

## Interpersonal Communication Strategies Used by Sundanese Language Teachers to Create a Conducive Classroom Environment at State Senior High School 1 Sumber

Baraya Rizqy Ramadhan, Khaerudin Imawan, Welly Wihayati\*

Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

Email: baraya.122100035@ugj.ac.id, khaerudin.imawan@ugj.ac.id,  
welly.wihayati@ugj.ac.id\*

### Abstract

#### Keywords

Interpersonal communication;  
Sundanese language;  
Devito's dimensions;  
Conducive classroom atmosphere;  
Regional language learning

Preservation of regional languages is increasingly challenged by globalization, particularly in educational settings where communication barriers may reduce student engagement. This study aims to identify interpersonal communication strategies used by Sundanese language teachers to create a conducive classroom environment at State Senior High School 1 Sumber based on DeVito's five dimensions of interpersonal communication: openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving one Sundanese language teacher and four grade XI students. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails, while data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. Findings show that teachers apply all five dimensions contextually. Openness is demonstrated through self-disclosure to build trust. Empathy is reflected in adapting mixed-language use and understanding students' linguistic backgrounds. Support is provided through motivation, reinforcement, and game-based learning. Positivity is created through icebreakers and constructive responses to student errors. Equality is implemented by ensuring fair participation and inclusive communication within Sundanese cultural etiquette. The integration of these interpersonal communication strategies effectively fosters a supportive and engaging learning environment while contributing to regional language preservation in broader educational context.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian has 718 regional languages spread across various regions. However this linguistic diversity faces a serious threat. In an eras of globalization that erodes cultural diversity, the preservation of regional languages such as Sundanese through education has become urgent, as cultural heritage faces the threat of domination by global languages. This phenomenon poses a fundamental challenge in maintaining the foundation of inclusive education for Indonesia's younger generation the primary issue being the gap between the ideal of regional language learning and the reality of classroom conditions that face interpersonal communication barriers.

Interpersonal Communication Between teachers and students is a key factor in creating a conducive environment. According to (DeVito., 2016) it is the process of sending and receiving messages between two or more people through verbal and nonverbal interaction that build mutual understanding. (DeVito., 2016) identifies five significant dimensions of interpersonal communication that is, openness the attitude of accepting feedback and sharing information based on mutual trust; empathy as the ability to understand students' feelings and respond personally, supportiveness that creates an environment where students feel valued rather than criticized, positiveness as the provision of positive evaluations and recognition that boosts motivation and equality that acknowledges both parties' valuable contributions to learning. In Indonesian educational practice, particularly in the teaching of regional languages such as Sundanese, the integration of local cultural elements often faces various challenges that affect the effectiveness of learning. Research conducted by (Tini et al., 2025) indicates the ability of teachers to include cultural values in the process of learning the regional language is difficult. This can potentially decrease the quality of student interactions and learning outcomes (Howe et al., 2019; Seo et al., 2021).

The choice of Sundanese language teachers as the focus of this research is based on a number of fundamental academic considerations. Firstly, regional language teachers face a multi-layered burden of responsibility: they do not merely perform the function of teaching language skills, but also act as guardians of the preservation of an intangible cultural heritage that is currently experiencing a significant decline. In this regard, the communicative interactions established by Sundanese language educators are more complex than those of educators in other subject areas, as they must simultaneously develop students' understanding of local cultural conventions (particularly *undak-usuk basa*) whilst fostering an appreciation for a regional language that is increasingly marginalised amidst the tide of globalisation. Secondly, the existence of a hierarchical linguistic system in the Sundanese language particularly regarding linguistic politeness presents unique challenges in the dynamics of interpersonal communication that require specific strategies to address. Teachers of general subjects such as mathematics, physics, or history are relatively unencumbered by the complex issues of layered linguistic etiquette; consequently, they do not need to navigate the difficulty of balancing effective communication with adherence to cultural norms simultaneously. Thirdly, efforts to preserve the Sundanese language through education are a strategic priority at the national level, given the Sundanese language's status as one of the 718 languages of the archipelago that are at risk of extinction. Consequently, studies involving Sundanese language educators hold great potential to yield findings that can directly inform national policy in the endeavour to safeguard the existence of regional languages.

Empirical observations at State Senior High School 1 Sumber indicate that interpersonal communication is often hindered by differences in cultural background, resulting in emotional tension and reduced student participation in learning activities or discussions. Students from rural areas tend to be passive because cultural norms emphasise respect for teachers, making it difficult to apply the principle of equality without adaptive strategies. In the Sundanese context, the concept of equality cannot be applied literally, but must be adapted to etiquette that emphasises respect for teachers as a guiding principle. Sundanese language teachers must use a gentle tone of voice when correcting students' mistakes so that the message is conveyed without damaging their self-esteem or reducing their motivation to learn. According to

(Hardiyanto, 2007), the system of honorific titles in the Sundanese language is an important linguistic convention in social interaction for expressing respect, politeness, and empathy, particularly through the use of informal language appropriate to the social status of the interlocutor. According to (Ardiwinata, 1984) Polite language is not merely a form of polite speech, but a concrete manifestation of openness and a supportive attitude within Sundanese culture, reflecting social norms and interpersonal relationships designed to offer support all of which are expressed through the appropriate choice of language based on social status and the identity of the conversation partner.

A gap in this research is the lack of in-depth studies on the adaptation of DeVito's interpersonal communication dimensions (openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality) in the context of learning regional languages in Indonesia, particularly the Sundanese language. Several previous studies, such as the study (Anggoro & Retno Ningsih, 2023) demonstrates that teachers' interpersonal communication significantly influences students' interest in learning, specifically by reducing classroom tension by up to 65.6%; however, this study focuses on Economics at State Senior High School 5 Depok without highlighting specific applications in regional languages. This is the research gap that this study aims to address. The existing literature has not systematically described how DeVito's five dimensions can be translated and adapted in language learning. This highlights the need for new research focused on how DeVito's dimensions of interpersonal communication can be contextualized in Sundanese language learning to create a conducive classroom atmosphere, while avoiding ethnocentric bias in educational communication.

Theoretically, this study provides recommendations for Sundanese language teachers at State Senior High School 1 Sumber regarding more effective language-based communication strategies. This study can fill an academic gap while providing a strategic response to the crisis of regional language preservation in the era of globalization. The objective of this study is to identify the interpersonal communication strategies of Sundanese language teachers at State Senior High School 1 Sumber, adapted from DeVito's dimensions (openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality), to create a conducive classroom atmosphere defined as a conducive learning environment. It is hoped that the findings can serve as a basis for more inclusive policy recommendations in teaching and learning activities, as well as provide policy recommendations for schools.

## **METHOD**

The research design used in this study was descriptive qualitative, which aims to provide an in-depth description of the interpersonal communication strategies employed by Sundanese language teachers in creating a conducive classroom atmosphere. According to (Yusuf, 2023) Qualitative methods are research approaches based on phenomena, with data analysis results taking the form of a descriptive approach expressed in the spoken words of the research subjects, emphasizing in-depth exploration rather than quantitative measurement. A similar view (Sugiyono, 2023) added that this approach stands in contrast to experimental research, which is characterized by the researcher serving as the primary instrument, the use of data triangulation, inductive data, and results in the form of subjective meanings. In this context, descriptive research was chosen because of its focus on the accurate and systematic depiction of phenomena, such as the adaptation of the dimensions of openness and empathy in teacher-

student interactions, without comparing or associating them with other cases (comparative or associative types).

This study was conducted at State Senior High School 1 Sumber as the primary site, which was selected because the school is located in an area with a significant Sundanese-speaking population but faces challenges in preserving the language among the younger generation. The subjects of this study were Sundanese language teachers actively teaching at State Senior High School 1 Sumber, while the object of the study was the interpersonal communication strategies used in learning interactions to foster a conducive classroom atmosphere. (Arikunto, 2013) explains that the research subject is the primary source of data that provides information relevant to the research focus, while the research object is the target or the subject of the research study.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, in which the researcher intentionally selected participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. According to (Sugiyono, 2017) Pursuant to the fact that purposive sampling is a data source sampling technique based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives, purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on specific considerations, such as selecting individuals who are most knowledgeable about the phenomenon to facilitate a deeper understanding of the social situation. The criteria for key informants are: one Sundanese language teacher who has taught for at least three years at State Senior High School 1 Sumber, has experience dealing with the cultural diversity of students, and is active in language preservation efforts through teaching. Supporting informants are 4 eleventh-grade students taking Sundanese language classes, selected purposively to represent a variety of learning experiences. The rationale for purposive selection is to enrich data depth and triangulate perspectives, not to generalize findings.

The data collection techniques employed a triangulation of methods, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were selected as the primary technique, using a semi-structured format that allowed for flexibility in eliciting in-depth information while remaining focused on the research themes. Participant observation was conducted to directly observe teachers' interpersonal communication practices in natural classroom settings, with a focus on verbal and nonverbal elements. Documentation studies were conducted to collect secondary data, including Sundanese language teachers' lesson plans, school curricula, and school policies on the preservation of local culture, which provide the historical and structural context framing teachers' communication practices.

The validity of the data is ensured through the four criteria proposed (Lincoln & Guba, 2015), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved through data source triangulation by comparing information from teachers, students, and documents as well as methodological triangulation by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis. (Creswell, 2014) explains that member checking is a technique in which the researcher asks informants to review the researcher's transcripts or interpretations to ensure the accuracy of the representation. Transferability is ensured by providing a thick description of the context and participants. Reliability is maintained through an audit trail that is, systematic documentation of methodological decisions, data collection procedures, and analysis records throughout the research process. Confirmability is maintained through the practice of reflexive journaling, in which researchers consistently record reflections on how

their personal backgrounds and values might influence data interpretation, as well as through peer debriefing, where findings and interpretations are discussed with an academic advisor to gain a critical perspective.

Data analysis using an interactive model (Miles Huberman A. M. & Saldaña J., 2014), which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data collection was carried out simultaneously using triangulation to obtain in depth findings (Sugiyono, 2023) The process of simplifying raw data requires judicious selection, reduction of complexity, and summarisation to reveal fundamental aspects. For example, researchers can identify trends in how individuals adapt according to DeVito's dimensional framework based on the interview data that has been collected. To facilitate contextual interpretation, findings are presented through descriptive narratives or matrices based on specific themes. When researchers analyse the results, they uncover new insights that contribute to theoretical development for instance, practical strategies for cultural adaptation within specific contexts. This methodological framework was chosen for its ability to organise qualitative data in a structured and systematic manner. However, (Saldaña, 2015) points out that such an approach faces serious challenges regarding subjectivity in the researcher's interpretative process. To address this weakness, thematic analysis is applied as a more objective validation mechanism. (Braun & Clarke V., 2006) for rigor.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study presents findings regarding the interpersonal communication strategies employed by Sundanese language teachers at State Senior High School 1 Sumber to create a conducive classroom atmosphere during teaching and learning activities, with a focus on the application of the dimensions of interpersonal communication outlined by (DeVito., 2016), which include: openness, empathy, support, a positive attitude, and equality. The primary data were obtained from in-depth interviews with a key informant, Juju Juwarsih, S.Pd., Gr., aged 40, and four supporting informants, namely Year 11 students Yogi Permana, Faisal Hakim, Anissa Billa, and Adis Wiana, all aged 17. This secondary data includes numerous participatory observations during the learning process in the classroom. The analysis of this research data follows the interactive model of (Miles Huberman A. M. & Saldaña J., 2014), which involves data input to identify patterns and presentation in the form of narratives and tables, as well as in-depth interpretation with reference to theory and previous research. The validity of this data is ensured through a summary of sources and methods, member verification, in-depth descriptions, audit trails, and reflective notes in accordance with the principles of (Lincoln & Guba, 2015).

This study adapts DeVito's theoretical framework on the five dimensions of effective interpersonal communication to the context of regional language teaching in Indonesia. The interpersonal communication strategies employed by Sundanese language teachers focus on how the dimensions of openness, empathy, support, positive attitude, and equality can be integrated and adapted to the Sundanese cultural context, particularly within the "Undak-Usuk Basa" (language ethics) system, to create a conducive learning environment. These strategies are not merely a mechanical application of universal theory, but rather contextual adaptations that respect local values whilst upholding the principles of humanistic and inclusive communication. In this section, the research findings and discussion regarding each dimension

will be presented sequentially, beginning with openness, followed by empathy, support, positive attitude, and equality. For each dimension, the results of feedback from teachers and students will be presented, which will then be analysed with reference to DeVito's theory and relevant contemporary educational literature.

### **The Openness Dimension**

The term 'openness' in interpersonal communication refers to the extent to which an individual has the courage to reveal important personal matters in order to build trust and emotional closeness. At State Senior High School 1 Sumber, particularly in the Sundanese language class, the application of openness by the teachers is evident in the way they approach students personally yet remain well-organised. According to one Sundanese language teacher who served as the primary source of information in this study, efforts to open up to students are carried out through stages that have been carefully prepared in advance. At the start of the session, the teacher chooses to introduce themselves, share their background and life experiences, whilst also discussing the class agreements. This effort is not merely about establishing ordinary interaction, but rather a measured strategy to create a relationship based on mutual trust between the educator and the students.

A concrete example of the teacher's openness is the way in which they shared a personal story relating to the lesson content. The teacher recounted their own experience of how they chose to study 'Sundanese Language Education' at their parents' urging, and linked this story to the importance of preserving regional languages. This experience also included how the teacher discovered the 'Undak-Usuk' system in the Sundanese language when they began their studies. This strategy not only serves to lighten the atmosphere but also conveys values that emphasise the cultural importance of the Sundanese language to the students. However, the teacher maintains professional boundaries by sharing only experiences that are educational and motivational, and does not share personal aspects irrelevant to the learning process. From the students' perspective, the teacher's openness creates a more comfortable and conducive classroom atmosphere. The students reported that the teacher often shared experiences from his own student days that contained motivational messages, particularly regarding the importance of perseverance in the face of failure. These messages made Sundanese language lessons seem more lively and meaningful, rather than merely the delivery of abstract cognitive information.

This teacher's openness encourages pupils to be more open themselves, for example by asking questions about topics they find difficult, or discussing learning difficulties without fear of being judged. Pupils describe this teacher as a friendly figure who is sensitive to their needs. Regarding differences in responses based on gender, it appears that female pupils, particularly those in leadership roles, roles in the classroom, more frequently utilized the teacher's openness to build personal relationships. Conversely, male students tended to utilize the teacher's openness in academic contexts and for learning tasks. This pattern reflects the various ways in which teachers respond to openness, rather than differences in teachers' preferences.

The findings indicate that Sundanese language teachers' openness aligns with the principles of interpersonal communication, which emphasize the importance of self-disclosure in building mutual trust. According to (DeVito., 2016) Measured and relevant self-disclosure can reduce the psychological distance between the communicator and the recipient, thereby

increasing the recipient's willingness to open up as well. The gender-based differences in responses found in this study align with the literature on gender communication, which indicates that women tend to use communication to build and maintain relationships (relational orientation), while men are more task- and information-oriented (task orientation). This does not indicate unfairness on the part of the teachers, but rather reflects different ways of utilizing opportunities for openness in accordance with individual preferences and needs. Thus, the dimension of openness in Sundanese language teachers' communication strategies has proven effective in creating a foundation of trust and psychological closeness that supports a more humanistic and conducive learning process.

### **Empathy**

The empathy shown by Sundanese language teachers is evident in their understanding of their pupils' linguistic backgrounds, as the majority are not native speakers of Sundanese. The pupils are more familiar with the Cirebon dialect or Indonesian. The teachers are well aware of this and do not impose specific language standards on the pupils, which could cause frustration. Instead, the teachers choose to adapt their teaching practices to the local context, as they know that in the Cirebon region, the use of a mixed language combining Sundanese with the Cirebon dialect and Indonesian is an accepted norm. This approach is in line with guidelines from the education authorities, which state that languages already mastered by the students should be regarded as bridge toward mastering a new language. Teachers recognise that the role of an educator is not to erase the linguistic identity of Cirebon or Indonesia, but rather to utilise it as linguistic capital in order to gradually guide pupils towards a higher level of proficiency in the Sundanese language.

Empathy is also evident in the adaptation of teaching methods and the learning environment. Teachers reach agreements with students regarding options for learning outside the classroom. When students suggest learning outdoors occasionally "to experience a change of scenery," teachers respond by organizing contextual activities such as studying on the sidelines of a field or visiting a museum when the material relates to wayang stories. Empathy also manifests at the individual level. The teacher identified a case of a quiet student in the class who was reluctant to communicate or work in groups. Instead of applying a negative label, the teacher first observed and gathered information about the student's background, issues, and culture, discovering that the student was experiencing feelings of inferiority. From there, the teacher sought to provide an appropriate solution. Additionally, the teacher also showed concern for the students' physical well-being, such as moving the lesson to a cooler area during hot midday classes.



**Figure 1,** The Atmosphere During Class Time in Class XI 5 at SMA N 1 Sumber  
**Source:** Retrieved by a researcher on January 27, 2026

In theory, these findings are consistent with the definition of empathy in an educational context, which refers to a teacher's ability to understand pupils' emotional, cognitive and sociocultural states and to respond to them appropriately and sincerely. Language adjustment through code-switching reflects what is known as affective empathy the teacher's emotional concern for students' psychological well-being, which can reduce anxiety and encourage active participation. In second language learning theory, (Krashen, 1985) explains that affective filters such as anxiety and fear can hinder language learning, whilst teacher empathy can help remove these barriers.

The survey strategy to investigate learning outside the classroom demonstrates teachers' understanding of (Kolb, 1984) theory of experiential learning, which states that direct experience enables a deeper absorption of knowledge. Thus, the researcher found that by providing students with the opportunity to experience Sundanese culture authentically, teachers demonstrated that learning is not merely the transmission of cognitive information, but also the development of meaningful sociocultural understanding. An individualised approach to students experiencing emotional difficulties reflects humanistic principles in interpersonal communication. (Rogers, 1961) emphasised that authentic empathy requires unconditional positive regard for unconditional acceptance. In this context, the teacher demonstrates this by seeking to understand the students' sociocultural context before offering support. This dimension of empathy – manifested through adjustments to language, teaching methodology, and individual attention – supports recent research findings indicating that adjustments in teacher communication enhance the effectiveness of teacher-student interactions.

### **Supportiveness**

The support provided by Sundanese language teachers is reflected in an approach that is both individually tailored and fair, taking into account each student's personality, interests and strengths. The first step in providing this support is to understand the students' personalities and backgrounds through open dialogue. Teachers gather information about the students' interests, recognising that Sundanese language learning encompasses a range of skills such as listening, speaking and comprehension and that each student has strengths in one of these areas. Teachers build on the strengths that students already possess as a foundation for building self confidence. Emotional support is evident in the consistent use of motivational language by

teachers. Students report that teachers often tell them they “can definitely do it,” that the Sundanese language “isn’t difficult,” and that using a mix of languages is a permitted option. To students who feel that Sundanese is irrelevant, teachers provide reinforcement with the message that although not everyone in Cirebon is fluent in Sundanese, with effort and willingness, they can certainly master it. This pattern of speech explicitly contains a growth mindset message that language ability is not a fixed trait, but rather can be developed through effort.

The support strategies employed by teachers are not limited to verbal encouragement. Teachers recognize that boredom is one of the causes of a loss of motivation, so they incorporate games in the Sundanese language into their lessons to keep the atmosphere dynamic and engaging. From an educational psychology perspective, this game-based learning helps to reduce anxiety, transforms students’ perception of the subject from boring to enjoyable, whilst also fulfilling cognitive learning objectives. Data from student interviews reinforce the impression that the support from teachers is perceived as sincere and not merely a formality. When students complained that Sundanese was difficult and complex, teachers responded with gentle words, acknowledging that learning a regional language does indeed have its own challenges, and suggesting that they take the learning process slowly. Students reported that through this form of support, they felt valued as individuals and not merely as attendance figures in the classroom.



**Figure 2,** Interview with 4 Students and 1 Sundanese Language Teacher

**Source:** Retrieved by the researcher on January 27, 2026

Conceptually, these are supportive measures taken by teacher’s in line with the principles of supportive communication, which prioritise acknowledging the efforts made, focusing on the process rather than solely on the outcome, and providing concrete assistance, for example through re-explanation, play-based activities, or more personalised guidance. This strength-oriented approach aligns with the literature on positive psychology, which emphasises that acknowledging students’ strengths is more effective in building resilience than focusing solely on weaknesses. Teachers’ use of growth mindset language reflects the principles of (Dweck, 2006) who states that students’ attitudes towards their abilities significantly influence their learning efforts. By consistently emphasising that abilities can be developed through effort, teachers help students adopt a more adaptive growth mindset when faced with language challenges. The integration of game-based learning into Sundanese lessons supports (Prensky, 2001) research on the potential of games to increase engagement and reduce anxiety,

particularly in language learning contexts, where the fear of failure often hinders participation. This approach is also consistent with the findings of the above research, which indicates that supportive interpersonal communication from teachers can alleviate tension in the classroom, with active support through motivation and reinforcement of students' strengths serving as the primary mechanisms.

### **Positivity**

Teachers foster a positive atmosphere by creating a classroom environment that encourages participation. Before diving into the lesson material, teachers almost always begin with an icebreaker. The icebreakers used include clapping together, singing Sundanese songs, or playing simple games. The teacher acknowledged that the decision to learn inside or outside the classroom depends on an initial observation of the students' mood; if the students are in a good mood, learning continues in the classroom; if not, the teacher chooses to learn outside the classroom. Students confirmed this by noting that the teacher often leads group clapping or singing Sundanese songs. Students described that the presence of the Sundanese language teacher immediately transformed the classroom atmosphere into a happier one, partly because the teacher is known for being cheerful and having a kind personality, so they are happy when the teacher enters to teach.



**Figure 3,** Classroom Atmosphere During the Sundanese Language Teacher's Icebreaker

**Source:** Diambil Peneliti, January 27, 2026

Teachers' positivity is also evident in how they respond to students' mistakes; when students give the wrong or incorrect answer, teachers do not use language that is accusatory or demeaning. Teachers focus more on providing guidance than on issuing verbal reprimands. Thus, mistakes are not viewed as evidence of incompetence, but rather as a natural part of the learning process. Students described that teachers did not make them feel discriminated against when they made mistakes. The dimension of positivity operationalized by teachers reflects the principles of supportive and humanistic communication. Teachers' flexibility in choosing learning locations based on observations of students' moods demonstrates an understanding of the affective filter hypothesis from (Krashen, 1985), which states that effective learning occurs only when affective barriers (such as anxiety and frustration) are minimized. By adaptively adjusting the learning environment, teachers create optimal conditions for the absorption of learning content.

A constructive response to pupils' mistakes reflects the principles outlined in (Dweck, 2006) research and the educational psychology literature, which emphasise that the way teachers respond to mistakes significantly influences the development of pupils' mindsets

during teaching and learning activities. When teachers respond to mistakes constructively and without judgement, students are more willing to take intellectual risks and continue learning.

This approach is consistent with the findings of the above research regarding the importance of attitudes that demonstrate warmth on the part of Sundanese language teachers in creating an environment that fosters student engagement. Overall, the positive dimensions instilled by Sundanese language teachers reflect a strong orientation towards the principles of fairness and acceptance, where every student feels valued and safe to learn without fear of judgement or receiving negative attitudes from the teacher.

### **Equality**

In interpersonal communication theory, it is explained that equality is generally understood as the recognition that all parties involved in the communication process are on an equal footing. However, in the context of Sundanese language learning, which employs the 'Undak-Usuk-Basa' system (a hierarchical language system), the concept of equality must be understood in a more contextual manner. Equality here does not mean eliminating the distance between teacher and student, but rather ensuring equal opportunities for participation, free from discrimination, and fair treatment for all students, regardless of their background, ability, or gender. Sundanese language teachers emphasise that all students must participate actively in classroom discussions. Teachers acknowledge that students may only be able to say a few words in Sundanese and slip in Indonesian, but that is not a problem. Teachers encourage students to speak first, bearing in mind that some students are afraid to speak for fear of making mistakes. Teachers allow students space to try using mixed language, whilst then helping to provide examples of correct Sundanese.

The teachers' decision to allow the use of a mixture of Sundanese, Cirebonese and Indonesian can be understood as a strategy to achieve linguistic equality. If only standard Sundanese were recognised as the 'correct answer', pupils from non-Sundanese backgrounds would feel a lack of confidence and be reluctant to participate in the learning process. By allowing for the use of a mixture of languages, teachers convey the message that students' linguistic identities are recognised and valued. The students confirm the positive impact of this approach: their fear of speaking is reduced because they know that teachers understand that not all students are familiar with Sundanese.

The teacher deliberately formed groups by pairing quieter pupils with more active ones, so that all pupils could learn together and interact with one another. The pupils emphasised that, generally speaking, there was no differential treatment based on academic achievement, gender or background, and they explained that all pupils were treated fairly. On the other hand, the students observed that female students, particularly those acting as subject representatives or class presidents, tended to interact with the teacher more frequently. The students explained that this was primarily due to the roles and initiative of female students, who more often held leadership positions, and not because of any discriminatory preferential treatment on the part of the teacher.

The research findings indicate that the dimension of equality in Sundanese language teachers' communication strategies is realised through the principle of dynamic justice. Teachers give all pupils the opportunity to speak, acknowledge the diversity of identities, avoid differential treatment based on background, and design class and group structures in such a way as to enable inclusive participation. Within the hierarchical Sundanese cultural context,

teachers successfully formulated a form of fairness that respects “Undak-Usuk Basa” (language etiquette) without sacrificing students’ rights to participate or their sense of being valued.

Findings regarding gender differences in the frequency of interactions indicate that interactions remain influenced by structural factors, even though teachers intended to promote equality. This highlights the complexity of implementing equality in practice, as formal equality (fair treatment) and factual equality (equal access to opportunities for interaction) are two distinct concepts requiring ongoing attention.

### **Cross-Dimensional Analysis sampe siniiii**

Multidimensional analysis identified key patterns in Sundanese language teachers’ communication strategies, such as cultural adaptation through the use of mixed language to promote inclusivity; personal openness to build trust; a positive approach through interactive activities; empathy with practical adjustments in learning; and equality through fair treatment whilst respecting Sundanese values of politeness. These patterns reinforce one another and create a conducive learning environment.

Cultural adaptation reflects teachers’ understanding of the challenges arising from the diverse Cirebon-Sunda backgrounds of their students, with the concrete result of increased student participation during lessons. Openness through pedagogically relevant personal narratives successfully motivates students, although there are gender-based differences in the application of this approach. A positive approach through icebreakers and constructive feedback reduces boredom and anxiety, whilst empathy and equality together create a psychologically safe environment where students feel valued. These findings align with (DeVito., 2016) theory of interpersonal communication, in which five interconnected dimensions contribute to effective and humanistic communication. The adaptation of mixed language and adjustments to the learning location reflect empathy and support; openness reinforces mutual trust; positivity through icebreakers and equality support the principle of equality with contextual adaptation to Sundanese idioms as a manifestation of empathy and support. In comparison with previous research, the findings support but also expand the existing literature with the specific context of regional language learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that interpersonal communication among Sundanese language teachers at State Senior High School 1 Sumber is effective because the teachers adapt the five dimensions of interpersonal communication (openness, empathy, support, positivity, and equality) into contextual and inclusive teaching practices. Openness is fostered through initial approaches, class agreements, and relevant self-disclosure; empathy is evident in the acknowledgment of students’ linguistic realities and the use of mixed language as a bridge for learning; support is manifested through motivation and reinforcement of students’ strengths; positivity is fostered through a pleasant classroom atmosphere and constructive feedback; while equality is applied by providing fair opportunities for participation without disregarding Sundanese cultural norms of politeness. Theoretically, these findings underscore the importance of culturally grounded interpretations of equality within the framework of interpersonal communication; practically, the findings provide direction for teachers’ communication strategies to enhance students’ comfort and confidence in participating; and in terms of policy, schools need to support flexible and contextual regional language learning,

including pedagogical legitimization of mixed language use and variations in learning spaces and activities. The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which focuses on a single school and a qualitative approach with a limited number of informants, thus requiring caution in generalizing; therefore, future research is advised to expand the location and diversity of informants (more teachers and students), employ a cross-context comparative design, and examine in greater depth the dynamics of student participation, which in the findings also appear to vary according to interaction patterns.

## REFERENCES

- Anggoro, D., & Retno Ningsih, T. W. (2023). Komunikasi interpersonal guru dan iklim komunikasi dalam pengaruhnya terhadap minat belajar siswa pada mata pelajaran ekonomi. *JIKAP (Jurnal Informasi dan Komunikasi Administrasi Perkantoran)*, 7(3), 268. <https://doi.org/10.20961/jikap.v7i3.67421>
- Ardiwinata, W. (1984). *Tingkat tutur bahasa Sunda: Ekspresi budaya dan tata krama sosial*. Pusat Studi Sunda.
- Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik*. Rineka Cipta.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Desain penelitian: Pendekatan kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan metode campuran* (4th ed.). Pustaka Pelajar.
- DeVito, J. A. (2016). *The interpersonal communication book* (14th ed.). Pearson.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.44-2397>
- Hardiyanto. (2007). Undak-usuk basa Sunda sebagai manifestasi kesopanan dan penghormatan dalam komunikasi. *Jurnal Linguistik Sunda*, 15(2), 123–135.
- Howe, C., Hennessy, S., Mercer, N., Vrikki, M., & Wheatley, L. (2019). Teacher–student dialogue during classroom teaching: Does it really impact on student outcomes? *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 28(4–5), 462–512.
- Hu, L., & Wang, Y. (2023). The predicting role of EFL teachers' immediacy behaviors in students' willingness to communicate and academic engagement. *BMC Psychology*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01378-x>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2015). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986281.n232>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital game-based learning*. McGraw-Hill.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Seo, K., Tang, J., Roll, I., Fels, S., & Yoon, D. (2021). The impact of artificial intelligence on

- learner–instructor interaction in online learning. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 18(1), 54.
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kualitatif, kuantitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Sugiyono. (2023). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D* (M. Dr. Ir. Sutopo, S.Pd., Ed.). Alfabeta.
- Tini, W., Nuraeni, L., & Nurhayati, S. (2025). Developing Sundanese language and cultural literacy in early learners through educational picture board games. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 10(1), 521–529. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v10i1.3115>
- Yusuf, K. (2023). *Metode penelitian bahasa: Teori dan praktik*. Alfabeta.