

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the rationale behind conducting this research. It includes several key sections: namely the background of the study, the research question, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitations. Each of these components will be described and explained in detail as follows:

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, patterns of language use in many communities have been increasingly influenced by globalization. The general use of national and international languages, particularly English in business, education, technology, and media, has reduced the everyday use of many local and minority languages (Wieczorek et al., 2025). As a result, younger generations tend to prefer languages that are considered more beneficial for social mobility, education, and career opportunities (Sopova and Ortega, 2019). This shift in language preference gradually contributes to the decline of local languages and threatens the cultural knowledge, traditions, and identities embedded within them. Language, however, functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a reflection of identity, culture, and social relationships within a community (Ningrum and Tazqiyah, 2024). Therefore, community efforts to continue using local languages across generations amid these social and cultural pressures are commonly discussed as language maintenance.

In line with these global trends, the use of local languages among younger generations in Indonesia has shown a noticeable decline (Santika, 2022). This situation raises concerns about the continuity of regional languages that traditionally function as markers of identity and everyday communication. Madurese provides a clear example of this phenomenon. Although Madurese is one of the widely spoken regional languages in Indonesia, its use has gradually decreased due to increasing contact with other languages (Herlianto, 2019). Social and economic changes, such as movement for education and employment, interethnic marriages, and the dominant use of

Indonesian in formal education, have strongly influenced language practices among young people. Consequently, many youths tend to prefer languages perceived as more practical or prestigious, including Indonesian or foreign languages, which further accelerates the decline of Madurese use among students (Lukmana and Alfin, 2023). Therefore, this condition indicates that despite its strong cultural roots, Madurese is increasingly vulnerable to language shift among younger speakers.

Within the broader context of language shift among younger Madurese speakers in Indonesia, Bangkalan, as one of the main regencies in Madura, provides a relevant setting to examine this phenomenon. Madurese remains actively used in daily interactions within families, markets, and social gatherings, indicating its strong presence in informal domains. At the same time, younger generations increasingly become bilingual or multilingual, selecting different languages based on context and setting. In educational environments, including formal schools and *pesantren*, language practices become more complex due to the interaction between Madurese, Indonesian, and Arabic (Laeli et al., 2025). Students commonly use Madurese for informal communication, Indonesian for academic activities, and Arabic for religious learning. This multilingual situation illustrates that language maintenance is not solely determined by the availability of a language but is also influenced by social roles, institutional demands, and communicative contexts, positioning Bangkalan as a meaningful site for investigating language maintenance among young speakers.

To understand this multilingual situation more comprehensively, *pesantren* play an important role as key educational and cultural institutions in Madura. As traditional Islamic boarding schools, *pesantren* function as spaces where religious, academic, and social activities take place under the guidance of *Kyai*, *Ustadz*, and *Ustadzah* (Widiyanto and Tamami, 2023). In these settings, Arabic is primarily used for religious instruction and prayers, Indonesian is employed for formal education, and local languages such as Madurese are commonly used in informal interactions among *santri* (Yusuf and Al-mubassyir, 2025). This linguistic arrangement creates a multilingual environment in which different languages coexist and interact on a daily basis. While the use of Madurese in informal domains may support its continuity, the institutional

dominance of Arabic and Indonesian can restrict its use in formal contexts. This dynamic is evident in *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan, where *santri* from various regions across Madura choose language choices based on situational contexts, reflecting broader sociolinguistic challenges faced by Madurese youth today (Ummah, 2023). Such continuous interaction among Madurese, Indonesian, and Arabic highlights the complex process of language choice and maintenance within institutional and social constraints.

In addition to the institutional context, generational characteristics also play a crucial role in language maintenance. This study focuses on Gen Z *santri*, younger generation who were born between 1997 and 2012 and represent the largest age group in Indonesia (Azzahra, 2024). According to a survey by the Ministry of Religious Affairs based on BPS data, Gen Z constitutes approximately 27.94% of the Indonesian population, or nearly 75 million people (Kementerian Agama, 2023). As digital natives, Gen Z *santri* have grown up with constant exposure to the internet, social media, and digital communication. While this generation is known for its adaptability and openness, extensive engagement with digital platforms often encourages the use of dominant languages such as Indonesian and English. Consequently, Gen Z *santri* frequently engage in code-switching, mixed-language use, and internet slang in both online and offline communication. These linguistic practices raise concerns about the maintenance of local languages, particularly Madurese, among Gen Z *santri* within multilingual institutional environments such as *pesantren*.

In response to these concerns, several studies on language maintenance have been conducted within sociolinguistic frameworks, particularly drawing on Holmes (2013) and Fishman (1991). They generally focus on factors and strategies that support the preservation of local languages in educational, religious, and social settings. For example, a study by A'ini (2022) on Madurese language maintenance in an Islamic boarding school found that institutional practices such as organizing Madurese language competitions, maintaining traditional religious activities, and habituating students to use Madurese in daily communication play an important role in sustaining the language. Research conducted in *pesantren* contexts highlights the role of

institutional practices, teacher attitudes, religious activities, and language policies in maintaining local languages, while studies in non-*pesantren* settings emphasize the importance of family language use, language attitudes, and identity in sustaining heritage languages. However, most existing studies tend to focus on institutional and policy-related factors, with limited attention given to the everyday language practices of Gen Z *santri*. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring how Gen Z *santri* maintain Madurese in their daily communication within a *pesantren* environment.

However, despite the existing research on language maintenance, limited attention has been given to younger generations as active language users. In particular, Gen Z *santri* who live in multilingual *pesantren* and are exposed to digital and global languages remain underexplored. This study specifically examines the maintenance of Madurese among Gen Z *santri* at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran Bangkalan* by focusing on their everyday language practices. Guided by Holmes' (2013) language maintenance factors and Fishman's (1991) strategies, this study investigates the factors and strategies that support the preservation of Madurese. Through this focus, the study aims to understand how Gen Z *santri* negotiate their local linguistic identity amid increasing global influences. Accordingly, this research is entitled “Language Maintenance of Madurese among Gen Z in *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran Bangkalan*: A Sociolinguistic Study.”

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background that has been stated, the research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are the factors that influence the maintenance of the Madurese language among Gen Z students at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran Bangkalan*?
2. What strategies are used and experienced by Gen Z *santri* in maintaining the Madurese language at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran Bangkalan*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions stated above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the factors that influence the maintenance of the Madurese language among Gen Z students at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan.
2. To examine the strategies that contribute to the maintenance of the Madurese language among Gen Z *santri* at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of sociolinguistic studies, especially in the field of language maintenance. By examining how Gen Z students in a *pesantren* environment maintain their local language, this study can strengthen the existing theories of language maintenance and provide contextual examples from a real community. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study will enrich the academic discussion on how young speakers deal with multilingual environments and how traditional institutions like *pesantren* influence language behavior.

Practically, this research is intended to help students or other researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies, particularly in the area of language maintenance and sociolinguistics. It is also expected to raise awareness among the students and teachers of *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan about the importance of preserving the Madurese language as a vital part of their cultural and linguistic identity. In addition, the findings of this study may serve as useful input for educational and cultural institutions in promoting the use and maintenance of regional languages among younger generations in Indonesia.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study concentrates on the area of language maintenance as part of the broader field of sociolinguistics. The research particularly examines Gen Z *santri* at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan and how they utilize the Madurese language in their everyday interactions. The analysis centers on two primary dimensions: (1) the factors that affect the preservation of the Madurese language among these students, and (2) the strategies they employ to sustain its use. The theoretical foundation of this research is primarily based on Holmes' (2013) theory, which is used to identify the factors influencing language maintenance, and Fishman's (1991) theory, which is applied to determine the strategies of language maintenance. Together, these theories provide the analytical framework for interpreting the collected data.

The limitation of this study is defined by its participants and investigative focus. The participants are confined to Gen Z *santri* who are both studying and residing at *Pesantren Al-Hikam Kemayoran* Bangkalan during the 2024/2025 academic year. Consequently, the results of this study may not be generalizable to represent all Madurese young people or other *pesantren* institutions in the Bangkalan region. Furthermore, this research exclusively addresses the sociolinguistic dimensions of language maintenance and does not examine the structural elements such as grammar or pronunciation of the Madurese language.