

School-based language revitalization in practice: Implementing programs for the preservation of East Makian

ABSTRACT - This study examines the implementation of a language revitalization program for East Makian, an endangered language, within senior high school settings. It further investigates the discrepancy between policy directives and actual classroom practices, given the language's persistent endangered status. The primary objectives are threefold: to determine the program's effect on students' cultural awareness and interest; to assess its impact on the number of proficient speakers; and to identify the facilitating and hindering factors affecting program implementation. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed, involving 183 student participants and five key informants across three schools. Findings indicate that the program's overall impact was rated as Good (34.68), characterized by a significant increase in students' cultural awareness and interest. The program's effectiveness was also rated as Good (34.48); however, this was structurally constrained by the absence of a formal curriculum. Supporting and impeding factors received a rating of Fairly Good (33.80), with teacher commitment identified as a key facilitator, while the lack of a standardized curriculum remained a major barrier. Notably, no statistically significant difference was observed between the group exposed to the program and the non-exposed group ($t = 0.052$, $p = 0.958$). These results suggest that while the program positively influences attitudinal outcomes, it does not lead to measurable improvements in students' productive language skills.

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1. Introduction

Language endangerment has become a pressing global issue due to its implications for cultural continuity, identity, and knowledge systems (Bouchard, 2022; Fujita-Round, 2023; Pérez Báez et al., 2019). Current predictions state that about 40 to 50 percent of the languages spoken around the world are under threat of extinction in this century as a result of globalization, political concentration, and the use of important languages for communication (Al-Zoubi & Abunawas, 2025; Grenoble & Whaley, 2020; Perley, 2021). Apart from being an issue regarding language loss, it is also one of cultural heritage (Bromham et al, 2020; Zhang, 2024).

The Indonesian country, where more than 700 regional languages exist, faces serious problems related to linguistic diversity protection (Budiono et al., 2024; Hamidah & Duncik, 2024; Kusumaningsih, 2022). For example, in North Maluku, a number of native tongues, such as East Makian, can be considered critically endangered languages (Aritonang, 2020, 2021; Lukmana & Taha, 2022). Based on empirical data, it can be stated that the process of transmission from one generation to another becomes extremely weak, since most speakers are elderly people. From the perspective of the EGIDS system, East Makian is classified as level 8a nearly extinct (David et al., 2025). Sartika et al. (2023) states that 60-80% of the basic vocabulary of Eastern Makian is no longer used by the younger generation. This finding indicates that the process of language shift has reached a stage that threatens the sustainability of this language as a living communication system.

In response, the Indonesian government has implemented regional languages revival programs as cultural preservation activities according to Law Number 24 of 2009 and Government Regulation Number 57 of 2014. With respect to the case of East Makian, the language revival programs have been conducted in several senior high schools of Makian Island since 2022 through the efforts of local educational bodies along with the provincial language institution (Balai Bahasa, 2022, 2024). The main aspects involved in these activities include extra-curricular language programs, cultural events, vocabulary lessons, and integration into class lessons (Hakim et al., 2025; Yulianti et al., 2022). Nevertheless, these programs remain outside the curriculum without teaching materials or evaluation systems (Ibnu et al., 2022).

Previous studies indicate some factors that influence the success of revitalization vary due to the interplay between the policies pursued by the government, educational institutions, and the local population (Finardi & Guimarães, 2021; Nakata, 2024; Ning An & Yongyan Zheng, 2022). In fact, in regions such as Makian Island, involvement seems still extremely low. The absence of local language teachers, unavailable local context learning materials, and local students being immersed in the dominant Indonesian language in local schools create a barrier in the active engagement of the younger generations (Chandra, 2023; Farisiyah & Zamzani, 2018; Siregar, 2022).

Research related to the Eastern Makian language has thus far been dominated by descriptive linguistic studies. Jufri, (2022) analyzing the reduplication system from a morphological perspective. Meanwhile Muhamad et al. (2022) examining honorific and greeting systems from a sociolinguistic perspective. Hasad, (2022) researching the phonological interference of the Suma dialect of Makian language into Indonesian. All of these studies focus

on describing the structure and variations of the language, using qualitative methods, and have not touched on the evaluation of revitalization programs or policies.

Given the aforementioned knowledge gap, the purpose of the current study is to explore the implementation of the East Makian language revitalization program in the high schools of Makian Island. Specifically, the research aims to explore the following research questions:

1. The impact of the program on the cultural understanding and emotional connection of the students to the East Makian language.
2. The effectiveness of the program to enhance the perception of the students' competence and usage of the language.
3. The factors facilitates and barriers of the implementation of the program

2. Literature review

2.1. Language revitalization

The concept of language revitalization is that of strategy aimed at reversing linguistic change and bringing back into functional usage endangered languages within their speaking communities (Hinton, 2018; Hinton et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Early theoretical approaches, especially that of Fishman (1991) with his Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), highlight the importance of intergenerational transfer. It is described as a gradual procedure whereby language revitalization involves progression from its symbolic usage or learning among adults (Stage 8) to informal transfer between generations (Stage 6), considered crucial and most difficult of all.

Other innovations like the Expanded GIDS of Eberhard et al. (2025) offer a more detailed categorization of language vitality. The classification of East Makian language in level 8a (nearly extinct) suggests serious problems in the transmission of this language as well as its dependence on adult speakers. This implies the critical nature of interventions, yet their purely symbolic or superficial nature appears to be inadequate. Thus, modern research puts emphasis on a more comprehensive approach that includes the combination of status planning, corpus development, and acquisition planning, especially in the educational environment (Khan & Zaki, 2022; Suwarno, 2020).

2.1.1. Social capital, structural deficit and digital ecologies

In essence, the sustainability of the implementation of revitalization programs is subject to the integrated balance of social capital and structural deficit (Bourdieu, 1986). On one hand, social capital comprising commitment, passion, and promotion at the grassroots level is the foundational pillar that kicks start projects or programs (Chukwuemeka & Yamin, 2025; Kessler, 2024). On the other hand, while embodied in individuals or groups or communities, is also theoretically susceptible to exhaustion or breakdown in the absence of institutional capital and economic capital (Ajani et al., 2024; Lewis & McLeod, 2021). In this sense, this particular study seeks to discuss the dependency of the Eastern Makian program on individual actors in terms of the absence of systemic support.

Furthermore, the traditional domains of language use are being rapidly reconfigured by digitalization. The digital sociolinguistic ecology presents both an existential threat and a potential revitalization tool (George & Lacombe, 2024; Meighan, 2024). Digital media accelerates shift by saturating youth environments with dominant languages, reducing the functional utility and factor of heritage languages (Huilcán Herrera, 2022; Sihite & Sibarani, 2024). Conversely, digital tools offer unprecedented opportunities for creating new content, connecting dispersed speakers, and embedding languages in modern communicative genres (Abingosa et al., 2025; Meighan, 2023). A critical gap in many school-based programs, including the one under study, is the failure to strategically engage with this digital ecology, thereby ceding a crucial domain to languages of wider communication.

Research on language revitalization in Indonesia has grown but remains fragmented, often focusing on macro-level policy analysis or micro-linguistic description (Budiono & Jaya, 2024; Budiono et al., 2024; Yulianti et al., 2022). Studies on the implementation of *muatan lokal* (local content) curricula reveal widespread challenges lack of teacher training, inadequate materials, and minimal monitoring (Bromham & Meakins, 2020; Bromham et al., 2022; Rahmayanti et al., 2022). Research specific to Eastern Makian has been predominantly structural-descriptive (e.g., phonology, morphology, dialectology) (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Habsi, 2018; Hasad, 2022; Muhamad et al., 2022), with a stark absence of evaluative studies on revitalization programs.

Drawing on these perspectives, this study examines the East Makian revitalization program through three complementary lenses. First, Fishman's GIDS framework is used to assess the program contribution to intergenerational transmission. Second, Bourdieu's theory of capital is applied to analyze the interchange between social initiative and structural support. Third, the literature on school-based revitalization provides a basis for understanding the institutional constraints shaping program implementation. Together, these frameworks enable a focused and systematic evaluation of how revitalization operates within formal education contexts

3. Method

The design used in this research is the sequential explanatory mixed methods design, which ensures that the integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies is done systematically and complementarily (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative data collection occurred prior to qualitative data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The purpose of conducting quantitative analysis was to determine the patterns associated with the impact and effectiveness of the program (Ivankova, 2014). Subsequently, qualitative analysis was done to explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative analysis.

3.1. Participants and sampling strategy

The participants were purposely sampled for information-rich samples. In the quantitative aspect, the participants are 183 students from Grades 10th and 11th grade who were residing permanently in the East Makian community (Vebrianto et al., 2020). These participants

were classified into two groups, namely Involved Group (IG) with 123 students participating in the program, and Uninvolved Group (UG) with 60 students not participating in the program.

On the qualitative aspect, there were five key informants purposively sampled for their involvement in the implementation of the program (Mertens, 2024). Three respondents were principals from three schools, while the other two were coordinators of teachers. The sampling procedure was done following the concept of thematic saturation, whereby data gathering ends when no new theme emerges (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.2. Data collection instruments and procedures

The data collection method used in this study involved quantitative data gathered through an interview schedule containing three variables: Program Impact (10 items), Program Effectiveness (10 items), and Supporting and Inhibiting Factors (10 items), using a five-point Likert scale as a measure. Before administering the schedule among the respondents, experts on sociolinguistics and educational evaluation were consulted for its validity and clarity.

Results of reliability analysis revealed the internal consistency of the variables, with reliability levels measured by Cronbach's alpha values of 0.87 for Program Impact, 0.85 for Program Effectiveness, and 0.83 for Supporting and Inhibiting Factors.

Semi-structured interviews acted as the primary data collection method for this qualitative study. The theme guide was employed to facilitate the discussion of primary domains of the implementation process, institutional support, challenges faced, prospects of sustainability, and interpretations of initial quantification trends, while also providing scope for exploring other emerging themes (Neuman, 2014). The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, appropriately audio-recorded after securing informed consent, and later anonymized for confidentiality purposes.

3.3. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and independent sample t-test were used for analysing quantitative data with the assumption that differences would be identified between the Involved Group and Uninvolved Group at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were tested prior to inferential analysis.

For qualitative data, thematic analysis was applied based on the interactive approach of Miles et al. (2014). This process involved data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. Coding of qualitative data was done through three steps; open coding (initial categorization), axial coding (relationships among categories), and selective coding (themes).

In order to improve the research analysis process, there were two separate individuals who participated in the coding process. The inter-coder reliability was achieved through repeated comparisons and discussions between the two individuals, until a very high degree of agreement was reached. The themes were discovered using an inductive approach; however, the findings were also shaped according to the theoretical perspective of the study.

The quantitative and qualitative data were integrated during the data interpretation phase. While the former provided general information about the trends, the latter gave a detailed insight into the mechanisms that drive these trends.

4. Findings

4.1. The program impact of eastern Makian language

Analysis of data from the questionnaires completed by 183 participants revealed that the perceived impact of the revitalization program in terms of its effect on the awareness, interest, and pride of the students was generally positive. Data indicated a mean of 34.68 (SD = 6.67), representing a value in the Good category using well-established normative criteria (Table 1). Distributional analysis of the data (Figure. 1) revealed that almost half (48.1%, or 88, of the total participants, $n = 183$) rated their perception of the impact as "Good," with 42.6% (78, or $n = 183$) rating the impact's perception as Fairly Good. Only a small minority (4.4%, or 8, of the total participants, $n = 183$) rated the perception as Poor.

Table 1

Categorization and distribution of scores for program impact (N=183).

Score Interval	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
$X > 42.00$	Excellent	9	4.9
$34.00 < X \leq 42.00$	Good	88	48.1
$25.10 < X \leq 34.00$	Fairly Good	78	42.6
$17.10 < X \leq 25.10$	Poor	8	4.4
$X \leq 17.10$	Very Poor	0	0.0

The results obtained in Table 1 show that the majority of students rated the impact of the program implementation into the Good category, i.e., 48.1%, and Fairly Good, i.e., 42.6%. The results suggest that the majority of students perceived the impact of the program implementation into their awareness and attitude toward the East Makian language. The number of students who rated the impact of the program implementation into Very Good was small, i.e., 4.9%, and only 4.4% rated it into Not Good, while no students rated it into Poor.

The fact that the average empirical score is 34.68 and it falls under the Good category reveals that, on average, it is clear that the implementation of the program has played a role in developing positive attitudes and awareness of culture among students towards Eastern Makian language, although to what degree is dependent on individual students.



Figure 1. Distribution of respondent for program impact

In this respect, five key informants including school principals and teachers were interviewed through a series of semi-structured interviews to obtain contextual information. One of the commonalities was the implementation of programs at different tiers of educational institutions. The local government assistance was through socialization, teacher training, and competitions related to languages. To cite one informant’s stated:

“The local government has been quite active in promoting regional language revitalization programs, especially for the East Makian language. Socialization and implementation activities have been carried out to make East Makian part of the curriculum at the elementary and junior high school level. The government also supports various regional language competitions up to the national level”. (Informant 1)

However, this support was described as absent or minimal at the senior high school level, primarily due to the "lack of an official policy or curriculum regulating the learning of Eastern Makian as a local content subject" (Informant 3). Another informant elaborated: “The regional government is quite involved, especially through cooperation with the Provincial Language Center Office and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The language revitalization program is already running at the elementary school and junior high school levels, although for senior high schools it has not been directly touched”. (Informant 4)

Despite this structural gap, informants noted observable positive shifts in student attitudes and selective language use. Informant 3 reported a change in student disposition:

“Before the revitalization program, students in our region did not even speak Makian in their school environment. But now, there has been a change. Students have begun to dare to speak the local languages, even though Indonesian is still more frequently used.” (Informant 3)

The convergent data demonstrates the program's fulfilment of its objective in developing a strong affective-symbolic foundation. It has indeed promoted cultural awareness, pride, and declarative interest effectively. Yet, there was a notable gap in the outcomes: the "awareness without practice" phenomenon became a dominant feature. Students expressed positive attitude and confidence levels in well-structured, performative situations (for example, in oratory

contests), but the utilization of the Eastern Makian variety in unstructured or daily social and academic contexts remained very low. The program became a symbolic cultural promotion vehicle, not a catalyst for authentic linguistic praxis.

4.1.1. Perceived effectiveness program of the eastern Makian language

The perceived effectiveness of the program in enhancing linguistic competence yielded a mean score of 34.48 (SD = 6.67), also categorized as Good (Table 2, Fig. 2). While 50.3% (n=92) of respondents rated effectiveness as Good, a significant portion (33.9%, n=62) perceived it as only Fairly Good, suggesting substantial room for improvement in pedagogical delivery and resource support.

Table 2

Categorization and distribution of scores for program effectiveness (N=183).

Score Interval	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
$X > 42.00$	Excellent	9	4.9
$34.00 < X \leq 42.00$	Good	92	50.3
$25.10 < X \leq 34.00$	Fairly Good	62	33.9
$17.10 < X \leq 25.10$	Poor	20	10.9
$X \leq 17.10$	Very Poor	0	0.0

Table 2 shows that most students rated the program implementation as Good (50.3%) and Fairly Good (33.9%). The average empirical score of 34.48, which falls into the Good category, indicates that, in general, the revitalization program has been implemented and recognized by students in the school environment. However, the proportion of students who placed the program implementation in the Poor category (10.9%) shows that there are variations in experiences and perceptions among students, indicating that the program implementation has not been fully standardized across all schools. The distribution of students' perceptions of the program implementation is visualized in Figure 2.

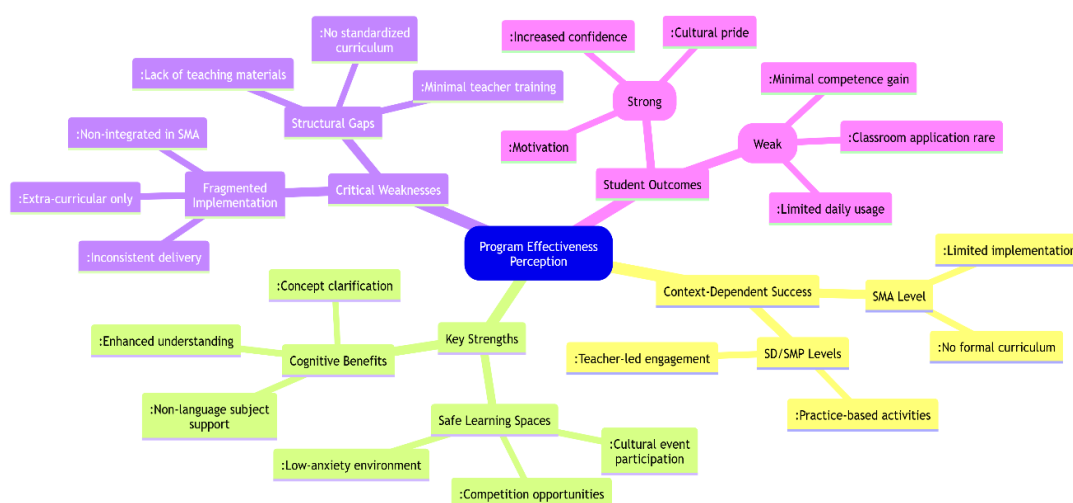


Figure 2. Distribution of respondent for program effectiveness

Similarly, the interview data indicated that the effectiveness of the program was context-dependent in the sense that in the elementary school and junior high school setting, in which learning activities were centered around practical work (drama, poetry contests), the program was rated as being more effective. The practical work was perceived as creating the safe space in which the AFL had a lower filtering effect and motivated the learners to use the program. The cognitive value of using the local language was pointed out in the informants' statements: "Eastern Makian has proven to help students' understanding in learning, even for non-language subjects. For example, a mathematics teacher said that explanations using Eastern Makian are easier for students to understand than Indonesian." (Informant 2)

The contrast with the senior high schools' level was stark, where effectiveness was severely constrained. The absence of a formal curriculum was the primary impediment. Informant 3 explained: "For elementary and junior high school students, learning Eastern Makian is quite effective because they are involved in practical activities such as competitions and drama. Meanwhile, in high school, no significant increase is seen because there is no formal learning" (Informant 3). The role of cultural events as a motivational driver was also emphasized: "Students are quite active in participating in regional language-based activities such as poetry, drama, and speech contests in Eastern Makian. Activities like this even go up to the provincial and national levels. Through these activities, students are increasingly confident using the regional language." (Informant 5)

The program demonstrated fragmented effectiveness. It succeeded as a supplemental, culturally enriching intervention in lower educational levels where practice-based activities were feasible. However, it failed to become integrated into the core academic ecosystem of senior high schools. Without curriculum mandate, dedicated instructional time, and structured materials, the revitalization effort remained peripheral, limiting its potential to foster sustained language development.

4.2. Comparative analysis involved vs uninvolved

To evaluate the program's differential impact, an independent sample t-test was conducted comparing aggregate scores of students involved in the program (n=123) and those Uninvolved (n=60). As shown in Table 3, the mean scores were nearly identical.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for participant and non-participant groups.

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Uninvolved	60	103.03	13.197	1.704
Involved	123	102.93	12.792	1.153

Levene's test revealed homogeneity of variances since $F = 0.253$ and $p = 0.616$. Using the t-test, the data proved to be not statistically significant since the t-test assuming homogeneity of variance gave $t(181) = 0.052$, $p = 0.958$, and the 95% confidence interval for the difference

in the means ranging from (-3.910 to 4.123) included zero. The test also gave a negligible mean difference, which equalled 0.107 (Table 4).

Table 4

Independent samples t-test results.

	Independent Samples Test								
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.253	.616	.052	181	.958	.107	2.035	-3.910	4.123
Equal variances not assumed			.052	113.899	.959	.107	2.057	-3.969	4.182

The null hypothesis stating that there is no difference in results for participants and non-participants cannot be rejected. These results are essential, as it has been shown quantitatively that participating in the current structure does not generate tangibly different results compared with non-participants. Such a discovery calls into question the actual efficacy of the program as it exists today.

4.2.1. Supporting and inhibiting factors of eastern Makian language

Program implementation factors influencing analysis yielded a mean of 33.80, which fell in the category of Fairly Good (see Table 5 and Figure. 3). This was a concentrated distribution, with 51.91% (n=95) falling under the category of Fairly Good and 40.98% (n=75) falling under the category of Good.

Table 5

Categorization and distribution of scores for supporting/inhibiting factors.

Score Interval	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
X > 42.00	Excellent	4	2.19
34.00 < X ≤ 42.00	Good	75	40.98
25.10 < X ≤ 34.00	Fairly Good	95	51.91
17.10 < X ≤ 25.10	Poor	9	4.92
X ≤ 17.10	Very Poor	0	0.00

The results in Table 3 reveal that the majority of the students selected the conditions under the supporting factors and inhibiting factors categories at the Fairly Good (51.91%) and Good (40.98%) levels. It seems that the average empirical score for the results, at 33.80, is in the Fairly Good category, showing that the implementing process of the program is in a state of complete balance in terms of the availability of supporting factors and inhibiting factors encountered in the implementing process. This means that the success of the program cannot

solely depend on the success experienced in the implementation process of the activities performed, but also on the availability of supporting factors such as commitment in schools, participation of teachers and the students, as well as social and cultural support encountered. In contrast, the inhibiting factors, which are resources, time, and the lack of supporting facilities, still need attention.



Figure 3. Distribution of respondent for supporting and inhibiting factors

Thematic analysis of interviews highlighted the prevailing dilemma of the interrelation between social capital and structural deficit.

4.2.1.1. Supporting factors

The major driving force behind the program was found to be the strong commitment of individual teachers as well as community enthusiasm and initiative. This type of grass roots initiative was seen to help programs such as language competitions and curriculum integration. The policy and cultural programs were identified as enablers: “The supporting factors are the presence of government policies for inclusion of regional languages in the basic curriculum, cultural activities, and the initiative of teachers and people in using Eastern Makian.” (Informant 1)

4.2.1.2. Constraining factors

The significant systemic constraints were: (1) lack of binding local policy and a formal curriculum at senior high school; (2) lack of sustainable budgetary allocation; (3) scarcity of teaching materials and training facilities; (4) weakening intergenerational transmission at home; (5) pervasive influence of digital media and Indonesian that diminishes perceived functional utility among youth. “The main obstacles are lack of facilities, no official regulations, and minimal learning resources. On Makian Island, there are no lodging facilities or infrastructure to support training activities” (Informant 3). “Parental support still depends on each family's awareness. If the family still communicates in the regional language at home, the children will get used to it. But if not, children are more likely to use Indonesian” (Informant 4). “Digital

media actually makes children more familiar with Indonesian or slang. The use of Eastern Makian is decreasing because they feel the regional language is not relevant to modern life.” (Informant 5)

For the program to be sustainable, it is tenuous and relies on the precarious nature of social capital without the safety net of a structurally enshrined and institutionalized structural underpinning. Its sustainability would be undermined by changes to personal circumstances that impact the program, such as the transfer of the teacher, as well as the tenuous nature of project-funding. For the program to be revitalized sustainably, the underlying power and energy of social capital would need to be enshrined structurally.

5. Discussion

The results of the current research suggest the occurrence of a structure-limited language revitalization model, characterized by effective involvement but the failure of translating it into functional language usage. The identified contradiction is linked to a more general conflict between symbolic and sustainable language revitalization practices. The discussion of the topic is provided based on the answers to the formulated research questions and the analysis of existing theory.

In addressing the first research question, which looks at the impact of the program on the students’ cultural sensitivity and affective involvement, it is clear that the revitalization program has had important affective effects on the target population. The students felt an increased sense of cultural pride and identity and developed a positive attitude towards the East Makian language. In line with the Fishman, (1991) GIDS model, more specifically, Stage 7 of the GIDS, in which language serves the purpose of a marker of identity, rather than communicative purposes, it can be said that affective reinforcement is needed for any language revitalization process. Examples of language revitalization programs involving such initial stages can be found among the efforts made by West Frisian and Basque communities (Goirigolzarri et al., 2025; Kircher et al., 2024).

However, in relation to the second research question, which concerns the program’s effectiveness in enhancing language competence and use, the findings indicate a critical limitation. The absence of statistically significant differences between the Intervention and Control groups ($p = 0.958$) suggests that program participation does not lead to measurable gains in linguistic proficiency or frequency of use. This condition can be conceptualized as affective encapsulation, a state in which positive language attitudes are confined within symbolic and performative domains without extending into functional communicative practices. In GIDS terms, this represents a stagnation at Stage 7 and a failure to transition to Stage 6, where intergenerational transmission and informal use become central.

This stagnation is theoretically significant. Fishman, (1991) emphasizes that the transition from Stage 7 to Stage 6 is the most critical and challenging phase in reversing language shift, as it requires the reactivation of language use within intimate domains such as family and peer interaction. The present findings suggest that the East Makian program has not yet created the necessary conditions for this transition. Instead, language use remains compartmentalized

within institutional and ceremonial contexts, echoing findings from other heritage language programs where students learn about rather than learn in the language (Torres-Purroy & Mas-Alcolea, 2022; McIvor & Ball, 2019).

This situation is also indicative of what recent research calls tokenistic revitalization efforts, wherein programs emphasize visibility, representation, and performative aspects over practical fluency (Tsykarev et al., 2025). Though such efforts can foster a strong sense of culture, they do not necessarily help reproduce a community of fluent speakers. This East Makian example, therefore, shows that there can be a disconnect between affective and linguistic success in revitalization efforts.

Addressing the third research question, which focuses on facilitating and inhibiting factors, the findings point to a fundamental imbalance between social capital and structural support. Teacher commitment, local enthusiasm, and community awareness constitute significant forms of social capital that enable the initiation and maintenance of the program. However, drawing on Bourdieu, (1986) theory of capital, these forms of capital remain inherently unstable unless they are institutionalized into durable structures namely cultural capital (curriculum, pedagogical norms) and economic capital (funding, resources).

In this particular case, the lack of curriculum, instruction time, standardization of teaching material, and training for teachers constitutes a lack of institutionalization. Thus, the revitalization project is conducted in a structural deficit context, where initiative takes precedence over systemic approach. This observation is consistent with existing studies that have proven the vulnerability of revitalization projects dependent on the participation of local communities alone to disruption and scalability limitations (Lauder et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2021). On the other hand, successful revitalization programs prove the positive effect that even the partial inclusion of revitalized languages in formal education systems can produce (Laschewski & Rädcl, 2025).

The concept of structural deficit is further illuminated through domain theory. While the program has successfully established the school as a symbolic domain for East Makian, it has failed to extend language use into critical domains such as peer interaction, home communication, and digital environments. According to domain theory, language vitality depends on its presence across multiple functional domains, particularly those associated with daily interaction and social reproduction. Without expansion into these domains, language use remains compartmentalized and unsustainable (Neokleous & Natlandsmyr, 2025).

External variables add another layer to this situation. The informants noted that the prevalence of the Indonesian language at home and the pervasive presence of digital media are significant obstacles. This follows a worldwide trend where digital sociolinguistic ecosystems drive language change by favoring dominant languages in digital communication (Meighan, 2021, 2023). On the other hand, the lack of digital approaches in the curriculum is a crucial oversight. Recent studies point to the potential of digital media such as social networking sites, video games, and digital storytelling to construct novel domains of language usage among young people (McLellan, 2023; Panjaitan & Patria, 2024).

One notable finding is the notion held by the participants about the lack of relevance of East Makian language in modern times. However, this is not because of any deficiency in the language, this only means that the language has limited spheres of applicability. The focus of the program on conventional practices might be the factor behind this association. There is the need to position the language as relevant in modern times and in the future.

As seen in this study, it becomes clear that there should be a separation made between cultural revitalization and linguistic revitalization. Though the program shows promise in terms of cultural identity revitalization (RQ1), it does not yield comparable results regarding language ability and usage (RQ2). This is important since confusing these two may provide an inaccurate picture of program success. According to Wolfram et al. (2023), true revitalization entails more than symbolism; it entails the production of new speakers and contexts of use.

Lastly, the methodological process of engaging a control group to assess program impact reveals a void in the effectiveness and evaluative process of a considerable number of revitalization programs. The reliance on self-reported successes and prevailing celebratory indicators conceals a void in actual outcome and achievement. The lack of impact demonstrated through our study's comparative process is a stark reminder that process and progress are not tantamount to one another. In fact, to really move this academic and practical discipline forward, evaluative processes must expand to compare and measure attitudes toward language as well as actual language acquisition, utilization, and transmission (Kolobe & Matsoso, 2020).

The Eastern Makian case serves as a graphic example of one of the most essential tasks in the field of endangered language revitalization, treading the path from symbolic acceptance to functional adoption. While the program's successful appeal to the affective supports a necessary base of social intent, this intent will not be transformed into pervasive linguistic behavior without accompanying structural reform in education policy, curriculum development, teacher training, and digital platform development. The future of Eastern Makian—and scores of languages standing at the same juncture—relies upon bridging this gap in implementation with policies that go beyond ceremonial inclusions to create immersive, meaningful, and modern contexts for the use of a language.

6. Conclusion

The current study demonstrates that the East Makian revitalization program results in an incomplete process, as it increases cultural awareness and positive attitudes toward the language yet fails to enhance students' linguistic skills and actual usage of the target language—a situation explained by the phenomenon of affective encapsulation, wherein emotional connection to the language exists only symbolically without practical application. This research makes three primary contributions: first, it provides a detailed empirical evaluation of the East Makian revitalization program using a mixed-methods design; second, it introduces the issue of affective encapsulation as a potential obstacle in language revitalization processes; and third, it demonstrates how the integration of quantitative and qualitative data can effectively assess revitalization program outcomes. Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness and practical implementation of such programs, including longitudinal studies to track students'

language development over time and to determine whether attitudinal improvements eventually translate into measurable gains in proficiency and usage, as well as ethnographic studies focusing on classroom practices to offer deeper insights into real-world teacher–student engagement with the language and the challenges of implementing communicative approaches. Comparative studies across different regional language revitalization programs are also recommended to identify best practices, contextual differences, and transferable strategies that can broadly strengthen revitalization efforts. The implications of this research underscore the need to shift from symbolic measures toward structural and functional expansion, with proposed measures including the development of leveled reading books and additional instructional materials, digital content creation, enhanced teacher training, and the integration of regional languages into an evaluation-based curriculum.

Declaration on the use of AI

The author used artificial intelligence tools solely to assist with language refinement, grammar, and light editorial support during the drafting of this manuscript. Meanwhile, all analyses, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article are entirely the author’s own ideas and responsibility.

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