

Sustaining the Mother Tongue: Insights into Waijewa Language Maintenance among Migrant Workers in the Denpasar Diaspora

Christmas Prasetya Ate^{a*}

^a *Universitas Citra Bangsa, Indonesia*

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: chris.ate@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Migrant workers are a social group that is vulnerable to changes in language practices due to the need to adapt to new environments. This study aims to describe the domains of language use, language attitudes, and the factors underlying the maintenance of the Waijewa language among migrant workers from Wewewa subdistrict, Southwest Sumba, who reside in Denpasar, Bali. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach supported by quantitative data. The main instrument was a questionnaire distributed to 22 respondents originating from five districts in Wewewa. The collected data were analyzed descriptively by calculating tendencies of language use, attitudes, and the dominant factors contributing to language maintenance. The findings reveal that the Waijewa language remains strong in domestic domains, particularly in the home, boarding houses, and communication with family through social media. However, its use tends to decline in public domains, which are predominantly influenced by Indonesian and Balinese. In terms of attitudes, almost all respondents expressed positive views toward the Waijewa language, demonstrated pride in its use, and emphasized the importance of transmitting it to future generations. The most influential factors in language maintenance are family roles, solidarity within the Sumbanese community, and cultural identity. Social media also contributes significantly, while workplace rules or policies show little influence. This study highlights that the maintenance of the Waijewa language in migration contexts is primarily supported by the internal strength of its speech community. Accordingly, the research contributes to the understanding of language maintenance dynamics of minority languages amid migration and the dominance of majority languages in multilingual urban settings.

Keywords: Language Maintenance, Migrant Workers, Mother Tongue, Waijewa Language

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role not only as a medium of communication but also as a key marker of cultural identity and social belonging. In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, the coexistence of national, regional, and local languages creates complex linguistic dynamics that shape how speakers negotiate language use, loyalty, and intergenerational transmission. Although Bahasa Indonesia functions as the national lingua franca, Indonesia remains home to more than 700 local languages, making linguistic diversity one of the country's most important cultural resources. At the same time, this diversity faces increasing pressure from urbanization, ethnic mixing, and changing patterns of language use, particularly in socially and linguistically diverse settings (Pepinsky et al., 2024; Badan Bahasa, 2025).

One of the most critical challenges faced by regional languages in Indonesia is language shift, namely the gradual reduction of mother-tongue uses in favor of more dominant languages in everyday communication. This process is especially visible among migrant and mobile communities, where speakers must adapt to new linguistic and cultural environments while balancing heritage-language loyalty with broader communicative demands. Recent studies suggest that migration and family language practices often reshape language behavior by encouraging speakers to retain the heritage language in intimate or family-based domains while shifting toward Indonesian or other dominant languages in public, educational, or occupational settings (Fishman, 1991; Mauziyyah et al., 2024; Pramuniati et al., 2025). In this sense, language shift among migrants should not be seen simply as immediate language abandonment, but rather as a domain-based negotiation shaped by mobility, family practice, and aspirations for social participation.

In this context, migrant workers from Sumba, particularly those from the Wewewa subdistrict of Southwest Sumba, represent a unique linguistic community. Their native language, Wajjewa, a member of the Austronesian language family, carries significant cultural and ethnic value. When these speakers migrate to urban centers such as Denpasar, Bali, they enter a linguistically diverse environment dominated by Indonesian and Balinese. The contact between these languages often results in code-switching, borrowing, and in some cases, language shift. Yet, preliminary observations indicate that many Sumbanese migrants continue to use Wajjewa actively within their communities, suggesting ongoing efforts toward language maintenance.

Language maintenance refers to the sustained use and intergenerational transmission of a minority language despite pressures exerted by more dominant languages (Fishman, 1991; Bellón et al., 2024). Recent scholarship has shown that the maintenance of minority languages is closely associated with family language practices, community solidarity, and cultural identity, all of which strengthen speakers' commitment to their heritage language (Balaska, 2024; Ramoniené & Ramonaitė, 2024). Family language policy, in particular, has been identified as a key factor in shaping intergenerational transmission and the continuity of heritage languages within diaspora communities (Bellón et al., 2024; Ramoniené & Ramonaitė, 2024). Beyond the family domain, communal networks also provide important social spaces in which migrants can reproduce linguistic and cultural practices in the host environment (Yang, 2026; Al-khresheh, 2025). This tendency is likewise evident among Indonesian migrant communities, where language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a resource for resilience and a marker of collective identity (Ali et al., 2025; Ate & Lawa, 2022).

Although scholarship on language maintenance and language shift has grown substantially across different parts of the world, research on these issues in the context of intra-national migration in Indonesia remains relatively limited. This gap is especially apparent in studies involving migrant communities from eastern Indonesia, whose linguistic experiences are often underrepresented in mainstream sociolinguistic research. Much of the existing literature has focused more heavily on international migration, bilingual education, or large and institutionally visible language groups. As a result, the dynamics of minority-language maintenance among internally mobile communities within Indonesia have not yet received sufficient attention, even though such communities also experience significant linguistic pressure when they move into new social and cultural environments.

In addition, sociolinguistic discussion in Indonesia has historically tended to give greater attention to dominant ethnolinguistic groups such as the Javanese, Sundanese, and Minangkabau. While these communities are undoubtedly important to the study of language

use and identity, this emphasis has often left smaller language communities less visible in academic discourse. Consequently, the experiences of speakers from minority groups are frequently absent from broader discussions of linguistic survival, adaptation, and identity negotiation. In this regard, the Wajewa community in Denpasar provides an important case for examining how minority-language speakers maintain their linguistic heritage while negotiating the demands of a multilingual urban setting. The case is particularly valuable because it sheds light on how language maintenance operates not only as a communicative practice, but also as a form of cultural continuity and social positioning in the context of internal migration.

This research, therefore, seeks to describe the domains of language use, language attitudes, and the factors underlying the maintenance of the Wajewa language among migrant workers from Wewewa, Southwest Sumba, residing in Denpasar, Bali. Building upon these theoretical and empirical foundations, the present study focuses on the maintenance of the Wajewa language among migrant workers in Denpasar, Bali. Specifically, it seeks to address three core aspects: (1) the domains in which the Wajewa language is used by migrant workers, (2) their attitudes toward their native language, and (3) the sociocultural factors that underlie its maintenance in the diaspora. By examining these dimensions, the research aims to contribute to the broader discussion of language maintenance within multilingual urban environments and to highlight the resilience of local linguistic identities in the face of globalization and mobility. The findings aim to provide insights into how minority languages can survive under conditions of linguistic contact, and how local identity and solidarity function as protective forces for language survival in the context of internal mobility and urban multilingualism.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design supported by quantitative data to examine the maintenance of the Wajewa language among migrant workers in Denpasar, Bali. The study was designed to capture both the observable patterns of language use and the sociocultural meanings underlying those patterns. Methodologically, it was grounded in Fishman's (1991) theory of language maintenance and shift, particularly in relation to the role of social domains in sustaining minority languages. It also supported by Holmes's (2013) sociolinguistic perspective on language choice in multilingual settings. The dimension of language attitudes was framed through Baker's (1992) theory of language attitudes, whereas the analysis of communal solidarity and migrant linguistic networks was informed by Pauwels's (2007) community-based perspective on minority language maintenance in migratory contexts. These theoretical foundations guided the construction of the research instrument and the analytical categories, which focused on three central aspects: domains of language use, language attitudes, and the factors underlying language maintenance. Accordingly, data were gathered through a structured questionnaire combining close-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended responses then it were analyzed descriptively through percentage-based summaries and thematic coding.

The participants consisted of 22 Wajewa-speaking migrant workers originating from five subdistricts in Wewewa, Southwest Sumba. They were selected through purposive sampling, as they met the main criterion of having lived and worked in Denpasar for at least one year while maintaining active communication with fellow Wajewa speakers. The participants represented diverse occupational backgrounds, including domestic workers,

construction laborers, vendors, and service employees. This variation provided a broad view of linguistic behavior across different social and professional settings.

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, designed to capture three main dimensions of language maintenance: (1) domains of language use, (2) language attitudes, and (3) factors influencing language maintenance. The questionnaire consisted of 20 close-ended statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, along with several open-ended items that encouraged respondents to elaborate on their linguistic choices and motivations. The close-ended items provided quantifiable data that could be summarized statistically, while open-ended responses offered qualitative insight into the participants' attitudes and perceptions.

Data collection took place between June and July 2025. Respondents were approached through local Sumba community networks in Denpasar, including church groups, neighborhood associations, and migrant worker gatherings. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and gave their consent prior to participation. The researcher distributed the questionnaire both in printed form and through digital means (Google Form) to ensure accessibility.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively, with quantitative responses summarized in percentages to represent language use patterns, attitude distributions, and dominant maintenance factors. Qualitative responses were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and explanatory factors behind the quantitative results. The analysis emphasized triangulation between data sources to ensure validity and reliability. The overall procedure was grounded in the sociolinguistic framework of language maintenance and shift (Fishman, 1991; Holmes, 2013), supported by the attitudinal theory of Baker (1992) and the community-based perspective of Pauwels (2007).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire and descriptive observations provides a comprehensive overview of how the Wajewa language is maintained among migrant workers living in Denpasar, Bali. This section presents the findings in relation to the three main objectives of the study: (1) to identify the domains in which the Wajewa language is used, (2) to examine the attitudes of migrant workers toward their native language, and (3) to explore the sociocultural factors that influence its maintenance in the diaspora. The results are presented quantitatively through frequency and percentage distributions, and qualitatively through thematic interpretation of respondents' statements. Each subsection integrates empirical data with relevant sociolinguistic theories to provide a critical discussion of how Wajewa functions as both a communicative tool and a symbol of cultural identity within a multilingual urban context.

DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE

The findings reveal that the Wajewa language remains actively used among migrant workers, particularly within domestic and personal domains. As shown in Table 1 below, 82% of respondents reported using Wajewa frequently or always at home or in their rented

accommodations, while 91% maintained communication in Waijewa with their family members through digital media such as WhatsApp or phone calls. This consistent use in private domains indicates a strong attachment to the mother tongue, reflecting its symbolic value as a marker of intimacy and identity. In contrast, language use in the public sphere, such as markets, workplaces, and interactions with non-Sumba speakers was lower, with only 59% reporting frequent use.

Table 1. Domains of Waijewa Language Use among Migrant Workers in Denpasar

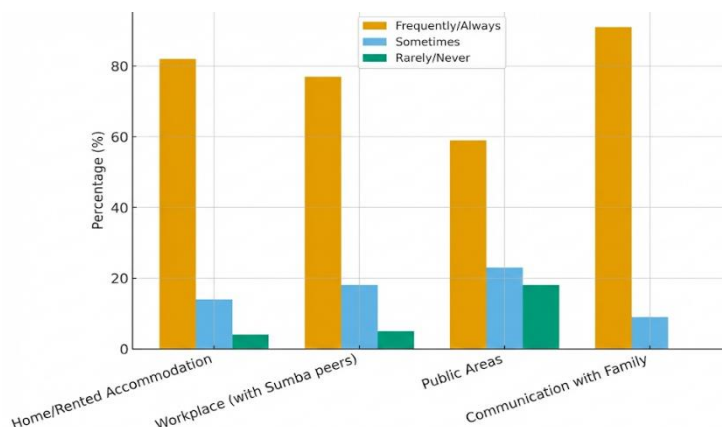
Domain of Language Use	Frequently/ Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely/ Never (%)
Home or rented accommodation	82	14	4
Workplace (with fellow Sumba speakers)	77	18	5
Public areas (markets, streets, shops)	59	23	18
Communication with family (phone/social media)	91	9	0

As reflected in the table above, language use in domestic and interpersonal settings is dominant, whereas usage decreases in broader social interactions. These results align with Fishman's (1991) domain theory, which asserts that the family domain serves as the primary site of intergenerational language transmission and thus the strongest bastion of linguistic continuity. Similarly, Holmes (2013) emphasized that minority languages typically survive in informal, in-group communication but face attrition in formal or cross-ethnic contexts. In the case of Waijewa migrants in Denpasar, the presence of fellow Sumba workers within certain occupational clusters (e.g., construction and domestic work) provides a micro-community that reinforces the use of Waijewa in specific settings.

The limited use of Waijewa in public or mixed-language environments can be understood as a form of pragmatic adaptation. Many respondents reported that they needed to use Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Bali when communicating with employers, customers, or local residents. In these contexts, the choice of language is shaped not only by personal preference, but also by the practical demands of social interaction in a multilingual urban environment. As a result, Waijewa tends to be used less frequently in situations where speakers must accommodate interlocutors from different linguistic backgrounds.

This pattern reflects what Romaine (2000) describes as functional bilingualism, in which speakers strategically alternate between languages in order to meet communicative and social expectations. For Waijewa-speaking migrants in Denpasar, such code choice demonstrates their ability to negotiate different domains of interaction while still maintaining their mother tongue in more intimate settings. To provide a clearer illustration of these language use patterns, Figure 1 below presents the frequency of Waijewa language use across various domains.

Figure 1. Domain of Waijewa Language Use among Migrant Workers in Denpasar



The chart in Figure 1 clearly illustrates the contrast between private and public domains of language use among Waijewa-speaking migrant workers in Denpasar. It shows that Waijewa is most strongly maintained in intimate settings, particularly at home and in communication with family members, where the language continues to function as a natural medium of everyday interaction. In contrast, its use declines noticeably in public and occupational domains, where speakers are more likely to interact with people from different linguistic backgrounds. This contrast indicates that the maintenance of Waijewa is not evenly distributed across all areas of social life, but is concentrated in domains that are closely associated with intimacy, trust, and shared ethnic identity.

This visual evidence reinforces the earlier discussion on functional bilingualism by showing that Waijewa speakers adjust their language choices according to the social and situational demands of each domain. Rather than abandoning their mother tongue, they appear to manage their linguistic repertoire strategically, maintaining Waijewa in contexts where it carries emotional and cultural significance, while shifting to Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Bali when broader communication is required. In this sense, Figure 1 provides empirical support for the argument that pragmatic adaptation plays a central role in shaping language use patterns among Waijewa migrant workers. It demonstrates that language maintenance in a multilingual urban setting is not simply a matter of loyalty or preference, but also of speakers' ability to negotiate different communicative environments while preserving their linguistic identity.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Overall, respondents demonstrated a highly positive attitude toward the Waijewa language. All participants (100%) agreed that Waijewa should be preserved and transmitted to future generations, while 95% reported feeling proud to use it. Moreover, 91% believed that speaking Waijewa strengthens solidarity among Sumba people in Denpasar. However, about 23% acknowledged that they occasionally felt more comfortable using Bahasa Indonesia in certain contexts, particularly in professional or mixed-ethnic interactions.

Table 2. Respondents' Attitudes toward the Waijewa Language

Attitudinal Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)
Waijewa language should be preserved and transmitted.	100	0	0
I am proud to speak the Waijewa language.	95	5	0
I feel more comfortable using Bahasa Indonesia. (reverse)	23	18	59
Waijewa language should be passed down to younger generations.	100	0	0
Speaking Waijewa strengthens solidarity among Sumba people.	91	9	0

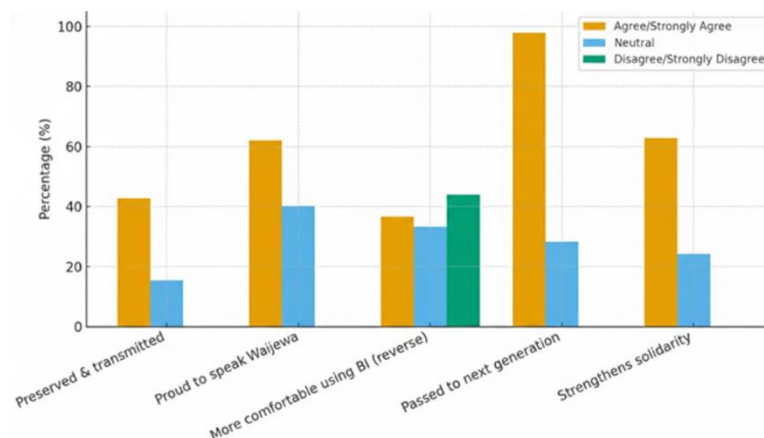
As reflected in Table 2 above, the overwhelming majority of respondents expressed a strong emotional and cultural attachment to their heritage language. Most participants indicated that Waijewa should be preserved, that they felt proud to speak it, and that it should be transmitted to younger generations. These responses show that Waijewa is not merely used as a practical means of communication but is also valued as an important symbol of belonging, identity, and cultural continuity. The strong positive orientation found in this study suggests that the language continues to occupy a meaningful place in the lives of its speakers, even within a multilingual and socially demanding migrant setting.

This finding supports the theoretical framework proposed by Baker (1992), who argued that language attitudes play a significant role in determining the vitality and maintenance of a speech community. Positive emotional attachment, cultural pride, and a sense of shared identity can function as powerful motivators that encourage speakers to continue using their heritage language despite the presence of more dominant languages. In the case of Waijewa-speaking migrants in Denpasar, these attitudes appear to strengthen the speakers' commitment to maintaining their mother tongue in everyday life. Thus, language maintenance is sustained not only by patterns of use across domains, but also by the affective and cultural meanings that speakers attach to the language itself.

Similarly, Edwards (2009) highlights the role of language as an embodiment of identity, suggesting that speakers' sense of belonging is often enacted through linguistic expression. Among Waijewa migrants, this positive attitude translates into continued language use as a form of cultural resistance and self-recognition amid a multilingual and competitive linguistic environment.

Moreover, the high rate of pride and willingness to transmit the language suggests that Waijewa still holds symbolic capital within the Sumba diaspora. Similar findings were noted by Rafael and Ate (2020) in their study of Tetun language maintenance among East Timorese refugees, where positive attitudes correlated with active language use within the family and community domains. Therefore, attitude functions not only as a reflection of linguistic loyalty but also as a predictor of long-term language survival within diasporic settings. To further illustrate these findings, Figure 2 below presents a visual summary of respondents' attitudes toward the Waijewa language.

Figure 2. Respondents' Attitudes toward the Wajiewa Language



The figure 2 above clearly demonstrates the overwhelmingly positive orientation of the participants, as reflected in their strong agreement on the importance of preserving and transmitting the language, as well as their pride in using it. The consistently high percentages across attitudinal indicators highlight that emotional attachment and cultural identification remain key components of Wajiewa language maintenance among the Sumba diaspora. This visualization thus complements the previous discussion by providing quantitative evidence that positive language attitudes serve as a crucial foundation for sustaining linguistic vitality and ensuring the intergenerational continuity of Wajiewa in a migratory context.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

The third objective examined the sociocultural and contextual factors that contribute to the maintenance of Wajiewa among migrant workers. Analysis revealed that family influence (95%), cultural identity (91%), and community solidarity (86%) were the three dominant factors supporting language continuity. Media and technology also played a supportive role, with 68% of respondents acknowledging social media as a platform where they could use and promote their language. Conversely, institutional or workplace policies appeared to have minimal impact, with only 27% reporting them as influential.

These findings reinforce Grenoble and Whaley's (2006) argument that family and community domains are the most critical environments for sustaining endangered languages. The family serves as the nucleus of language transmission, while ethnic networks provide the social reinforcement necessary for consistent use. Pauwels (2007) further contends that migrant communities often rely on in-group solidarity to maintain their language across generations, even when living in linguistically dominant societies. The case of Wajiewa speakers in Denpasar exemplifies this phenomenon, as community gatherings, church events, and shared housing arrangements create "safe spaces" for the language to thrive.

The role of social media as a supplementary domain of use reflects a contemporary dimension of language maintenance. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok enable younger speakers to engage in written and spoken Wajiewa, expanding the language's reach beyond physical boundaries. This aligns with recent observations by Ali, Prasatyo, and Dharmawan (2025), who found that digital communication mitigates language loss among

Indonesian migrant workers by providing spaces for interaction, solidarity, and linguistic affirmation.

In contrast, the minimal influence of workplace policy or government intervention highlights a gap in institutional support for minority languages. While Wajewa maintenance in Denpasar thrives through personal and communal efforts, formal recognition or encouragement from local authorities remains absent. Thus, the preservation of Wajewa in the diaspora relies heavily on internal motivation, social bonding, and cultural identity rather than external policy mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that Wajewa language maintenance among migrant workers in Denpasar is strongly concentrated in private and interpersonal domains, especially in the home and in communication with family members through digital media. This result supports earlier sociolinguistic research arguing that the family domain remains the strongest site of minority language maintenance and intergenerational transmission. In line with Fishman's perspective on language maintenance and with more recent studies on family language practices, the present study confirms that everyday interaction within intimate settings continues to function as the primary space in which minority languages are preserved. The high frequency of Wajewa use at home and in family communication indicates that the language is not merely retained as a symbolic marker of ethnic origin, but remains actively embedded in routine social practice. This suggests that, even in a multilingual urban setting, the private sphere continues to provide a protective environment for the survival of the mother tongue.

At the same time, the findings also show that Wajewa is less frequently used in public and mixed-language environments, where Indonesian and, to a lesser extent, Balinese become more dominant. This result supports previous studies on migrant bilingualism which show that minority-language speakers often adopt dominant languages for wider communication while maintaining their heritage language in more intimate domains. However, the present study also extends earlier research by showing that this pattern is clearly observable not only in transnational diaspora communities but also in the context of internal migration within Indonesia. In the case of Wajewa-speaking migrants, language maintenance does not occur through linguistic isolation from dominant languages, but through a functional distribution of languages across domains. Wajewa is preserved for intimacy, kinship, and solidarity, whereas Indonesian and Balinese are used for accommodation, work, and public interaction. This indicates that multilingual adaptation does not necessarily lead to language abandonment; rather, it may coexist with strong loyalty to the mother tongue.

The attitudinal findings likewise reinforce previous research emphasizing the importance of positive language attitudes in sustaining minority languages. The fact that all respondents agreed that Wajewa should be preserved and passed on to future generations, and that almost all expressed pride in using it, supports earlier studies which argue that emotional attachment, loyalty, and cultural pride are central resources for language maintenance. These results are also consistent with studies of minority and diaspora communities showing that language attitudes are not merely symbolic, but are closely tied to actual practices of use and transmission. In this study, positive attitudes toward Wajewa appear to function as a psychological and cultural defense against language shift. The stronger the respondents' sense of pride and belonging, the more likely they are to maintain the language in daily life and to regard it as an inheritance that must be sustained.

Another important finding concerns the role of communal solidarity and cultural identity. The results support previous studies that highlight the importance of ethnic networks, shared cultural practices, and community-based interaction in preserving minority languages. Similar to earlier findings on diaspora and migrant communities, the present study shows that communal gatherings, church activities, and shared living arrangements create supportive spaces in which Waijewa remains socially meaningful. At the same time, this study extends earlier research by demonstrating that such solidarity is equally crucial in an intra-national migration setting, where migrants remain within the same nation-state but still experience a significant shift in linguistic ecology. In this sense, Waijewa functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a marker of collective belonging that strengthens ties among Sumba migrants in Denpasar. The language becomes a resource for sustaining identity under conditions of mobility, adaptation, and urban multilingualism.

The findings also contribute to recent discussions on the role of digital communication in language maintenance. The frequent use of Waijewa in phone calls, WhatsApp messages, and other social media interactions supports earlier studies showing that digital platforms can expand the domains in which minority languages are practiced. However, the present study goes further by showing that, for Waijewa migrant workers, digital communication is not simply a supplementary medium but an important extension of the family and community domain. Through these platforms, speakers are able to maintain real-time contact with relatives and fellow migrants, thereby preserving linguistic intimacy across geographical distance. This suggests that contemporary language maintenance among migrant communities should not be understood only in relation to physical co-presence, but also in relation to digitally mediated interaction.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the maintenance of Waijewa among migrant workers in Denpasar both supports and extends earlier sociolinguistic research. It supports previous scholarship in showing that family practices, positive language attitudes, and communal solidarity remain central to minority-language survival. At the same time, it extends the literature by demonstrating that these mechanisms operate strongly in the context of internal migration in Indonesia, where minority-language speakers negotiate not only the dominance of the national language but also the influence of regional host languages. The study therefore contributes to a more nuanced understanding of language maintenance by showing that migration does not inevitably produce language loss. Under certain social conditions, migration may instead intensify linguistic loyalty, reinforce identity consciousness, and encourage the strategic maintenance of the mother tongue across both physical and digital domains

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the Waijewa language continues to function as a vital symbol of identity, emotional connection, and cultural solidarity among migrant workers from Wewewa, Southwest Sumba, who reside in Denpasar, Bali. Although these speakers live in a multilingual urban environment dominated by Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Bali, Waijewa remains actively used in domestic and interpersonal domains. Its continued use in family interaction and among fellow Sumba migrants indicates that the language still occupies an important place in the social and emotional life of the community. This condition suggests that Waijewa is not maintained merely as a habitual means of communication, but also as a marker of belonging that helps speakers preserve a sense of origin and continuity in a context of migration.

The findings also reveal that the maintenance of Wajewa is closely related to the speakers' strong affective orientation toward their heritage language. The respondents' expressions of pride, loyalty, and commitment to passing the language on to future generations provide clear evidence of linguistic resilience within the Wajewa-speaking community. In this sense, the language is sustained not only because it is still used in specific domains, but also because it is valued as an important part of collective identity. The continuing attachment to Wajewa reflects a deeper social meaning: the language serves as a symbolic resource through which speakers affirm who they are and where they come from, even while adapting to the linguistic demands of life in Denpasar.

These findings affirm Fishman's (1991) theory of intergenerational transmission and Baker's (1992) model of language attitudes, both of which emphasize the importance of positive language perception in sustaining minority languages under the pressure of dominant ones. The results of this study show that favorable attitudes toward Wajewa—such as pride in speaking it and the belief that it should be preserved—play an important role in supporting its continuity. At the same time, the study highlights that language maintenance is reinforced by several interconnected factors, especially familial reinforcement, community solidarity, and cultural identity. By contrast, institutional and workplace support appears to play only a minor role, suggesting that the survival of Wajewa in this migratory setting depends more on internal community strength than on formal structures of recognition or policy.

In practical terms, the study points to the importance of strengthening community networks, cultural pride, and opportunities for regular language use as strategies for preserving Wajewa in the diaspora. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook also emerge as meaningful spaces for linguistic interaction, enabling Wajewa speakers to remain connected with family members and fellow migrants across geographical distance. These digital spaces extend the domains in which the language can be practiced and maintained, especially when physical separation might otherwise weaken regular contact. As such, the findings suggest that contemporary efforts to sustain minority languages should not focus solely on face-to-face interaction, but should also recognize the growing importance of digitally mediated communication in maintaining linguistic ties.

Theoretically, this study contributes to sociolinguistic research on language maintenance by demonstrating that minority languages can remain resilient in migration contexts when supported by strong emotional attachment, family-based transmission, and communal solidarity. The case of Wajewa-speaking migrant workers in Denpasar shows that migration does not inevitably lead to language loss; under certain conditions, it may instead strengthen language loyalty and identity awareness. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of Wajewa will depend on whether this commitment can be maintained across generations. For this reason, future research should examine intergenerational transmission among younger speakers and explore variation across Sumba dialects in order to gain a broader understanding of how minority languages adapt, survive, and transform in the face of globalization, urbanization, and mobility.

REFERENCES

- Al-khresheh, M. H. (2026). The role of heritage language maintenance in shaping identity and cohesion among migrant populations: A case study of Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Population Studies*, 12(1), 46–66. <https://doi.org/10.36922/ijps.7070>
- Ali, H. V., Prasatyo, B. A., & Dharmawan, Y. Y. (2025). Navigating language barriers: Translingual discrimination and resilience among Indonesian migrant workers in Kuwait. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v14i3.73641>
- Ate, C. P., & Ndapa Lawa, S. T. M. (2022). Pergeseran bahasa Tetun Fehan dalam ranah keluarga pada guyub tutur masyarakat Belu di wilayah perbatasan RI–RDTL. *SeBaSa*, 5(2), 424–437. <https://doi.org/10.29408/sbs.v5i2.6672>
- Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa. (2025, February 14). *Masa depan bahasa daerah*. <https://badanbahasa.kemendikdasmen.go.id/artikel-detail/4540/masa-depan-bahasa-daerah>
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Multilingual Matters.
- Balaska, C. (2024). Family language policy in Italian transnational families in the UK: Influence of language ideologies on heritage language management. *Ampersand*, 13, 100188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2024.100188>
- Bellón, P., & Nieva, S. (2024). Perspectives about home-language maintenance in multilingual families with and without language and communication disorders: A scoping review. *Revista de Logopedia, Foniatría y Audiología*, 44(3), 100496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rlfa.2024.100496>
- Edwards, J. R. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (2006). *Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Mauziyyah, M., Setyaningsih, E., & Sumardi. (2024). Competing a family language policy in two generations of transnational families in Indonesia: A case study. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*. [Lengkapi volume(issue) dan halaman dari Mendeley/database jurnal Anda.]
- Pauwels, A. (2007). *Maintaining minority languages in transnational contexts: Australian and European perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pepinsky, T. B., Coppedge, M., Lindberg, S. I., Sanhueza Petrarca, C., & Staton, J. K. (2024). Urbanization, ethnic diversity, and language shift in Indonesia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2055761>

- Pramuniati, I., [tambahkan penulis lain sesuai metadata Mendeley], & [tambahkan penulis lain bila ada]. (2025). Language shift between generations: Regional-speaking communities in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. [Lengkapi volume(issue) dan halaman dari Mendeley/database jurnal Anda.]
- Rafael, A. M. D., & Ate, C. P. (2020). Pemertahanan bahasa Tetun dalam guyub tutur bekas pengungsi Timor-Timur di Desa Manusak Kabupaten Kupang. *Kembara: Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 6(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v6i1.11708>
- Ramonienė, M., & Ramonaitė, J. T. (2024). Family language policy and dialect maintenance in the Lithuanian diaspora. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 18(1–2), 133–154. <https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.24782>
- Romaine, S. (2000). *Language in society: An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Yang, L. (2026). Plurilingual family language policy of internal immigrant families in a Chinese city: The role of schools and grandparents in heritage language maintenance. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2025.2542481>