

Based on the results of a survey involving 108 respondents from the younger generation, it shows the Use of English in Social Media for the Preservation of Local Culture and Wisdom in Indonesia. The survey was conducted in February and March 2025 and can be described as follows:

Gender Distribution

Gender	
F/M	Number of Respondents
Male	51
Female	57
Total	**108**

The survey entitled the Use of English in Social Media for the Preservation of Local Culture and Wisdom in Indonesia involved 51 male respondents and 57 female respondents.

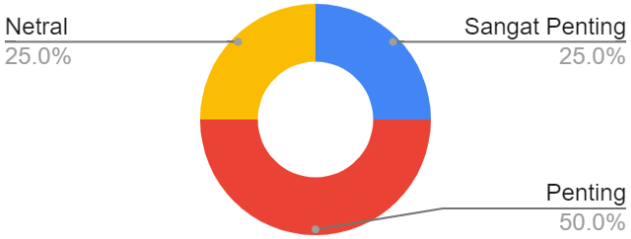
Age Distribution

Age	
Age	**Number of Respondents**
17	1
18	6
19	43
20	36
21	15
22	3
23	4
Total	**108**

Based on the age of respondents involved in the survey, the majority of respondents were very young, namely 19 and 20 years old. There were 43 respondents aged 19 years, 36 respondents aged 20 years, 15 respondents aged 21 years, 6 respondents aged 18 years, 4 respondents aged 23 years, 3 respondents aged 22 years, and 1 respondent aged 17 years.

In the survey entitled the Use of English in Social Media for the Preservation of Local Culture and Wisdom in Indonesia, several questions were asked about the application of the use of English in social media, and how it impacts the preservation of culture as local wisdom.

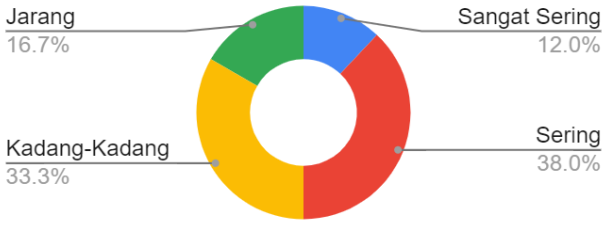
1. What do you think about the use of English in social media?



Graph 1. Opinions of the Young Generation on the Use of English in the Social Media

The survey results show that respondents, or in this case the younger generation, have opinions about the use of English in social media. As many as 50% of respondents think that English is important to use in social media, 25% of respondents strongly agree with the use of English in social media, and 25% of respondents are neutral about the use of English in social media.

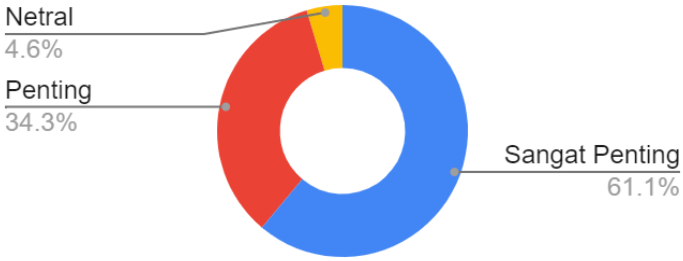
2. How often do you find the use of English in social media?



Graph 2. Frequency of finding the use of English in local mass media

The survey results show how often the younger generation finds the use of English in social media. 12% of respondents stated that they very often find English in social media, this is supported by 38% of respondents who stated the same thing, namely often seeing the use of English in social media. However, as many as 33.3% of respondents admitted that they only sometimes find English in social media, 16.7% admitted that they rarely find English in social media.

3. What do you think about the preservation of culture which is Indonesia's local wisdom in the social media?

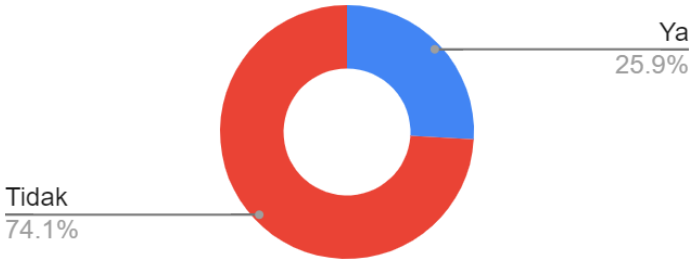


Graph 3. The importance of preserving culture as Indonesia's local wisdom in social media.

The survey results show respondents' opinions on the importance of preserving culture as Indonesia's local wisdom in social media. 61.1% of respondents stated that preserving and creative culture is very important to be raised in the mass media. This is supported by 34.3% of respondents who also stated

the importance of preserving and creative culture which is Indonesia's local wisdom can be raised in the mass media.

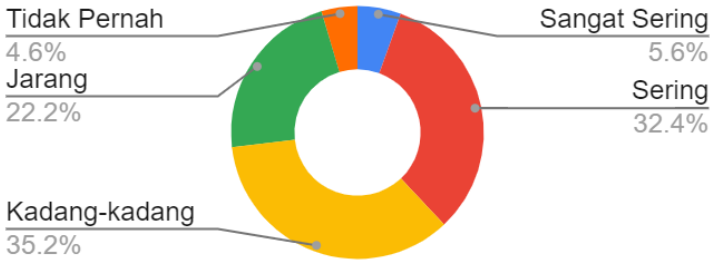
4. Do you feel that the use of English in social media can threaten the existence of regional languages and local wisdom?



Graph 4. Respondents' perceptions regarding the use of English can threaten the existence of regional languages.

The survey results show that respondents' opinions regarding the use of English in mass media can threaten the existence of regional languages and local wisdom. 74.1% of respondents stated that the use of English in mass media does not threaten the existence of regional languages and local wisdom of Indonesia. Meanwhile, 25.9% of respondents stated that English could threaten the existence of regional languages and local wisdom of Indonesia.

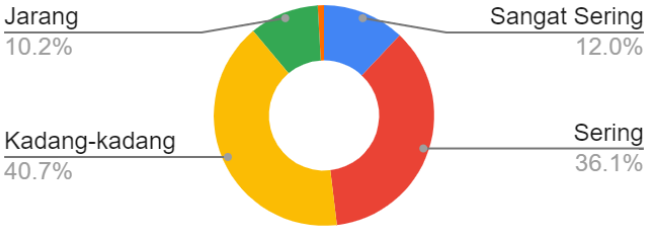
5. How often do you find the use of regional languages, which are local Indonesian wisdom, in the social media amidst the onslaught of English?



Graph 5. Respondents' perceptions regarding the use of English can threaten the existence of regional languages.

The survey results above show how often respondents find the use of regional languages which are local wisdom of Indonesia in the social media amidst the onslaught of English. 32.4% and 5.6% of respondents stated that they very often find the use of regional languages in social media. 35.2% of respondents stated that they sometimes find regional languages in social media, 22.2% of respondents admitted that they rarely find the use of regional languages in social media, and 4.6% of respondents admitted that they never find the use of regional languages in social media.

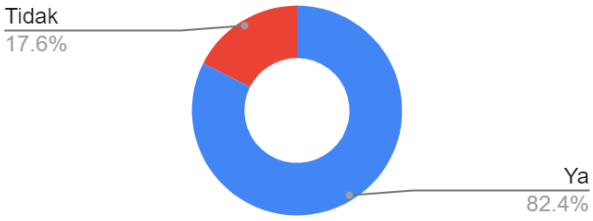
6. How often do you find promotions and socialization of local Indonesian culture (such as dance and other arts events) in local mass media?



Graph 6. Frequency of respondents finding promotion and socialization of local Indonesian culture in social media?

The survey results above show the frequency of respondents finding promotions and socialization of local Indonesian culture (such as dance events and other arts) in social media. 36.1% and 12.0% of respondents admitted to very and often finding promotional content and socialization of local Indonesian culture in the social media. 40.7% admitted to only occasionally finding promotions and socialization of local Indonesian culture in social media. 10.2% of respondents admitted to rarely finding promotions and socialization of local Indonesian culture.

7. Do you feel that the use of English in social media has a positive impact on Cultural Preservation as Local Wisdom in Social Media?



Graph 7. Respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of English on efforts to preserve culture as local wisdom in the social media.

The survey results above show the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of English on efforts to preserve local wisdom in social media. 82.4% of respondents felt that the use of English in social media had a positive impact on the preservation of local wisdom in social media. Meanwhile, 17.6% of respondents felt that the use of English in social media did not have a positive impact on the preservation of culture as local wisdom in social media.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into how English is perceived and used in social media by the younger generation in Indonesia, particularly in relation to cultural preservation and the promotion of local wisdom. The survey responses illustrate a generally favorable attitude toward the integration of English in digital spaces, while also highlighting concerns about the visibility and sustainability of regional languages and traditional cultural practices.

Firstly, the data indicate a strong endorsement of English in social media: 50% of respondents believe English is important, and an additional 25% strongly agree with its use. This suggests that English is increasingly viewed not as a threat but as a tool for broader communication and global engagement. It reflects a growing awareness among Indonesian youth that English can serve as a medium to reach wider audiences, especially when promoting aspects of local culture that may be unfamiliar to international viewers.

Moreover, the frequency with which respondents encounter English on social media—50% stating they often or very often see it—confirms the pervasiveness of English in digital discourse. This aligns with prior research by Tagg et al. (2017), who noted that English often functions as a bridge language in online communication, especially in multilingual societies. However, this finding is contrasted with the less frequent appearance of regional languages online; only 38% of respondents stated that they often or very often see local languages used on social media, while 22.2% rarely encounter them, and 4.6% never do. This suggests a digital imbalance in linguistic representation, which may contribute to the marginalization of local languages if left unaddressed.

Encouragingly, the importance of cultural preservation remains a shared value. Over 95% of respondents believe that promoting local culture and wisdom on social media is important or very important. This finding underscores a strong cultural awareness among young Indonesians and aligns with Smith's (2006) argument that cultural heritage—particularly intangible forms such as language, rituals, and artistic expression—requires active participation for its survival.

Interestingly, 74.1% of respondents do not view English as a threat to regional languages or local wisdom, suggesting that the majority believe in a coexistence model rather than a zero-sum linguistic scenario. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Pennycook (2010), who argued

that global and local languages can interact in complementary ways when thoughtfully integrated. However, a minority (25.9%) still express concern over linguistic erosion, signaling the need for ongoing monitoring and policy intervention to ensure that cultural authenticity is not compromised by globalization.

Additionally, when asked about the impact of English on cultural preservation, a large majority (82.4%) agreed that it has a positive effect. This is a crucial insight—it implies that English, when used strategically, is not just a functional language but a powerful instrument for cultural diplomacy and global storytelling. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube allow Indonesian creators to frame their cultural narratives in a way that is accessible to non-Indonesian audiences, potentially generating interest in traditional arts, crafts, and values beyond national borders.

However, there remains a gap in the frequency of cultural content promotion. While a modest percentage of respondents (about 48%) often or very often see local culture promoted online, a significant 40.7% only see such content occasionally. This indicates an opportunity for cultural stakeholders—governments, educators, and content creators—to expand and amplify the digital presence of local traditions through English-medium content while also reinforcing indigenous language use.

In summary, the discussion highlights a nuanced view: English is not inherently a threat but rather a medium of potential empowerment. The challenge lies in balancing its use with consistent efforts to support and represent Indonesia's rich linguistic and cultural diversity in the digital sphere. This approach not only ensures the preservation of local wisdom but also situates Indonesian culture within a global dialogue.

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