

Lessons from Bali on how to revitalize local languages on Facebook

What this research was about and why it is important

The research is about the survival of a language that depends on its transmission to the next generation. The purpose of this research is to analyze how social media can facilitate teenagers' use of minority languages by examining the activities of a vibrant Balinese language Facebook group LBB (Lestarikan Bahasa Bali). Regardless of official policies, school practices, and family norms, this group actively creates a space where adolescents can speak Balinese 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. According to this study, social media have the potential to be a highly effective, low-cost, and easily implementable tool to enhance language revival among a crucial young generation by operating outside government, school, and family structures.

What the researchers did

- Looked up the history of the Balinese LBB group and their development and focused on the Balinese language, the use of technology, cultural events, activities and language education.
- Focused on Facebook group LBB as a digital space for Balinese people and analyses how often Balinese is used on LBB and other social media sites as well as postings and how social media can facilitate teenagers' use of minority languages by examining the activities of a vibrant Facebook Balinese language group.
- Explored whether LBB and social groups dynamically encourage use of Balinese regardless of and apart from official state policies, family norms and global pressures.

What the researchers found

- The survival of a language depends on its transmission to the next generation.
- Social media have the potential to be highly effective, low-cost, and easily implementable tools to enhance language revival among a crucial young generation by operating outside government, schools and family structures.
- Social media platforms like Facebook can play a role in this by providing a space for people to engage with and use minority languages in a variety of contexts.
- LBB provides a place for members to share content, discuss topics, and interact with one another using the Balinese language.
--> This can create a sense of community and belonging among speakers of the language, and encourage its use among young people in particular.
- Existence of everyday Balinese ("bahasa sehari-hari") and formal Balinese ("bahasa halus").
- LBB members using 'semi-halus', which is described as 'semi respectful' Balinese.
- LBB is a space where a single mid-level registered Balinese is acceptable.
- LBB is a productive space for young people to speak Balinese however they can.
- Postings consistently in Balinese is noteworthy, using Balinese on an international platform was inappropriate exclusive.
- There is no simple link between identity and language choice.
- Individual's choice of language is influenced by parents' ethnicity, language spoken in home environment and ethnic heterogeneity of classroom and social environment.
- Identities & ideologies are not always mutually reinforcing but may be in tension.
- LBB is helping to revitalize Balinese in similar way to how shadow puppet plays are used to raise up political issues in Bali.

Things to consider

- LBB offers young people a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere in which they can easily write however they want.
- Since LBB members said that they feel liberated from register errors, it may give them self-confidence.
- The article gives a good overview of how LBB members feel and deal with the Balinese language.

Material, data, open access article: N/A

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