

## GENDER AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AMONG BANDUNG'S MILLENNIALS

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**Abstract :** *This study examines gender-based language attitudes toward the Sundanese language among millennial speakers in Bandung, focusing on three dimensions: language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from open-ended interviews. The sample consisted of male and female millennials aged 28–40. Results indicate that both male (82.40%) and female (81.09%) respondents demonstrate strong positive attitudes toward language loyalty, particularly in acknowledging the importance of mastering and transmitting Sundanese. Language pride was also high among males (67%) and females (69.55%), although some respondents questioned the effectiveness of maintaining Sundanese in digital spaces. Awareness of language norms emerged as the most challenging dimension, with lower positive responses from females (41%) compared to males (59%). Female respondents often shifted to Indonesian to maintain politeness norms, while males cited fluency challenges and limited digital use. The findings suggest that sustaining Sundanese vitality requires strategies that address both affective and practical aspects of language use, incorporating gender-sensitive approaches, vocabulary and register mastery, and inclusive digital engagement.*

**Keywords:** *language attitude, gender, Sundanese language, millennials, sociolinguistics*

### A.Introduction

Language can be described as the structured and socially accepted use of sounds, symbols, or written characters within a human community for the purposes of communication and expressing oneself. In communication, the use of local languages among millennials plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity while simultaneously reflecting the dynamics of language shift and modernization in contemporary society. As members of a social group and participants in their culture, people utilize language, which is a system of traditional written, physical, or spoken symbols, to communicate themselves (Nurjannah, 2024). Moreover, language can be used as a vehicle for history, tradition, values, and worldviews (Abatbaevna, 2023).

A local language is a language variety traditionally spoken within a specific community or region, serving as a vital marker of cultural identity and heritage. In today's era of rapid societal transformation and shifting generational dynamics, the functions of local languages are increasingly diverse and complex. These languages not only serve as a means of communication and cultural preservation but also reflect the evolving social structures and identities within communities. These roles are shaped significantly by communicative practices and gendered perceptions.

Contemporary urban sociolinguistic research confirms that gender influences local language usage such as women, for example, often seek to convey both modern identity and cultural continuity through local languages, while men tend to adapt their language use to fit pragmatic or situational contexts (Rizki et al., 2023). This gendered linguistic behavior reflects deeper sociocultural norms and identity constructions that affect not only language use but also the attitudes toward linguistic heritage. Addressing local languages through a gender-informed lens yields a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic traditions are upheld, transformed, or eroded among younger generations amid contemporary societal change.

The utilization of language, including Sundanese, within a given speech community as a medium of communication does not exhibit a monolithic character; rather, it demonstrates considerable variation shaped by sociolinguistic, cultural, and situational factors (Wagiati et

al., 2022). Among these factors, social factors play a very important role, as they influence how local languages are maintained and preserved, as well as conceptualized as language attitudes. This study aims to determine how gender roles, particularly among millennials, influence attitudes toward local languages in Bandung.

Language attitudes refer to the beliefs, feelings, and predispositions that individuals or communities hold toward a language, which can significantly affect its use, maintenance, or decline (Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010). These attitudes encompass cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that shape the ways in which languages are perceived and practiced. Positive attitudes toward a language are often associated with efforts to preserve and promote it, whereas negative attitudes may contribute to language shift or loss (Legère et al., 1994). In the context of local languages, attitudes are critical in determining whether a language will continue to be transmitted to younger generations.

Local languages, such as Sundanese in Bandung, function not only as communication tools but also as markers of cultural heritage, social identity, and collective memory (Fishman, 1991). The preservation of these languages is essential for maintaining community traditions, values, and worldviews (Abatbaevna, 2023; Kartika, 2016). However, urbanization, modernization, and globalization have altered language use patterns, often resulting in decreased intergenerational transmission and a gradual shift toward dominant languages such as Bahasa Indonesia or English (Pennycook, 2016).

Gender has long been recognized as a significant variable in sociolinguistic research, influencing both language use and attitudes (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Studies have shown that women are often more linguistically conservative and more active in maintaining local language norms, whereas men tend to adopt more innovative or pragmatically driven language choices (Labov, 2001; Trudgill, 2000). These differences can be attributed to variations in social roles, identity construction, and perceptions of prestige associated with language use.

Research indicates that gendered patterns in language attitudes may emerge from distinct cultural expectations and social functions (Romaine, 2000). For example, women may demonstrate a stronger emotional attachment to local languages as a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering community solidarity (Gal, 1978). Men, on the other hand, may view language primarily through its communicative utility, leading to more flexible or situationally driven use of local languages. Such distinctions suggest that gender roles can directly influence the extent to which local languages are valued and preserved.

Bandung presents a unique sociolinguistic environment where Sundanese coexists with Bahasa Indonesia and other languages. As a rapidly developing urban center, Bandung reflects both the cultural richness of West Java and the pressures of linguistic modernization. Previous studies have documented variations in Sundanese use across different age groups, social classes, and educational backgrounds (Trianto et al., 2025; Wagiati et al., 2022). Millennials in particular are navigating a complex linguistic landscape where traditional norms meet contemporary communicative demands, making gender-based differences in language attitudes especially relevant to understanding patterns of local language maintenance (Ramdhani & Enawar, 2019).

While numerous studies have examined language attitudes in Indonesia, there is a limited body of research focusing specifically on the intersection of gender and local language attitudes in urban contexts like Bandung. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into how sociocultural factors and generational shifts influence language preservation, as well as inform language policy and revitalization strategies that are sensitive to gender differences.

## **B. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a sociolinguistic approach with a mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research components. According to Creswell (2009) mixed-method research is an approach that combines or integrates qualitative and quantitative forms

of inquiry to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. The quantitative data, obtained from the scores of research instruments, produced numerical values that could be statistically analyzed to measure frequency and identify patterns or trends within specific contexts. Conversely, the qualitative data, collected through open-ended interviews, offered diverse perspectives from respondents and provided an in-depth depiction of the phenomenon under investigation, organized according to predetermined thematic categories (Creswell, 2012). The data collection process began with the quantitative phase, wherein structured questionnaires were distributed digitally to members of the millennial generation in Bandung. This was followed by the qualitative phase, which involved direct observation and in-depth interviews. The primary objective of the quantitative phase was to identify potential relationships between variables, which could subsequently be elaborated upon through qualitative findings (Creswell, 2009). The research questions were operationalized into indicators referring to the research. These indicators were classified into two main analytical categories derived from Garvin and Mathiot's (1968) conceptual framework of language attitudes, encompassing three core characteristics: language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale format with structured items and multiple-choice responses tailored to the demographic and linguistic profiles of the respondents. The target population comprised millennials residing in Bandung, defined in this study as individuals aged 28 to 40 years in 2024. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of both male and female participants across varying educational and occupational backgrounds.

Quantitative data processing was conducted after the distribution of the questionnaire through data tabulation and index calculation using the Likert scale. The index value for each indicator was computed by summing respondents' scores for each item, dividing the total by the number of items, and normalizing against the highest possible score. Qualitative data, meanwhile, were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and provide contextual explanations for the quantitative results.

Table 1. Likert Scale Table

Score	Response Category	Description
5	Strongly Agree (SA)	The respondent fully supports the statement without hesitation.
4	Agree (A)	The respondent supports the statement with high confidence.
3	Neutral (N)	The respondent is undecided, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
2	Disagree (D)	The respondent somewhat rejects or disagrees with part of the statement.
1	Strongly Disagree (SD)	The respondent completely rejects the statement.

### C.Findings and Discussion

Gender has been recognized as an influential factor in shaping language attitudes. Within a speech community, men and women rarely exhibit identical speech patterns. This variation arises from the tendency of male and female members of the same community to employ distinct linguistic forms. As Holmes (2013) asserts, such gender-based differences are largely shaped by the sociocultural structures embedded within a society. In the context of this study, the analysis examines the language attitudes of millennials in Bandung toward the Sundanese language, with a specific focus on gender-based variations. The findings are presented in two categories:

**Language Attitudes of Male Respondents**

Table 2. Language Attitudes of Male Respondents

Aspect	No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Language loyalty	1	Mastering the Sundanese language is important	60%	40%	-	-	-
	2	The use of Sundanese should be practiced at every opportunity	48%	20%	20%	12%	-
	3	Teaching Sundanese to children is important.	68%	24%	4%	4%	-
	4	Using Sundanese when communicating face to face with family.	44%	36%	12%	8%	-
	5	Using Sundanese when communicating in social media.	48%	24%	24%	4%	-
Percentage of Language Loyalty Attitudes			82,40%		12%	5,60%	
Language Pride	6	Speaking Sundanese as part of personal identity	64%	28%	12%	-	-
	7	Feeling proud when speaking Sundanese	60%	32%	12%	-	-
	8	Maintaining the use of Sundanese in online spaces	80%	12%	4%	4%	-
	9	Speaking in Sundanese is outdated	36%	44%	12%	4%	4%
Percentage of Language Pride Attitudes			67%		15%	24%	
Awareness of Language Norms	10	Sundanese is part of Sundanese culture	16%	48%	24%	-	12%
	11	Using Sundanese with the variety of <i>undak-usuk basa</i> is difficult	-	8%	20%	44%	28%
	12	Not using Sundanese if not fluent	8%	36%	16%	24%	16%
	13	The Sundanese language is endangered	-	36%	32%	24%	8%
Percentage of language Norm Awareness Attitudes			59%		18%	23%	
Overall Percentage of Positive Attitudes						69,47%	
Overall Percentage of Neutral Attitudes						15%	
Overall Percentage of Negative Attitudes						17,53%	

The data presented in the table above illustrate the language attitudes of millennial respondents toward the Sundanese language, based on male participants, divided into three components: language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. The language loyalty aspect, represented in items 1–5 of the table, indicates a predominantly strong positive attitude among male millennials in Bandung toward the Sundanese language. The results show that 82.40% of respondents demonstrated a positive attitude, with the statement “mastering the Sundanese language is important” receiving particularly strong agreement. Meanwhile, 12% of respondents expressed uncertainty, and 5.60% displayed a negative attitude.

The language pride aspect, reflected in items 6–9, also shows a high level of positive attitudes among male millennials, with 67% indicating agreement. Uncertainty was expressed by 15% of respondents, while only 24% reported a negative attitude. Some respondents perceived that maintaining the Sundanese language in online spaces is ineffective, given that not all internet users are proficient in Sundanese.

The awareness of language norms aspect, represented in items 10–13, reveals that 59% of respondents expressed a positive attitude toward the Sundanese language. However, 18% were uncertain, and 23% held negative attitudes. Many respondents reported difficulty in using Sundanese, which often led them to engage in code-mixing or code-switching. In addition, some respondents believed that Sundanese is in a state of endangerment.

### Language Attitudes of Female Respondents

Table 3. Language Attitudes of Female Respondents

Aspect	No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Language Loyalty	1	Mastering the Sundanese language is important	52,73%	36,36 %	10,91%	-	-
	2	The use of Sundanese should be practiced at every opportunity	20%	49,09 %	21,82%	9,09%	-
	3	Teaching Sundanese to children is important.	50,91%	38,18 %	10,91%	-	-
	4	Using Sundanese when communicating face to face with family.	32,73%	49,09 %	14,55%	3,64%	-
	5	Using Sundanese when communicating in social media.	21,82%	54,55 %	18,18%	5,45%	-
Percentage of Language Loyalty Attitudes			81,09%		15,27 %	83,37%	
Language Pride	6	Speaking Sundanese as part of personal identity	49,09%	43,64 %	5,45%	-	1,82%
	7	Feeling proud when speaking Sundanese	36,36%	56,37 %	7,27%	-	-
	8	Maintaining the use of Sundanese in online spaces	56,36%	40%	3,64%	-	-
	9	Speaking in Sundanese is outdated	21,82%	56,36 %	20,00%	1,82%	-
Percentage of Language Pride Attitudes			69,55%		16,36 %	14,09%	

Awareness of Language Norms	10	Sundanese is part of Sundanese culture	23,64%	29,09 %	32,73%	7,27%	7,27%
	11	Using Sundanese with the variety of <i>undak-usuk basa</i> is difficult	-	5,45%	29,09%	41,82%	23,64%
	12	Not using Sundanese if not fluent	5,45%	25,46 %	36,36%	23,64%	9,09%
	13	The Sundanese language is endangered	3,64%	27,27 %	43,64%	20%	5,45%
Percentage of language Norm Awareness Attitudes			55%		28,18 %	16,82%	
Overall Percentage of Positive Attitudes						68,55%	
Overall Percentage of Neutral Attitudes						19,94%	
Overall Percentage of Negative Attitudes						38,09%	

The total number of 16.36% respondents expressed a neutral attitude, while 14.09% demonstrated a negative attitude toward the statements in this aspect. Interactions among women were more frequently conducted in Indonesian, intended to avoid the use of Sundanese, which might be perceived as harsh or impolite. Regarding the aspect of language norm awareness, the responses were also predominantly positive, with a percentage of 41%. On the other hand, a considerable proportion of respondents expressed uncertainty, accounting for 36%, while 22% held negative attitudes. Respondents emphasized that the use of *undak-usuk basa* (speech level system) should be given careful attention, accompanied by the mastery of appropriate Sundanese vocabulary according to its proper equivalents.

The findings reveal distinct patterns in the language attitudes of millennial respondents in Bandung toward the Sundanese language, differentiated by gender across three main dimensions: language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. For male respondents, the data indicate a predominance of positive attitudes toward language loyalty, with 82.40% agreeing that mastering the Sundanese language is important. The statement receiving the highest positive response was the importance of mastering Sundanese, suggesting a strong recognition of its value as a heritage language. Neutral responses accounted for 12%, while negative attitudes were minimal at 5.60%. Similarly, female respondents demonstrated a high level of positive attitudes in this dimension (81.09%), with only 15.27% neutral and 3.64% negative responses. The consensus among female participants was that teaching the mother tongue to children should begin as early as possible, reflecting a shared perception of the intergenerational role in sustaining language vitality.

### Language Pride

Male respondents also reported high levels of language pride (67% positive), with relatively fewer neutral (15%) and negative (24%) responses. However, some respondents expressed skepticism toward maintaining the use of Sundanese in digital spaces, citing the limited proficiency of internet users in the language. Among female respondents, positive attitudes were slightly higher at 69.55%, while neutral and negative responses stood at 16.36% and 14.09%, respectively. Notably, many female participants reported preferring Indonesian in their interactions, particularly to avoid the risk of Sundanese being perceived as impolite or harsh, suggesting that pragmatic considerations shape language choice even among those with high language pride.

### **Awareness of Language Norms**

In terms of language norm awareness, male respondents reported 59% positive attitudes, 18% neutral, and 23% negative. A recurrent theme was the difficulty of using Sundanese fluently, particularly in mastering the *undak-usuk basa* (speech level system), which often led to the use of code-switching or code-mixing. Furthermore, some male respondents perceived Sundanese as being in an endangered state. Female respondents, on the other hand, showed a lower proportion of positive attitudes in this category (41%) and a notably higher neutral stance (36%) alongside 22% negative responses. While many acknowledged the importance of adhering to *undak-usuk basa* norms, they also emphasized the need for adequate vocabulary mastery to ensure appropriate usage in different contexts.

### **Interpretation of Gender Differences**

Overall, the data suggest that both male and female millennial respondents exhibit strong positive attitudes toward language loyalty and pride in the Sundanese language, though female respondents demonstrate slightly higher scores in these categories. However, awareness of language norms emerges as the most challenging dimension for both groups, with female respondents showing a markedly lower proportion of positive attitudes compared to males. These differences may be influenced by gendered communication practices, where female respondents report strategic shifts to Indonesian in certain contexts to mitigate perceptions of impoliteness, while male respondents are more likely to emphasize the functional challenges of fluency and register use. The findings align with sociolinguistic perspectives (Holmes, 2013) that link gender-based linguistic variation to broader sociocultural norms and expectations within a speech community.

### **D.Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that both male and female millennial respondents in Bandung exhibit predominantly positive attitudes toward the Sundanese language, particularly in the dimensions of language loyalty and language pride. High levels of agreement on the importance of mastering and transmitting Sundanese indicate a strong underlying recognition of its value as part of cultural heritage. However, awareness of language norms, especially the mastery and application of *undak-usuk basa*, emerged as the most challenging aspect for both genders, with female respondents showing notably lower positive attitudes in this category compared to males.

The observed gender differences reflect broader sociocultural dynamics that influence language use. Female respondents reported strategic shifts to Indonesian in certain contexts to maintain politeness norms, whereas male respondents emphasized functional difficulties in achieving fluency and maintaining usage in digital spaces. These patterns align with recent sociolinguistic studies that frame gender as a socially constructed factor shaping linguistic practice within specific cultural settings.

The findings suggest that efforts to sustain the vitality of the Sundanese language must address not only intergenerational transmission and positive affective attitudes, but also practical competence in linguistic norms. Initiatives should incorporate gender-sensitive approaches, enhance vocabulary and register mastery, and leverage digital platforms as inclusive spaces for language use. By doing so, language policy and revitalization strategies can more effectively respond to both the cultural and functional realities faced by contemporary speakers.

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