



Audiobook as a Medium for Conserving Sundanese Folklore and Enhancing the Language Skills of Generation Alpha

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Abstract

The Sundanese language, despite being the second most widely spoken regional language in Indonesia, faces declining use among younger generations who perceive it as irrelevant. This study addresses how oral Sundanese folklore can be conserved and simultaneously transformed into an effective learning medium for Generation Alpha. Employing a research-and-development approach combined with a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design, the study conserved the folklore “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis” through the stages of data collection, validation, value analysis, and transformation into a bilingual illustrated audiobook. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning and the concept of literary transformation from orality to literacy frame the analysis. The product was tested on 27 fourth-grade students at SDIT Wadi Al Ahgaff, Bogor. Results shown significant improvement in Sundanese knowledge (30.00 to 98.41; $t = 19.63$; $p < 0.001$; N-Gain 0.98) and language skills (43.25 to 83.57; $t = 30.23$; $p < 0.001$; N-Gain 0.72), both with very large effect sizes. The study contributes a replicable model of folklore conservation that bridges cultural preservation and digital-era pedagogy, supporting SDG 4 on quality education.

Keywords: Policy. Folklore Conservation; Sundanese Language; Audiobook; Generation Alpha; Learning Media

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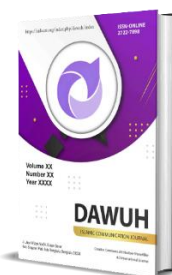
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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is home to the world's richest diversity of regional languages, with 718 languages spread across 38 provinces. In West Java, Sundanese is spoken by roughly 51.25% of the population and ranks as the second most widely used regional language in the country after Javanese. Yet a large speaker base does not guarantee a language's vitality. As a socio-cultural entity, language continually changes amid cross-cultural contact and advances in communication technology, leaving most of Indonesia's regional languages in a threatened condition (Ismadi 2018).

The challenge facing Sundanese today is generational. Globalization and the dominance of national and foreign languages have reduced the use of Sundanese, particularly because young people often regard regional languages as irrelevant to contemporary social life (Muhammad, Sondakh, and Mulyono 2015). If this trend continues, the number of speakers will keep shrinking and the survival of Sundanese will be at risk. Cultural preservation therefore becomes essential: a systematic effort to maintain, preserve, and develop the values, traditions, language, and cultural heritage so that they remain alive and relevant amid the dynamics of the times, with young people as the principal heirs (Firgiawan et al. 2025).

Folklore is part of the culture of a collective, distributed and inherited from generation to generation, whether orally or through example accompanied by gesture (Danandjaja 1994). As communal property, folklore records the cultural phenomena of its owners and can therefore represent the identity of a culture (Rustandi and Anggradinata 2019). Folktales, as one genre of oral folklore, not only contain moral and cultural values but also enrich vocabulary and understanding of the regional language (Aljamaliah and Darmadi 2022). Reintroducing Sundanese folklore to children thus becomes a strategic gateway for language preservation and character building.

Conservation in this study is understood as an effort to preserve the values of folklore by developing the source (hypogram) text—oral in nature—into a different literary form or cultural product. This process aligns with the idea of literary transformation from orality to literacy, namely the transfer of oral folklore into a recorded medium more resistant to the passage of time. Such transformation does not erase the essence of the folklore but extends its reach and longevity through a new medium. In the context of regional-language preservation, this approach has proven effective as a form of cultural conservation based on oral folklore (Kurniati et al. 2015).

Product design draws on the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which holds that learning is more meaningful when information is presented through two channels—verbal and visual—in an integrated manner (Mayer 2014). An illustrated audiobook combines oral narration (the verbal-auditory channel) with illustration (the visual channel), enabling users to build a coherent mental representation. The Sundanese voice-over dimension strengthens the auditory channel while modeling pronunciation, and broadens access for users who cannot yet read. Early childhood is an optimal period for language acquisition, so this combination of modes is relevant to the characteristics of Generation Alpha—a generation fully formed within a digital environment with access to technology from an early age (Jha 2020; Yuliandri 2020).

The concept of language vitality explains that a language's survival is determined not merely by its number of speakers but by sustained intergenerational transmission. A language with millions of speakers can still be threatened if children stop learning it as a first language



or stop using it in everyday domains. This is precisely what is happening to Sundanese in urban areas such as Bogor: the speaker base remains large, but the chain of transmission to Generation Alpha is weakening. Revitalization therefore places young people as the primary target, employing media and technology close to their daily lives. Local-wisdom-based learning media, including digital comics, digital dictionaries, and culturally themed pop-up books, have been widely tested as promising instruments of revitalization (Firgiawan et al. 2025; Nabila, Adha, and Febriandi 2021).

Folklore is valuable not only linguistically but also as a rich source of character education. Folktales can shape children's character and foster love for regional culture through the values that live within them (Aljamaliah and Darmadi 2022). In “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis”, the central value being conserved is servant leadership: a leader who protects his people with care, builds infrastructure for their welfare, and preserves nature for the sustainability of life. This value is worth instilling early as a foundation of character, while linking language learning with identity formation. The conservation product thus operates on three levels at once: preserving language, transmitting local history, and instilling character values.

The problem of this study is framed in two questions. First, how can oral Sundanese folklore be conserved and simultaneously transformed into a learning medium suited to the characteristics of Generation Alpha? Second, how effective is such a conservation product in improving users' knowledge and skills in the Sundanese language? These questions arose from the condition of the research partner, the Bogor Historia Community—a community of history and culture enthusiasts established in 2012 with 25 members—which mentors elementary school children in Sundanese history and culture but lacks a learning medium capable of measurably improving Sundanese knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The geographical position of Bogor reinforces the urgency of this study. As a satellite city of Jakarta, Bogor is highly vulnerable in terms of regional-language use due to population mobility and the dominance of metropolitan Indonesian in daily interaction. This places elementary-age children in Bogor in a paradoxical situation: they grow up in the heart of Sundanese culture, yet their everyday exposure to the Sundanese language and folklore is steadily thinning. An intervention that links folklore preservation with language learning is therefore an urgent need rather than a mere curricular supplement.

Prior studies show that audio books and similar multimedia are effective in improving knowledge and learning interest. Najahah, Agus, and Oemar (2016) demonstrated that pop-up books can enhance knowledge of Indonesia's traditional houses and clothing, while Devi and Maisaroh (2017) found that three-dimensional visual effects make learning more engaging and effective. Pratiwi, Kurniawan, and Hapsari (2024) confirmed that pop-up books can instill Sundanese cultural values, and Khairunisa, Nurani, and Jahja (2024) reported effectiveness of up to 91.25% for a digital pop-up book for early childhood. Several recent pretest–posttest studies likewise report high-category N-Gain for local-wisdom-based pop-up media (Nabila, Adha, and Febriandi 2021; Friska, Maksum, and Marini 2023; Siregar 2025).

The study most closely related to the present one is Kurniati et al. (2015), which tested Javanese-language learning based on oral folklore as a form of cultural conservation and found the design effective: experimental-class learning outcomes were better than the control class, and students were more active, enthusiastic, and creative. The two studies share the use of oral



folklore as a basis for conservation and learning. However, the present study differs in two fundamental ways. First, the language being preserved is Sundanese, whose learning-media research remains more limited than that of Javanese. Second, the resulting product is not merely a lesson design but a reproducible cultural artifact—a bilingual illustrated audiobook—so that the conservation outcome is durable and can be disseminated independently beyond the classroom.

Nevertheless, a gap remains. Most of these studies stop at measuring knowledge or interest and have not methodologically linked media development with the work of folklore conservation. Moreover, the majority focus solely on the visual mode and accommodate neither pre-reading users (ages 4–5) nor the strengthening of oral language skills. This study fills that gap by placing folklore conservation at the core of product development and adding a Sundanese voice-over dimension as a novelty, so that the product not only conveys information but also preserves the folklore’s speech and values while training pronunciation.

To address this problem, the study rests on three complementary theoretical foundations: the concept of folklore and its function as a recorder of cultural identity, the concept of literary transformation from orality to literacy as the basis for conservation, and the cognitive theory of multimedia learning as the basis for media design. The objectives are (1) to describe the conservation of the folklore “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis” into an illustrated audiobook product, and (2) to test the product’s effectiveness on the Sundanese knowledge and skills of Generation Alpha.

METHODS

This study employs a research-and-development approach combined with a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design. The product-development stage followed five steps: (1) collecting primary data through interviews with speakers and secondary data through a literature review; (2) synchronizing and validating the oral data against literature sources; (3) analyzing the values contained in the folklore; (4) conserving them by composing a sequence and developing the product; and (5) testing the product. The Bogor Historia Community partner assisted in collecting primary data, validating the folklore, and translating and composing the narrative.

The test subjects were 27 fourth- and fifth-grade students at SDIT Wadi Al Ahgaff, Tegallega, Bogor. Three variables were measured: enthusiasm (a Likert-scale questionnaire, 30% weight), Sundanese knowledge (a written questionnaire, 35% weight), and Sundanese language skills (performance observation of 11 indicators covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing, 35% weight). Knowledge and skills were measured at pretest and posttest. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, N-Gain scores, and Cohen’s d effect sizes; the normality of gain distributions was checked with the Shapiro-Wilk test.

The knowledge instrument consisted of five items measuring mastery of the story content and Sundanese vocabulary, each worth a maximum of 20 points for a maximum score of 100. The skills instrument was an observation sheet of eleven indicators grouped into four language aspects—listening (three indicators), speaking (three), reading (two), and writing (three)—with a rubric scoring each indicator from 1 to 5. Raw skill scores ranged from 11 to



55 and were then converted to a 100-point scale for ease of interpretation. Assessment was conducted by a trained observer to ensure objective observation of performance.

N-Gain categories follow the common convention: high if $g \geq 0.70$, medium if $0.30 \leq g < 0.70$, and low if $g < 0.30$. Cohen's d is interpreted as small (0.2), medium (0.5), large (0.8), and very large beyond 1.0. Combining significance testing, N-Gain, and effect size ensures that conclusions state not only whether an improvement is statistically meaningful but also how large its practical significance is for learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conservation began with data collection. Primary data were gathered through interviews with speakers and informants facilitated by the Bogor Historia Community partner, while secondary data came from a literature review of Bogor historical sources. Because oral folklore often has several speech variants, the validation step was crucial: informants' accounts were synchronized with literature sources presenting similar data to ensure consistency and validity before further processing. This step ensures that the conservation product rests on accountable data rather than mere invention.

The folklore chosen for conservation was “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis,” a local knowledge of Bogor rich in leadership values. Value analysis shows that strong, positive leadership is vital to a region's development: Sri Baduga Maharaja is depicted building protective moats, hardening roads to facilitate trade, and preserving nature by creating forests and lakes. This value was retained throughout the conservation process.



Figure 1. Audiobook “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis”

The sequence was arranged into twelve narrative scenes, from the founding of the Pakuan Pajajaran kingdom, through Prabu Sri Baduga Maharaja's leadership in building moats, roads, forests, and lakes, to the king's death and the erection of the Batu Tulis Inscription by his son as a tribute. The narrative was then developed in parallel in Sundanese and Indonesian. As an illustration, the Sundanese opening reads, “Jaman baheula, di tanah Bogor ngadeg hiji karajaan gede anu ngaranna Pakuan Pajajaran,” paired with the Indonesian “Dahulu kala, di tanah Bogor, berdiri sebuah kerajaan besar bernama Pakuan Pajajaran.” This bilingual pairing lets users recognize Sundanese vocabulary while grasping its meaning, consistent with the principle of integrating verbal channels in multimedia learning. The final product is an illustrated audiobook containing bilingual narration with embedded audio playback, so that folklore once living only in speech is now recorded in a more durable, repeatedly accessible medium.

Effectiveness for Sundanese Knowledge

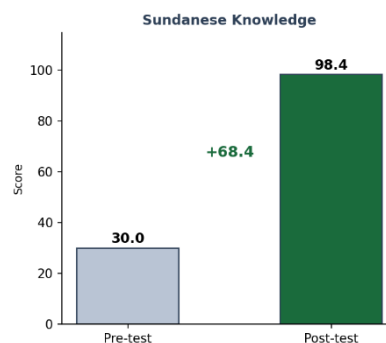
Before examining each variable in turn, Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for both knowledge and skills at pretest and posttest. Both variables show a substantial rise in mean scores, while posttest minimum values remain high (95 for knowledge and 67.27 for skills), indicating that even the lowest-achieving respondents reached a good category after using the product.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for Sundanese knowledge and skills (N = 27).

Variable	n	M	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge – Pretest	27	30.00	19.22	0	80
Knowledge – Posttest	27	98.41	1.55	95	100
Skills – Pretest	27	43.25	6.38	34.55	56.36
Skills – Posttest	27	83.57	8.00	67.27	96.36

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Skills are expressed on a 0–100 scale converted from the raw scores of 11 indicators (maximum 55).

Testing on 27 respondents showed a highly significant improvement in Sundanese knowledge. The mean pretest score of 30.00 (range 0–80) rose to 98.41 at posttest (range 95–100), an average gain of 68.41 points. Every respondent improved without exception. The paired-samples t-test yielded $t = 19.63$ ($p < 0.001$), an N-Gain of 0.98 in the high category, and a Cohen's d of 3.78, classified as very large. The Shapiro-Wilk test on gain scores indicated a normal distribution ($p = 0.055$), confirming the appropriateness of the paired t-test. This achievement also corrects the limitation of the initial laboratory test, which involved only one



respondent.

Figure 2. Mean Sundanese knowledge scores at pretest and posttest.

The distribution provides additional insight. At pretest, the high standard deviation (19.22) and wide range from 0 to 80 reflect highly varied prior knowledge—some respondents were entirely unfamiliar with the story, while others possessed partial knowledge. After the intervention, the standard deviation shrank dramatically to 1.55, indicating that the product successfully leveled all respondents' understanding to a high and even degree. This narrowing

is strong evidence that the product's effectiveness does not depend on a user's starting point; those beginning from zero and those with a foundation alike reached full mastery—a characteristic much needed in heterogeneous elementary classrooms.

Effectiveness for Sundanese Language Skills

Sundanese language skills also improved significantly. The mean skill score rose from 43.25 (pretest) to 83.57 (posttest) on a 100-point scale, or from a raw total of 23.79 to 45.96 out of 55. The paired-samples t-test yielded $t = 30.23$ ($p < 0.001$), an N-Gain of 0.72 in the high category, and a Cohen's d of 5.82, very large; the gain distribution was normal (Shapiro-Wilk $p = 0.751$). A summary of the statistical tests for both variables appears in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of statistical tests for knowledge and skills.

Variable	Gain	N-Gain	t	Cohen's d
Knowledge	+68.41	0.98	19.63	3.78
Skills	+40.3	0.72	30.23	5.82

Note: both are significant at $p < 0.001$.

Analysis by aspect shows that every skill aspect improved. The largest gain occurred in reading (+2.29), followed by writing (+2.05), speaking (+1.98), and listening (+1.84). At posttest, writing reached the highest score (4.46) while speaking was the lowest (3.75). Details by aspect appear in Table 3 and are visualized in Figure 2.

Table 3. Skill achievement by aspect (1–5 scale).

Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test	Δ
Listening	2.40	4.23	+1.84
Speaking	1.78	3.75	+1.98
Reading	2.02	4.31	+2.29
Writing	2.41	4.46	+2.05

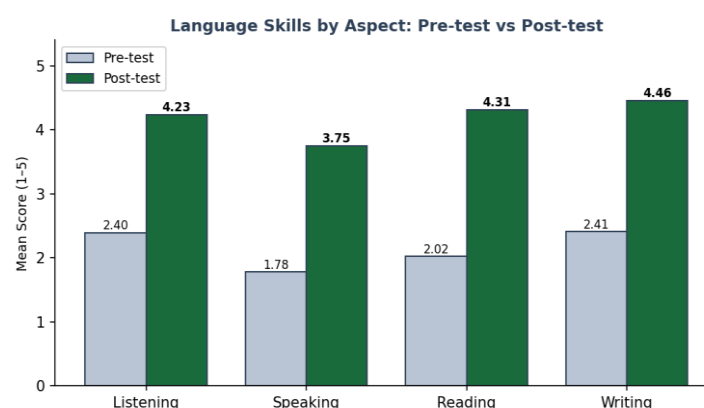


Figure 3. Comparison of skill scores by aspect: pretest vs posttest.

This pattern is pedagogically meaningful. Receptive skills (listening and reading) and writing developed faster because the audiobook provides rich, repeatedly accessible auditory-visual input. Speaking, by contrast, developed more slowly because productive-oral skills require repeated practice and confidence built over a longer period. This finding aligns with prior studies reporting high effectiveness of audio and multimedia media in the knowledge domain, yet signals the need to strengthen oral-practice components so that speaking improves optimally.

Indicator-level analysis provides a finer picture. As shown in Table 4 and Figure 3, the largest gains occurred in reading words/sentences (+2.44) and identifying main characters (+2.33), while the smallest—though still real—was in grasping the moral message (+1.41). Identifying main characters even reached a near-perfect posttest score (4.96), indicating that a clear narrative structure with the central figure of Sri Baduga Maharaja is easily grasped. Conversely, retelling the story orally (3.33) and grasping the moral (3.70) demand higher-order cognition—reconstruction and inference—that develops more gradually.

Table 4. Skill achievement by indicator (1–5 scale).

Code	Indicator	Pre	Post	Δ
K1	Understanding the story content	2.26	4.04	+1.78
K2	Identifying main characters	2.63	4.96	+2.33
K3	Grasping the moral message	2.30	3.70	+1.41
K4	Word pronunciation	1.74	4.00	+2.26
K5	Retelling the story orally	1.48	3.33	+1.85
K6	Answering questions	2.11	3.93	+1.81
K7	Reading words/sentences	1.71	4.15	+2.44
K8	Reading narrative text	2.33	4.48	+2.15
K9	Copying words	2.37	4.48	+2.11
K10	Writing new vocabulary	2.44	4.48	+2.04
K11	Writing sentences	2.41	4.41	+2.00

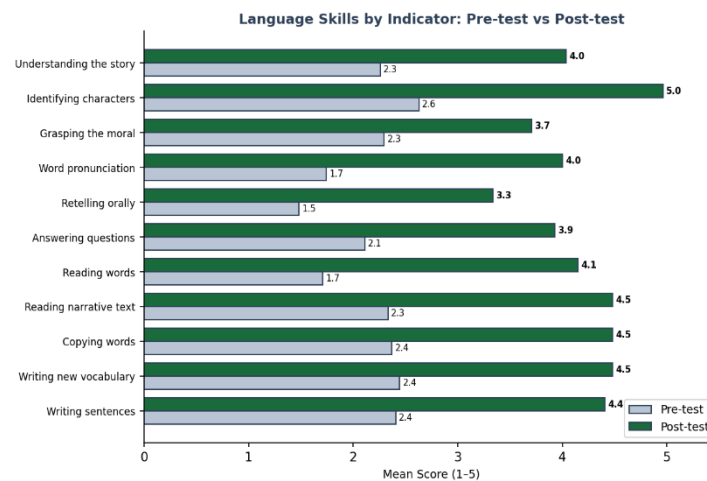


Figure 4. Comparison of scores by skill indicator: pretest vs posttest.

Compared with prior research, the achievements here are consistent with, and even exceed, earlier findings. Audio book studies commonly report high-category N-Gain around 0.73 (Siregar 2025; Nabila, Adha, and Febriandi 2021), whereas this study obtained N-Gain of 0.98 for knowledge and 0.72 for skills. The higher knowledge gain can be explained by two factors: the tested material is based on a single, focused story that is easy to master, and the voice-over dimension reinforces retention through auditory repetition. The slightly lower skills gain relative to knowledge reflects the complexity of building language proficiency, which does require more time and practice.

It is also worth noting that not a single respondent experienced stagnation or decline in either knowledge or skills. This uniform direction of improvement—together with the small posttest standard deviation for knowledge (1.55)—indicates that the product works consistently across individuals and does not benefit only certain respondents. Such consistency is an important indicator of a learning medium’s viability, since even effectiveness is more valuable than high but uneven effectiveness across users.

The methodological strength of this study deserves emphasis. Using three layers of evidence—significance testing (t-test), normalized gain (N-Gain), and effect size (Cohen’s d)—yields more robust conclusions than relying on the p-value alone. The t-test indicates the improvement did not occur by chance; N-Gain places its magnitude in the high category; and the very large Cohen’s d (3.78 for knowledge and 5.82 for skills) shows that the intervention’s practical significance is exceptional. Coupled with verification of gain-distribution normality via Shapiro-Wilk, this analytic chain meets sound quantitative-reporting standards. Such statistical triangulation remains rare in research on developing regional-language learning media, making it one of this study’s methodological contributions.

Beyond the knowledge and skills dimensions, the test design also measured enthusiasm as an affective variable weighted at 30%. Treating enthusiasm separately matters because a learning medium’s success cannot be measured by cognitive achievement alone but also by its capacity to spark interest and engagement. An effective but tedious medium tends to be unsustainable, whereas one that fosters enthusiasm can encourage repeated, self-directed learning. Within this frame, the illustrated-audiobook mode gains its advantage: the blend of

sound, image, and a child-friendly story turns Sundanese learning into an enjoyable experience rather than a burden.

On a broader level, this study demonstrates that cultural conservation and education can proceed alongside the strengthening of the creative economy. A proven, viable folklore audiobook can be developed into a marketable publishing product, so that regional-language preservation need not depend entirely on grant funding but can sustain itself through market mechanisms. The proposed model thus addresses the sustainability challenge that often weakens revitalization programs: how to keep preservation efforts alive after the project period ends. This contribution is relevant to SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as to the agenda of cultural preservation and creative-economy development through the publishing industry.

CONCLUSION

This study reaches two principal conclusions corresponding to its research questions. First, the oral Sundanese folklore “Sejarah Sri Baduga Maharaja dan Batu Tulis” was successfully conserved and transformed from orality to literacy into a bilingual illustrated audiobook through the stages of data collection, validation, value analysis, sequence composition, and product development. The leadership value embedded in the folklore was preserved intact, while the Sundanese voice-over dimension constitutes a novelty that broadens reach to pre-reading users and strengthens pronunciation modeling.

Second, the conservation product proved effective in significantly improving both the Sundanese knowledge and the language skills of Generation Alpha. Knowledge rose from 30.00 to 98.41 (N-Gain 0.98; Cohen’s d 3.78) and skills from 43.25 to 83.57 (N-Gain 0.72; Cohen’s d 5.82), both significant at $p < 0.001$ with very large effect sizes. All skill aspects and indicators improved, with reading showing the largest gain and speaking the aspect most in need of strengthening.

The theoretical implication lies in uniting two lines of work that have largely run separately: folklore conservation in literary-cultural studies and media development in educational studies. The proposed five-stage model—data collection, validation, value analysis, conservation through sequencing, and product testing—can serve as a replicable reference for preserving other regional languages and folklore facing similar threats. Practically, this bilingual illustrated audiobook is ready for use by the partner and schools as an enjoyable, demonstrably effective local-content teaching resource.

This study is not without limitations. Testing was conducted at a single school using a one-group design without a control class, so generalization should be approached with caution. Future research is therefore advised to broaden the respondent base across several schools, consider a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group, and strengthen the oral-practice component of the product so that productive-oral skills rise as optimally as receptive skills. With these steps, the study’s contribution to preserving the Sundanese language and to achieving SDG 4 on quality education will be even stronger.



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