

Research Article

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Author for correspondence:

Aninditya Sri Nugraheni

✉ aninditya.nugraheni@uin-suka.ac.id

✉ Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Language Acquisition Mapping Program to Enhance Linguistic Skills and Cultural Understanding of Indonesia for Primary Students in Australia

Aninditya Sri Nugraheni^{ID}, Aninda Aji Siwi^{ID}, Abroto Abroto^{ID}

Abstract

Background/purpose. This study aims to examine the language acquisition mapping program designed to facilitate Indonesian language acquisition among secondary school students in Australia. The research focuses on both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding, highlighting the importance of integrating cultural elements into language learning to enhance students' overall competence and global awareness.

Materials/methods. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive design. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and educational policymakers, along with observations at Newport Lakes Primary School (NLPS) to gather data. Furthermore, a content analysis of student works and pertinent documents was carried out. Informants with deep understanding of educational practices and policies concerning the mandatory inclusion of the Indonesian language in the curriculum were selected using purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was applied to the data to uncover significant patterns and insights

Results. Programs like Indonesian Beginners and Continuers contribute to fostering global awareness and empathy among students. The study concludes that culturally integrated curricula are crucial for preparing students to thrive in a multicultural world. However, the study's reliance on specific educational settings and observational data presents limitations. Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of such programs and include comparative analyses across different educational systems.

Conclusion. The primary conclusion highlighted and validated in the research is that the results hold considerable importance for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers engaged in the creation and execution of language education initiatives.



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1. Introduction

In Australia, English is the national language. Meanwhile, many other languages exist, such as the languages of immigrants and the aboriginal languages. As stated by Zhou (2017) in Qiong Bai (2024), Australia is the first English-speaking country to officially and effectively embrace a pluralistic and multilingual culture in the world (Bai et al., 2024). Politicians and linguists often speak about Australian language education policy in terms of formulation and implementation to the world (Palviainen & Curdt-Christiansen, 2022).

In the rapidly developing era of globalization, limitless communication between nations provides a special opportunity to learn more languages to facilitate all forms of communication (Rahmani & Karimi, 2025). Mastery of foreign languages is not just a communication tool, but also a bridge of culture, a trigger for empathy, and a foundation for future diplomacy (Sustarsic & Cheng, 2022). Indonesia and Australia, two neighboring countries separated by ocean yet united by history, geopolitics, and regional cooperation, have great potential to strengthen bilateral relations through cross-cultural understanding, and this is where language plays an irreplaceable binding role (Roszko, 2025).

Indonesia is one of Australia's main strategic partners, yet data reveals a contrasting reality evidenced by a significant decline in the interest of Australian students in learning the Indonesian language over the past decade (Aspinall & Crouch, 2023). Behind these statistical figures lies the uncertainty of a widening gap between the two nations that should know each other more closely (Peel et al., 2022). The Indonesian language is not just a system of sounds and grammar, but more than that; it reflects the values, traditions, and perspectives of its people.

The Language Acquisition Mapping Program is here as an answer to that challenge (Kasneci et al., 2023). The main goal of this program design is to enhance Indonesian language proficiency in a structured and contextual manner, while also exploring the richness of the archipelagic culture (Putra et al., 2024). By mapping the journey of language acquisition through a data-driven and experiential approach, this program is not just a language course, but a transformation of the learning method: from memorizing to understanding, from speaking to feeling.

While the strategic importance of Indonesian and the broader benefits of language acquisition are “well-established”, a critical research gap exists in fully comprehending the specific factors contributing to the reported decline in Australian students' interest in learning the Indonesian language over the past decade (Kohler, 2021). The current narrative highlights the problem and introduces potential solutions like the Language Acquisition Mapping Program (LAMP), which aims to enhance Indonesian language proficiency and explore archipelagic culture through data-driven and experiential approaches, but it lacks an in-depth analysis of the underlying causes of this decline and the specific challenges faced in teaching and acquiring Indonesian language within the Australian education system. Crucially, there is also insufficient documented evaluation of the effectiveness, impact, and specific mechanisms of initiatives like the Language Acquisition Mapping Program in reversing this trend, leaving unanswered questions about its implementation outcomes and areas for improvement.



Figure 1. Background of Thinking

Based on Figure 1, some points underlie this research. The Indonesian Language has the potential to develop in Australia. There are numerous of universities in Australia that provides Department of Indonesian Language, it's because they recognized Indonesia's significant regional importance and close ties through offer comprehensive Indonesian Language and Studies programs that go beyond linguistic acquisition to encompass the nation's rich culture, history, politics, and society then surely could strengthen bilateral ties through the use of "soft power". Besides, students' interest in Australia to master the Indonesian Language has also increased; there are about seventeen universities that provide a major in Indonesian Language. Furthermore, the Indonesian Language is not only taught in universities but also in 500 schools in Australia, each school puts Indonesian Language as one of the basic lessons in their Education system

After learning the language communicatively and understanding the language as a system, it is hoped that the students can develop literacy in English. Further, the student's intellectual curiosity, increasing metalinguistic awareness, intellectual, analytical, and reflective capabilities, and the enhancement of creativity and critical thinking can be broadened and strengthened by learning languages (Filmer, 2024). When students learn new languages at school, they bring diversity into the class. Each of them has a different culture, language, and personality (Lavrenteva & and Orland-Barak, 2022). They may even have experience learning or speaking another language, either formally or informally (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). They can also be exposed to other languages through family members. Considering those factors, it is common to consider Australian students as mono-, bi, or multi-lingual (King, 2023).

The National Policy on Languages (NPL) establishes the foundation of harmony among languages spoken in Australia. The NPL became the basis, and it did not develop without any contention (Ngai et al., 2021). It was the Asian Studies Association of Australia's (ASSA) research recommendation that recommended a national council to develop Asian language study. As Slaughter in stated, the

realization of the political, economic, and strategic importance of Asia in Australia has improved its relationship with the region (Caballero-Anthony & Emmers, 2022). This situation resulted in both Asian languages, and studies have slowly taken on a greater role in the Australian education system (Huang & and Liao, 2024).

Another reason why Asian languages are popular is economic factors. It is projected that Asia's top 10 export markets. China, Japan, Singapore, Korea, and Indonesia were predicted to be Australia's top five export destinations (Beghin & Park, 2022). The success of the economy in Australia would be dependent on the good relationship with those countries (Talebzadehhosseini & Garibay, 2022). A report entitled Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future (Rudd, 1994) was delivered to the Council of Australian Government (COAG) (Henderson, 2021). It was Australia's intergovernmental forum for matters of national importance. The report proposed the National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools (NALSAS). The strategy provided support to the top four languages in priority: Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean. (Henderson, 2024).

We can infer from the above that Indonesia is one of the top Asian languages studied in Australian schools (Sakhiyya & and Martin-Anatias, 2023). This article will further discuss the history, the reasons, and the challenges of teaching the Indonesian language in Australia (Mufanti et al., 2024). The aim of knowing the history and the reasons gives insight into the importance of the Indonesian language to Australians as their second or foreign language study (Wang & Chik, 2022). The description of the recent challenges of teaching Indonesians offers insight into the Indonesian government as an evaluation of Indonesians' place in the educational system going forward.

Despite the widely acknowledged geopolitical and economic significance of Indonesia to Australia, and the clear cognitive and cultural benefits of language acquisition, the reasons for the notable decline in Australian students' interest in learning Indonesian remain largely underexplored. (Hill, 2016). While statistics confirm this concerning trend, there is a distinct absence of comprehensive research pinpointing the specific contributing factors. This gap leaves unanswered critical questions about whether the decline stems from outdated curriculum content, insufficient teacher training and resources, a lack of perceived career pathways for Indonesian speakers, competition from other foreign languages, or even evolving student motivations and interests?.

Furthermore, while the Language Acquisition Mapping Program (LAMP) is introduced as a direct response to this challenge, the existing information provides no explicit detail regarding its effectiveness, the challenges encountered during its implementation, or the specific mechanisms through which it aims to reverse the decline in interest. There is a notable void in empirical data or qualitative evaluations that could shed light on whether LAMP's "structured and contextual manner" for enhancing proficiency, or its "data-driven and experiential approach," are genuinely yielding the desired outcomes (Hiver et al., 2024). Without such an evaluation, it's impossible to discern if that program is effectively addressing the multifaceted issues contributing to the decline, if its methods are truly transformative, or if there are unforeseen obstacles hindering its full potential. This lack of evaluation for such a key initiative represents a significant unknown that impedes informed decision-making for future language education policies and programs.

The urgency from this research is to address this decline in Indonesian language learning, as it risks creating a significant and potentially damaging gap between Australia and Indonesia, hindering future diplomacy, cross-cultural understanding, and regional cooperation, particularly given Indonesia's undeniable strategic importance to Australia. It also undermines Australia's ability to fully leverage "soft power" as a crucial tool in international relations and poses a potential disadvantage in navigating the economic and geopolitical landscapes of the Asian region, where a strong grasp of the Indonesian language is increasingly essential for effective engagement (Ratri et al., 2024). Furthermore, a decline in Indonesian language proficiency represents a missed opportunity for

cultivating deeper intercultural understanding, which is vital for fostering harmonious international relations and ensuring that educational strategies for critical strategic languages are optimized for effective outcomes. That means it is very importance for a study from multidisciplinary sciences that are interrelated in dealing with those issues.

Based on the identified gaps and urgencies, the main objective of this research is to explore language acquisition mapping programs for Indonesian language acquisition among elementary school students in Australia. Specifically, it examines how those programs facilitate not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding. It will investigate existing language acquisition mapping programs to understand their effectiveness in fostering both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding among students in Australia. The research focuses on different levels of Indonesian language courses, including Indonesian Beginners and Continuers, to understand how each level contributes to students' language skills and appreciation of Indonesian culture.

Through detailed analysis by examining classroom interactions, teaching methods, and student outcomes, this study aims to uncover the most effective pedagogical approaches that support language acquisition and promote intercultural competence in the context of primary schools in Australia. Simply put, this study aims to provide insights into the pedagogical approaches that best support language acquisition and intercultural competence.

For comprehensive understanding about this research, here are some research question:

1. What are the primary socio-cultural, pedagogical, and structural factors contributing to the observed decline in Australian students' interest and enrollment in Indonesian language programs?
2. What specific challenges are currently faced by educators and students in the Indonesian language teaching and learning environment in primary education in Australia?
3. How does the Language Acquisition Mapping Program (LAMP) effectively contribute to Indonesian language proficiency and cultural understanding among Australian primary students, as well as what are its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature Review

Previously, there have been several studies exploring language acquisition among high school students which have further investigated significant implications for global education. In social life, communication is a key element in building connections and harmony; an understanding and the ability to comprehend multiple languages are needed to achieve mutual understanding (Ischak & Mubarok, 2022; Sari et al., 2019). In Australia, learning many languages, especially Indonesian, gives students the opportunity to better understand and comprehend other languages. More than just learning languages, they are also given the chance to learn about foreign cultures, which enriches their educational experience and prepares them for a global world (Kesuma et al., 2023; Zen, 2020). This research underscores the importance of language acquisition mapping programs in promoting linguistic and cultural proficiency, particularly focusing on the Indonesian language.

Previous research has extensively examined various aspects of language acquisition, providing a foundational understanding of the factors that influence learning outcomes. For instance, studies have highlighted the positive impact of hybrid, synchronous, and asynchronous learning models on second language acquisition during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hudriati et al., 2023; Zein, 2017). The use of interlanguage and its impact on language learning among students has been well documented, proving that there is a complex relationship between learners' native language and the target language (Kawecki, 2022; Versteegh, 2020). In addition, sociolinguistic factors become very

important, such as the influence of social background and speaking style, which have been proven to affect phonological production in multilingual settings (Nugraha et al., 2023; Zen & Starr, 2021).

2.2. Language Acquisition Program to Improve Linguistic

Language Acquisition Program to Improve Linguistics. Through the integration of parental involvement and educational strategies, it has also been recognized as important in language development. Several previous studies have presented data and understanding that interaction between parents and children during educational activities can significantly enhance language acquisition, especially in English (Budianto et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2024). In addition, there are also equally important factors for student success and shaping valuable experiences, namely teacher strategies, including the use of mobile applications and feedback mechanisms, play a crucial role in shaping student experiences and learning outcomes (Masrul & Erliana, 2024; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of language learning and the various elements that contribute to successful language acquisition.

Learning Indonesian in Australia has gained attention due to the significant bilateral relations between the two countries. The learning process utilizes various methods, one of which is the Total Physical Response (TPR) method and the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which have proven effective in elementary schools, helping students understand vocabulary and sentence structure (Fhonna & Yusuf, 2020). At the high school level, the integration of technology through distance learning and blended learning has increased student interest and strengthened their connection to Indonesian culture (Nugraheni et al., 2023). If viewed further in relation to the Australian government's policies, such as the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy, along with social and political interventions, have also influenced the development of Indonesian language studies at the university level, reflecting the dynamics of language learning in a multicultural context.

2.3. Cultural Understanding

Cultural understanding learning has many advantages and strengths, but there are still notable shortcomings and limitations in the existing research. For example, the specific challenges faced by non-native speakers in learning Indonesian in non-Indonesian contexts are still underexplored. (Ritonga et al., 2023; Widianingtyas et al., 2023). Although there is a lot of research on the general benefits of multilingual education, there is still a lack of research aimed at testing the effectiveness of structured Indonesian language programs in secondary schools outside of Indonesia (Fernandes et al., 2024; Silalahi et al., 2023). This gap is particularly pertinent given the increasing interest in Indonesian language studies within the Australian educational framework.

This research aims to address the shortcomings of previous studies by examining in-depth the language acquisition mapping programs designed for the acquisition of the Indonesian language among high school students in Australia. With a focus on linguistic skills and cultural understanding, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how such programs contribute to the overall educational development of students. The research results are expected to provide valuable insights into the optimization of language curriculum and the promotion of intercultural competence, thus enhancing academic discussions about language education and multicultural integration. The exploration of the language acquisition mapping program for Indonesian language acquisition in Australia not only fills a crucial research gap but also has the potential to significantly influence educational policies and practices. By peeling back various layers of language learning in a multicultural context, this study aims to contribute to the field of language education and cultural studies more broadly.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design, with a qualitative descriptive methodology aimed at providing a comprehensive and factual description of the language acquisition mapping program that facilitates the acquisition of the Indonesian language among elementary school students in Australia. The selection of a qualitative approach to empirically explore the relationship between linguistic competence and cultural understanding without relying on numerical variables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The research utilizes purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select informants with extensive knowledge of educational policy analysis regarding the compulsory inclusion of the Indonesian language in the curriculum. Data were collected using three primary methods through in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, observations at Newport Lakes Primary School (NLPS) in Australia, and content analysis of student works and relevant documents, ensuring a thorough examination of materials related to the study's focus. Tools and technologies such as audio recording devices, field notes, and NVivo software were used to capture, document, and analyze data efficiently.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The researcher employed purposive sampling, selecting informants with expertise in Australian education policy, specifically regarding the mandatory inclusion of Indonesian language education. To enhance depth and network expansion, the study also applied snowball sampling, in which initial informants recommended other potential participants who met the criteria. It means that when the researcher interviews an informant, and later on, he assigns another subject that he is knowledgeable of, and so on

The collected data will be arranged, analyzed, interpreted, and concluded. We do this in order to describe the real and systematic research findings. Data or information collected is qualitative data. The information is collected from various data sources used in the research. The data are taken from the following: (1) Informant, lecturer, and students; (2) Bateman Primary School; (3) Baynton West Primary School; (4) The University of Sydney; and (5) Document analysis, some of the Australian students' work.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

The researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation. Rather than relying solely on standardized tools, the researcher's ability to interact, observe, interpret, and reflect is essential in uncovering the deeper meanings behind participants' experiences. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied by comparing results across interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted to verify interview interpretations with participants. Inter-coder reliability was enhanced by involving an external coder during the content analysis stage and discussing discrepancies until consensus was reached.

3.4. Data Analysis

The researchers used three techniques to obtain and collect data. First, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and education policymakers. These interviews aimed to gather rich, oral narratives about the implementation and perceptions of Indonesian language education. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researchers to identify recurring patterns, codes, and themes. Second, the researchers conducted classroom observations at Newport Lakes Primary School (NLPS). The aim was to document student engagement, teacher-student interaction, and classroom strategies that supported Indonesian language acquisition. Observational notes were then coded and analyzed

thematically to identify behavioral patterns and contextual influences that complemented interview insights. Third, content analysis was used to examine student assignments, curriculum documents, and education policy texts relevant to Indonesian language education in Australian schools. The researchers used triangulation to obtain valid data in qualitative research.

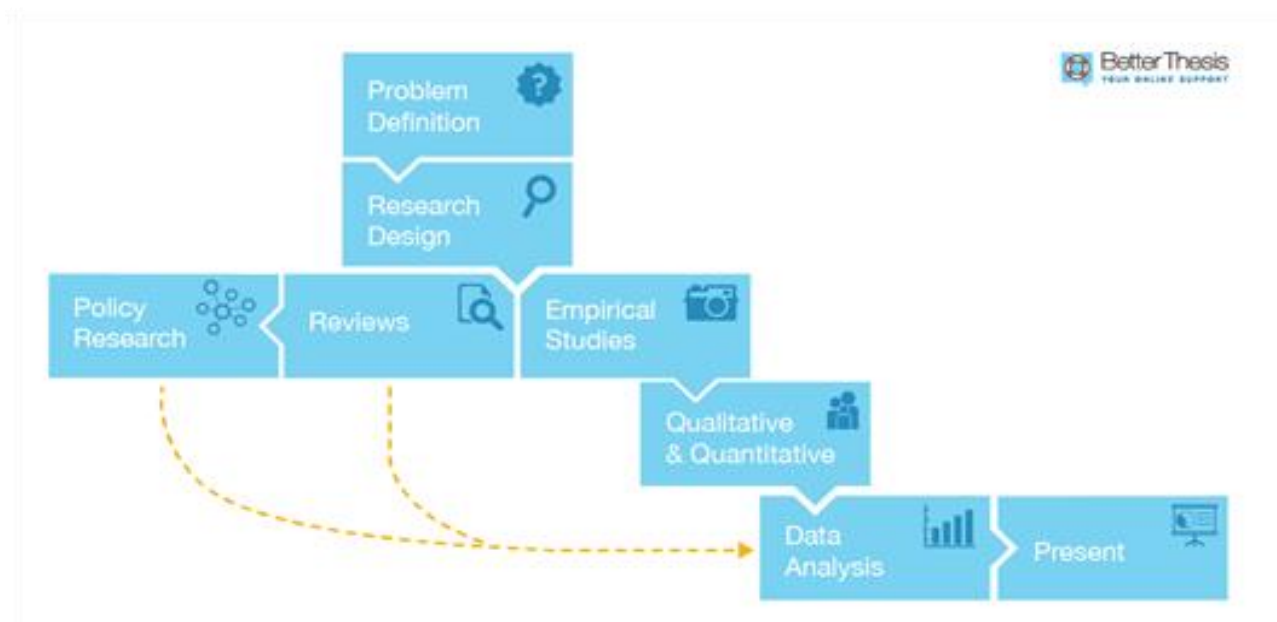


Figure 2. Policy Research Method

4. Results

4.1. History of Indonesian Language in Australian Schools

Kohler and Mahnken described that leaders and policymakers in Australia started to suggest teaching the Indonesian language as part of school education fifty years ago (Suwandi et al., 2023). It began in the 1950s, following the New Colombo Plan that started Australia's positive support for Indonesian independence. There was no formal study of the Indonesian language in either Australian schools or universities. Further, no trade and diplomatic representatives of Australia were fluent in Indonesian (Baldwin, 2019). The regulation of the study of the Indonesian language in Australia was begun and governed by some federal, state, and territory policies. The reasons for the Australian government's introduction of the Indonesian language are political and national strategies. It happened from 1955 to 1970, which is known as the initial period.

Then, the next period continued from 1970 to 1986, known as the declined period. It happened when there were economic difficulties in Australia and political unrest, including in East Timor in Indonesia. From the early 1980s up to 1990, the interest in learning the Indonesian language started gaining momentum. It was due to growing interest in both economics and politics. Asian studies and the Asian language also have some benefits for Australian education.

Australia's first policy on language was developed in 1987. This year was the turning point because Lo Bianco (1987) wrote about the National Policy on Language. There are four principles as guides, and they encompass the issues nationally. The four principles are (1) English competence, (2) Language other than English (LOTE) maintenance and development, (3) LOTE Provision of services, and (4) learning a second language opportunity. Indonesian language was one of the languages learned in Australia. Further, in 1991, the Indonesian language was considered one of the fourteen priority languages, according to the Australian Language and Literacy Policy.

Paul Keating, as the 24th Australian Prime Minister in 1994, introduced the National Asian Language and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy. This strategy targeted the four languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean). It was because the four countries were Australia's largest trading partner in Asia. NALSAS aimed to build and strengthen national economic growth by teaching young Australians these languages. When Howard became the Prime Minister of Australia, he strengthened the position of NALSAS in 2002 through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs by developing a framework for all languages, including Indonesian. In 2007, Kevin Rudd, as the prime minister, declared the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), which was implemented in 2009. The initiative was about funding four languages over four years (2008-2012).

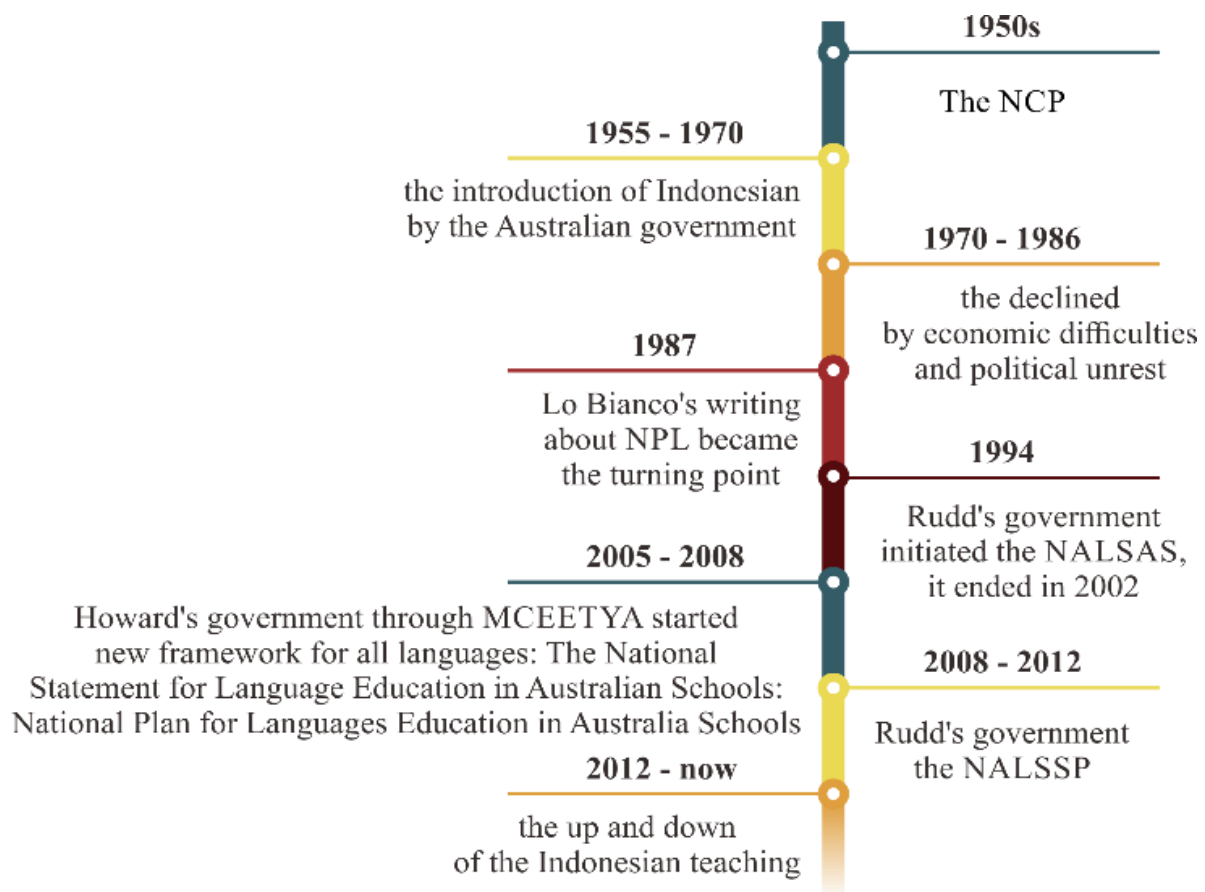


Figure 3. Indonesian Studies in Australia

4.2. The Reasons Why Learning Indonesian

"Australia's past, present, and future are inextricably tied with that of Indonesia". That statement represents the relationship between Australia and Indonesia from the very beginning. Although the two countries are culturally different, they share history, borders, interconnected people, and shared contemporary difficulties that force both sides to require close cooperation. Historically, Indonesia and Australia have built strong relationships. They have been working together in the past. The important support that Australia gave to Indonesia was in the late 1940s when Australia supported Indonesia's efforts for independence in the United Nations.

The past connection in history between the two countries, also stated by (Riany et al., 2022), began 50 years ago when Indonesia was still in the quest for independence, and Australia gave diplomatic support. Then, it continued with the Colombo Plan, the cooperation on economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, which began the positive interaction between those two

countries. Many prominent people were coming as representatives of the countries in South and Southeast Asia (Tran & Bui, 2021a).

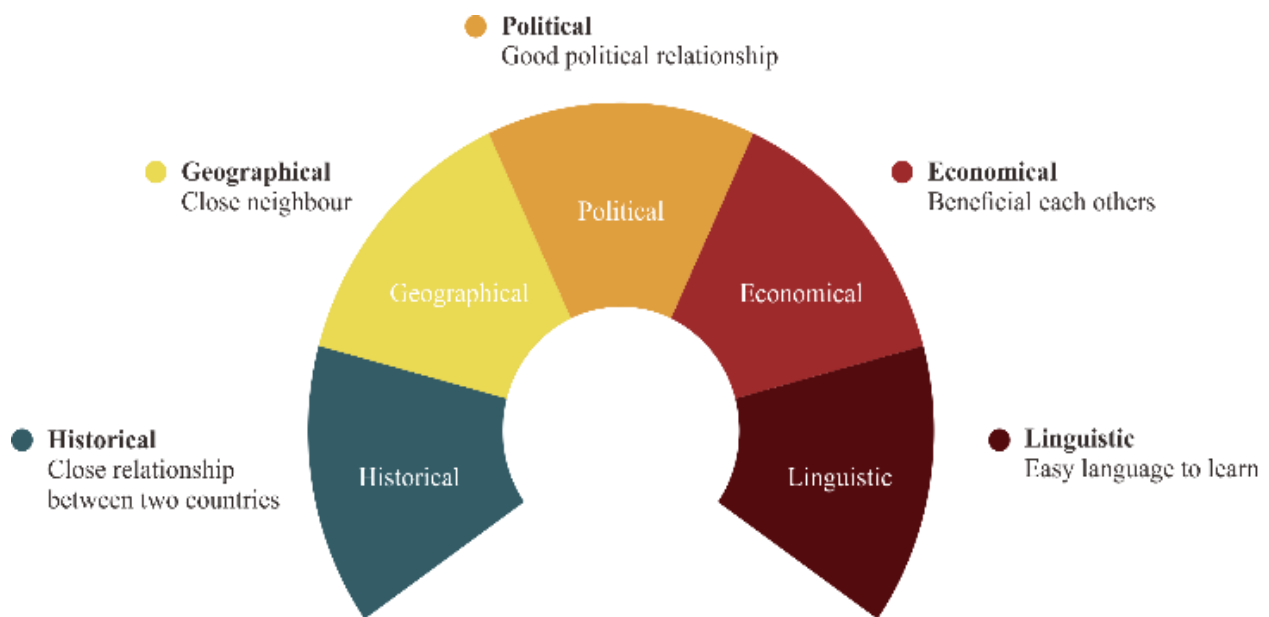


Figure 4. The Reason for Learning Indonesian in Australia

Over the past thirty years, Southeast Asia has made big changes for the world. Indonesia is one of the most powerful countries in Southeast Asia, and it plays an important role in it. Indonesia also has a strategic location in Southeast Asia. Further, Indonesia has several important meanings to Australia. Indonesia is a country with huge diversity in culture, geography, society, and politics. It is geographically known that Indonesia is also the nearest and the largest neighbour to Australia (Yayusman et al., 2023). In addition, the two countries are partners in natural maritime and also share the longest maritime boundary in the world.

Indonesia is one of the key members of ASEAN, which also makes Indonesia the major trading partner. Indonesia is said to become the world's seventh-largest economy in 2045. Indonesia is a country with the largest population of Muslims and also Christians compared to Australia. Australia's key partner in areas including public health, environmental sustainability, and human mobility is Indonesia, which is also a popular holiday destination for Australians. Indonesian was in third place among the languages learned in some Australian schools after Japanese and Italian, as seen in Table 1. However, some other languages of immigrants have become a language learned in Australia.

Table 1. Top Six Languages Learned in Australian Schools

Language	Number of Students
Japanese	332,943
Italian	322,023
Indonesian	209,939
French	207,235
German	126,920
Chinese (Mandarin)	81,358

The insight of being a multicultural and multiracial country made Australia realize the benefits of language study. “It has been acknowledged that learning another language enhances the learner’s understanding of and insights into their language”. The statement is a conclusion from Vygotsky (1986) that the understanding of a child’s native language increases by learning a foreign language. They are conscious and careful when they are using words to express their thoughts or ideas.

The fact that many Australians learn Indonesian also shows that the language is easy for English speakers to learn. It is different when people are studying Korean, Japanese, Chinese, or other Asian languages, where people must learn different alphabets than the one they are used to. The Indonesian language uses the same alphabet as Australia does. The last is that the Indonesian language is a non-tonal language that English speakers will pick up easily and quickly.

Because of these reasons, Indonesia and Australia always connect in the most important areas, such as politics, security, commerce, and people-to-people connections. Some agreements have been signed in the areas of education, defence, development, counter-terrorism, and economic cooperation.

5. Discussion

This study aims to explore language acquisition mapping programs for Indonesian language acquisition among primary school students in Australia. Specifically, it examines how these programs facilitate not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding. The research focuses on different levels of Indonesian language courses, including Indonesian Beginners and Continuers, to understand their impact on students' language skills and cultural appreciation. By analyzing classroom interactions, instructional methods, and student outcomes, this study seeks to provide insights into the pedagogical approaches that best support language acquisition and intercultural competence.

Language acquisition, particularly in the context of learning Indonesian as a foreign language, involves a complex interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and cultural elements. The structured programs in Australian schools are designed to introduce students systematically to various aspects of the Indonesian language, including its syntax, semantics, and phonology, as well as the cultural practices and values associated with it. These programs emphasize the importance of a dual focus on language and culture, enriching the learning experience and enabling students to use the language effectively in real-world contexts. This holistic approach not only enhances linguistic skills but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indonesia’s cultural diversity, promoting global awareness and empathy among learners. The process of language acquisition is implemented through several levels, each with its specific objectives and methodologies, which will be explained in detail in the following sections.

5.1. Indonesian Beginners

This course covers the use of formal and informal language. The main goal of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of the Indonesian language and culture while also equipping them with the necessary communication skills. Observations and indirect interviews indicate that the comprehensive structure of this course meets the diverse linguistic needs of beginners, ensuring a deep understanding of the nuances of the language. However, this course also aims to foster an appreciation for Indonesia's rich cultural heritage, thereby encouraging cultural awareness and sensitivity among students.

In the first step, students are introduced to various aspects of language learning, including family life, home, and the environment. These topics are explored from personal and community perspectives, allowing students to connect their learning with real-life scenarios. The outcomes of

this course help students effectively express their ideas and experiences. It significantly enhances student engagement and understanding, fostering a deeper connection with the language. To reinforce their understanding and use of Indonesian in their daily lives, students are encouraged to relate their experiences and daily activities.

A lecturer shared her valuable insights during an in-depth interview. She highlighted the profound impact of the course, stating,

"The course not only builds linguistic skills but also integrates cultural education, which is essential for a holistic learning experience. Students who enjoy learning the language and embracing the culture tend to have a deeper understanding and respect for Indonesia."

The opinion is in line with the research conducted by Rahmat et al., (2024) entitled: How can international students well understand the tailored online collaboration projects? A case study of BIPA learners. The results of this study indicate that BIPA beginners experience an improvement from PBL adaptation. Based on the identified challenges, project-based online cross-cultural collaborative learning is recommended to balance group work and individual assistance for BIPA beginners, providing team dynamics with more time, and making better use of technological resources. Through their experiences in learning about Indonesia, students gain insights into its rich cultural heritage, including art, music, and customs. This process not only enriches students' linguistic abilities but also broadens their global perspectives. The emphasis on cultural understanding fosters mutual respect among students and cooperation between Australia and Indonesia, in line with broader educational goals of developing global citizenship. Observations indicate that students who engage deeply with the cultural components of the course develop a greater appreciation for the diversity of humanity, which is an important aspect of 21st-century education.

5.2. Indonesian Continuers

Observations and indirect interviews revealed that this syllabus significantly contributes to the overall education of students by enhancing communication, cross-cultural understanding, literacy, and general knowledge. By studying the Indonesian language, students gain access to the rich culture of the Indonesian-speaking community and develop a deeper appreciation for the diverse attitudes and values within the Australian community and the broader global context.

The study of Indonesia offers numerous advantages for Australian students, given Indonesia's status as a close neighbour and the fourth most populous country in the world. Indonesia's vibrant culture and history, situated at the crossroads of Asia, provide valuable insights into the region's traditions, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Observations indicate that proficiency in Indonesian can facilitate closer relations between Australia and Indonesia, fostering stronger business and tourist links, as well as educational exchanges through initiatives like 'sister-school' relationships. Moreover, the growing Indonesian community within Australia underscores the practical benefits of studying the language for fostering community ties and mutual understanding. This is consistent with the research conducted by (Tran & Bui, 2021b) titled: Public Diplomacy and Social Impact of Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Host Country Perspective on Hosting New Colombo Plan Students. The results of this study identify four main forms of social impact associated with Australian student learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific, as perceived by host communities: (a) strengthening bilateral and international relations; (b) fostering partnerships among students, university-industry, and universities; (c) enhancing community engagement through service-learning; and (d) enriching the training capacity, human resources, and awareness of their own values of host organizations.

Indonesian Studies lecturers share insights in an interview, highlighting, "The advantage of learning the Indonesian language not only provides students with knowledge of a new language but

also opens doors to understanding diverse cultural richness. It prepares them for a future where cross-cultural communication is increasingly valuable."

Table 2. Theme

Prescribed Themes	Mandatory Topics
The individual	1. Personal identity 2. Education and aspirations 3. Leisure and lifestyles
The Indonesian-speaking communities	1. People and places 2. Cultural diversity 3. Visiting Indonesia
The changing world	1. The world of work 2. Youth issues 3. Issues in today's world

Students studying Indonesian at the Stage 6 level often pursue it for various reasons, ranging from academic interests to enhanced vocational opportunities. Indirect interviews with educators highlight that many universities and tertiary institutions in Australia offer pathways for further study in Indonesian and related fields. Proficiency in Indonesian, coupled with other skills, can open doors to careers in trade, business, banking, defence, diplomacy, immigration, education, journalism, law, engineering, tourism, and the arts. Additionally, Indonesian is closely related to Malay, making it a valuable skill for communication in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, thus broadening its applicability in the region.

The language lecturer also noted, "This syllabus structure is very flexible, allowing educators to tailor the program to meet the unique needs and interests of their students. This flexibility ensures that the learning experience is comprehensive and meaningful." He emphasized the importance of integrating cultural elements into language learning, stating, "When students personally connect with the material, their engagement and understanding significantly increase, leading to better outcomes." The three required themes that make up the syllabus are the changing globe, Indonesian-speaking communities, and the person. Each theme encompasses various topics and sub-topics that guide students and teachers in their exploration of the language and culture. Observations suggest that the themes provide a framework for students to engage with the material from multiple perspectives, enhancing their ability to relate personal experiences to broader cultural and social contexts. The flexibility in topic selection and the depth of study allow teachers to tailor the program to meet the needs and interests of their students, ensuring a comprehensive and meaningful learning experience.

5.3. Indonesian Extension

The Indonesian Extension course is designed to advance students' proficiency and fluency in the Indonesian language beyond what is achieved in the Continuers course. Through a more in-depth and comprehensive language experience, this course allows students to develop a greater interest in studying Indonesian. Through the study of contemporary literature and its applications in a variety of job fields, it also offers insight into Indonesian-speaking cultures and their perspectives on contemporary concerns, enhancing students' enthusiasm for the language. This observation is based on an indirect interview with educators who have implemented this curriculum.

One of the core objectives of the Indonesian Extension course is to enable students to present and discuss their opinions, ideas, and viewpoints in Indonesian. This involves engaging with a variety of texts that reflect the cultural nuances of Indonesian-speaking communities. The skills developed include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are essential for effective communication and comprehension. The curriculum's thematic focus on the individual and contemporary society allows students to explore relevant issues through prescribed and related texts, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the language in real-world contexts.

The same statement was also conveyed by Hardianti (2024), Indonesian higher education students' perception of critical literacy. The results of this research focus on examining college students' perceptions of critical literacy in language education. The findings indicate that critical literacy has not been maximally integrated into the curriculum, despite its importance for academic and professional development. The relevance of this research also highlights critical literacy within the context of advanced Indonesian language courses, as well as utilizing a qualitative approach through interviews. To further support the study of contemporary issues and to enhance their understanding of Indonesian culture, students are required to engage with a range of related texts. These texts provide diverse perspectives on the prescribed issues, allowing students to evaluate how different contexts influence the presentation of these issues. This approach ensures that students not only develop language skills but also critical literacy, enabling them to reflect on their cultural contexts and draw connections between Indonesian and other languages. This holistic approach to language learning was highlighted during indirect interviews with curriculum developers. The lecturer (Q) involved in the curriculum development emphasizes, "The Indonesian Language Extension Course is designed to challenge students and encourage them to think critically about the issues they are studying. By engaging deeply with both the language and cultural context, students gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of Indonesian society and its contemporary challenges."

The outcomes of the Indonesian Extension course are designed to reflect the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students are expected to achieve by the end of the course. These outcomes build on the foundations laid by the Indonesian Continuers course, with a specific focus on enhancing students' ability to use and appreciate Indonesian as a medium for communication and creative expression. The degree to which students achieve these outcomes is assessed using a performance scale, which takes into account the objectives covered, the students' needs and interests, and the complexity of the texts studied. These insights are based on observations and feedback from teachers who have taught the course.

5.4. Indonesian in Context

This study aims to explore language acquisition mapping programs that facilitate the acquisition of the Indonesian language among elementary school students in Australia, focusing on linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding. Previous research has emphasized the importance of integrating language and cultural education to enhance students' global awareness and intercultural competence (Ischak & Mubarak, 2022; Sari et al., 2019). This dual-focus approach aligns with broader educational goals, promoting not only linguistic skills but also a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. The programs analyzed in this study, including Indonesian Beginners and Continuers, are designed to systematically introduce students to both the language and cultural practices of Indonesia, reflecting a holistic approach to language education (Kawecki, 2022; Versteegh, 2020).

The primary findings indicate that language acquisition mapping programs significantly contribute to both language proficiency and cultural appreciation among Australian secondary school students. Students enrolled in the Indonesian Beginners course demonstrated notable improvements in their ability to understand and use Indonesian in everyday contexts while also gaining insights into Indonesian cultural practices (Nugraha et al., 2023; Zen & Starr, 2021). Similarly, those in the

Indonesian Continuers course exhibited advanced language skills and a profound understanding of cultural nuances facilitated by immersive and contextually relevant teaching methods (Masrul & Erliana, 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024). These findings underscore the efficacy of a comprehensive curriculum that integrates linguistic and cultural education.

Unexpectedly, the study also revealed that students who engaged more deeply with cultural components showed higher levels of linguistic proficiency and cognitive development. This correlation between cultural engagement and language skills supports the notion that cultural immersion enhances overall language acquisition (Fernandes et al., 2024; Milal, 2021). Moreover, the use of diverse instructional methods, such as interactive classroom activities and real-world applications, was found to be particularly effective in fostering both language proficiency and cultural understanding (Budianto et al., 2022; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). These results suggest that a dynamic and culturally rich learning environment is crucial for effective language education.

Interestingly, the findings also highlighted the role of cognitive and intellectual development in language learning. Students engaged in tasks that promoted problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity demonstrated enhanced language skills (Silalahi et al., 2023; Widianingtyas et al., 2023). This supports previous studies indicating that second language learning can improve cognitive functions and intellectual growth (Hudriati et al., 2023; Kesuma et al., 2023). The language acquisition mapping program in this study provided ample opportunities for students to develop these skills through purposeful and context-driven activities, reinforcing the interconnection between cognitive development and language acquisition.

The integrated approach to language and cultural education is essential for comprehensive language acquisition. For instance, studies on multilingual education have shown that integrating cultural perspectives enhances students' academic progress and intercultural competence (Ischak & Mubarak, 2022; Zein, 2017). Additionally, the positive correlation between cultural engagement and language proficiency observed in this study aligns with findings that highlight the importance of cultural immersion in language learning (Ritonga et al., 2023; Zen, 2020). These comparisons validate the effectiveness of the educational programs examined and their contribution to holistic language education.

Conversely, some aspects of the findings contradict previous research. For example, while some studies suggest that formal grammar instruction is not crucial for language proficiency (Versteegh, 2020; Widianingtyas et al., 2023), this study found that contextual grammar instruction within a cultural framework significantly enhanced students' communication skills. This discrepancy highlights the need for a balanced approach that incorporates both formal grammar and contextual language use, supporting effective communication and deeper linguistic understanding (Fernandes et al., 2024; Silalahi et al., 2023). These findings suggest that tailored instructional methods that adapt to the learners' needs and contexts are vital for successful language acquisition.

The significant correlation between cultural immersion and cognitive development observed in this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to language education. By fostering both linguistic skills and cultural understanding, students not only achieve higher language proficiency but also develop critical cognitive abilities that support overall academic success (Hudriati et al., 2023; Kesuma et al., 2023). However, it is crucial to interpret these findings cautiously, considering the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students. Tailored educational programs that address these individual differences can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction (Kawecki, 2022; Zen & Starr, 2021).

The implications of these findings are significant for language education policy and practice. By integrating cultural components into language curricula, educational programs can foster a more comprehensive and engaging learning experience, promoting both linguistic proficiency and

intercultural competence (Ischak & Mubarak, 2022; Sari et al., 2019). This approach aligns with national educational goals to enhance global awareness and intercultural understanding among students, preparing them for a multicultural and interconnected world (Salim & Hanif, 2021; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). Consequently, policymakers and educators should consider these insights when designing and implementing language education programs to achieve these broader educational objectives.

6. Conclusion

Overall, this study explores language acquisition mapping programs for the acquisition of the Indonesian language among primary school students in Australia, focusing on linguistic skills and cultural understanding. Through a qualitative descriptive methodology, the researchers found results and presented that integrating cultural components into the language curriculum enhances learning, improving both language skills and cultural appreciation.

From a pedagogical aspect, educators face substantial challenges, such as limited access to professional development, the use of irrelevant or outdated teaching materials, and the low integration of Indonesian culture in the language learning process. Meanwhile, from the perspective of learners, the Indonesian language is often considered to have less market value or practical relevance compared to other foreign languages. This is particularly evident at the secondary and higher education levels, where the heavy curriculum burden and low perception of the utility of the Indonesian language lead to reduced participation and motivation to learn.

The following findings indicate that programs such as Basic and Advanced Indonesian Language are effective in introducing the syntax, semantics, phonology, and cultural values of Indonesia, as well as promoting global awareness and empathy. The implications for language education policy highlight the need for an integrated culturally teaching approach to prepare students for a multicultural world. However, researchers also found shortcomings in its implementation, including reliance on observational data and specific educational settings. Future research should examine long-term effects, conduct comparative analyses across various educational systems, and address challenges in teaching less commonly taught languages.

In response to this condition, the Language Acquisition Mapping Program (LAMP) shows positive potential in rekindling interest and enhancing language competency through structured, in-depth, and culturally rich learning pathways. The main strength of LAMP lies in providing personalized learning trajectories, strong integration of cultural contexts, and collaboration among educational institutions. However, the effectiveness of this program is still hindered by uneven implementation, a lack of training for teachers within the LAMP framework, and the absence of longitudinal data to measure its long-term impact. Therefore, a multiperspective and integrated strategy is needed, such as repositioning the sociopolitical relevance of Indonesia in the Australian discourse, enhancing educators' capacities through continuous training, and ensuring consistent curriculum integration from primary education to higher education. Strengthening programs like LAMP with evaluative notes on existing weaknesses will be an important step in reforming the perspective on the values and learning of the Indonesian language in Australia.

7. Suggestion

There are several limitations observed in this study, one of which is the lack of school types explored, which makes these findings possibly less representative. Additionally, as a suggestion, this study includes several important aspects, namely, first, the researchers found shortcomings in its implementation, including dependence on observational data and specific educational settings. Next, future researchers should examine long-term effects, conduct comparative analyses across different educational systems, and address challenges in teaching less common languages.

Declarations

Author Contributions. A.S.N: conceptualization, methodology, validation. methodology, review editing, validation. AH: review editing, investigation, preparation of the final original manuscript. A: data collection, data analysis. visualization, data analysis. LHA: project administration, supervision. All authors have read and approved the final version of the published article.

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About the Contributor(s)

Aninditya Sri Nugraheni, Dr. is a lecturer in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Teacher Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta.

Email: aninditya.nugraheni@uin-suka.ac.id

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7139-4770>

Aninda Aji Siwi, is a lecturer in English Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta.

Email: aninda.siwi@uin-suka.ac.id

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8621-6309>

Abroto Abroto, is a doctoral student in Elementary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta.

Email: ahmadabroto05@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7212-5038>

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