



Tidung Language Revitalization through Local-Content Learning in A Multicultural Elementary School in Tarakan, Indonesia

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Abstract

The declining intergenerational use of the Tidung language in multicultural Tarakan has made elementary-school local-content learning an important but underexamined space for language revitalization. This study analyzes how Tidung language learning is implemented as local content in Grade 5 at SDN 028 Tarakan and how policy actors, school stakeholders, families, and customary institutions interact in supporting or constraining revitalization. A descriptive qualitative case-study design was used, with SDN 028 Tarakan selected as a bounded case because it represents an urban multicultural school where Tidung is formally taught although many students do not use it in daily home communication. Data were collected from August to October 2025 through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving 22 informants: one principal, one Grade 5 teacher, twelve Grade 5 students, four parents, two Education Office representatives, and two Tidung customary leaders. The analytical focus was the policy-to-practice translation of Tidung local-content learning, particularly curriculum implementation, teacher readiness, student engagement, material availability, and home/community language support. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings reveal four central themes: strong policy and stakeholder support, teacher-led adaptation under material constraints, positive but mostly receptive student engagement, and an ecosystem gap between school learning and home/community language use. Concrete classroom evidence showed that students were able to repeat greetings, name daily objects, and sing simple Tidung songs, but they rarely initiated spontaneous Tidung dialogue without teacher prompting. Teachers compensated for the lack of standardized books and audio materials by preparing vocabulary sheets, using classroom objects, and adapting songs and short stories. Parents and customary leaders supported the program culturally, but home use remained limited because many families used Indonesian or other ethnic languages in daily interaction. The study proposes a policy-to-practice revitalization model in which local regulation must be followed by standardized materials, systematic teacher training, participatory cultural resources, technology-based media, and family-community language practices. Its novelty lies in showing that, in a multicultural urban setting, school-based local-language revitalization functions first as institutional legitimization and cultural awareness building, but it cannot develop young active speakers unless school exposure is connected with family routines, community validation, and authentic communicative domains.

Keywords: Tidung language; Local content curriculum; Elementary school; Language revitalization; Ethnopedagogy; Multicultural Tarakan

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INTRODUCTION

Local languages are not merely communication tools; they store collective memory, ecological knowledge, customary norms, oral traditions, and community identity. Their decline

therefore signals more than a linguistic problem. It also indicates the weakening of intergenerational cultural transmission (Aprilia & Firmansyah, 2025; Karmaker, 2027; Litaay & Rahawarin, 2023). In Indonesia, the issue is particularly urgent because the country has extensive ethnolinguistic diversity and many regional languages compete with Indonesian, foreign languages, and digital popular culture in everyday communication (Elina & Meilani, 2025; Suhendi, 2025). Globalization and the dominance of majority languages threaten the vitality of regional languages (Bianco, 2014; M. N. Hakim et al., 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2025), including Tidung in Tarakan City. Within this context, elementary schools are expected to become a formal space for language maintenance by integrating regional languages into local-content learning (de Zarobe, 2025; M. A. Hakim et al., 2024; Rafael et al., 2024; Rusdiansyah et al., 2025).

The urgency of Tidung language education is related to three empirical conditions. First, Tidung is increasingly less dominant among children in urban Tarakan because Indonesian is used as the main language of school interaction, peer communication, and public communication. Second, intergenerational transmission is uneven: some Tidung families still recognize cultural expressions, greetings, and customary vocabulary, but many children do not use Tidung actively at home. Third, although the local government has positioned Tidung as local content in elementary schools, classroom implementation still faces practical problems, including the limited availability of student books, teacher guides, dictionaries, audio pronunciation models, and systematic teacher training. Thus, the problem is not simply whether Tidung is included in the curriculum, but whether curriculum inclusion can be transformed into meaningful communicative practice among children.

Tarakan is a strategic and multicultural urban area in North Kalimantan. It contains indigenous Tidung cultural heritage while also hosting migrant communities with diverse linguistic backgrounds. This heterogeneity creates a particular challenge for local language education. Unlike rural or culturally homogeneous settings, students in urban Tarakan may not hear or use Tidung regularly at home (Yusuf et al., 2025). Consequently, the school becomes one of the few structured domains in which children can encounter the language (Bialystok, 2018; Feldman, 2019; Jurkic et al., 2023). SDN 028 Tarakan, the focus of this study, provides an important case for examining how a local-content policy is translated into classroom practice, how teachers respond to limited resources, and how students interpret Tidung learning in a multilingual school ecology.

This case is scientifically important for four reasons. First, SDN 028 Tarakan represents a multicultural school context in which Tidung is taught not only to Tidung students but also to students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Second, Grade 5 students are at a critical age: they are old enough to reflect on cultural identity and participate in classroom dialogue, but still young enough for early language exposure to shape attitudes toward local culture. Third, the school illustrates a policy-to-practice tension commonly found in local-content curriculum: the subject is formally mandated, but its implementation depends heavily on teacher initiative and available cultural resources. Fourth, the case allows analysis of whether local-content language learning functions merely as cultural recognition or as a pathway toward communicative revitalization.

The state of the art in local-language education shows that revitalization is most promising when schools, families, cultural communities, and government institutions work as an ecosystem (Bloch et al., 2014; Sakti et al., 2024; Xue et al., 2021). Prior studies on local content and ethnopedagogy emphasize that culturally rooted learning strengthens identity, character, and contextual understanding (Hafida, 2024; Pattiasina et al., 2025; Sakti et al., 2024; Sugiarka, 2025). Research on local wisdom-based learning also shows that learning becomes more meaningful when students interact with familiar cultural symbols, stories, practices, and language (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Harefa, 2026; Maftuh & Supriatna, 2025; Ottu et al., 2024; Siumarlata et al., 2026). Previous studies in Indonesia have generally shown that local-content

learning can strengthen cultural identity, contextualize instruction, and support character education. However, much of this research has focused on the existence of local content, the development of culturally based materials, or the general importance of ethnopedagogy. Fewer studies have examined the micro-level implementation of a local language in the classroom, especially how teacher improvisation, student response, family language practice, and policy support interact in one bounded school case.

Research specifically related to Tidung language education remains limited in at least three respects. First, existing discussions tend to emphasize cultural preservation and policy support rather than classroom-level evidence of how students actually engage with Tidung. Second, there is still limited analysis of how non-native or multicultural student groups experience Tidung learning. Third, previous work has not sufficiently explained the gap between receptive learning—such as recognizing words, repeating vocabulary, and enjoying songs—and productive use, such as initiating greetings, speaking short dialogues, or using Tidung outside class. This study therefore does not merely confirm that materials, teacher training, and community support are needed; it explains how their absence shapes the type of learning that emerges in the classroom.

This study addresses three interconnected gaps. First, there is a practical gap between the formal requirement to teach Tidung and the availability of appropriate textbooks, student books, dictionaries, audio-visual resources, and teacher training. Second, there is a theoretical gap because many previous discussions of local-language instruction were framed within earlier curriculum contexts, whereas this case is situated in the flexibility and school-level adaptation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Third, there is a contextual gap: much discussion of local-language maintenance assumes relatively homogeneous communities, while Tarakan presents a multilingual urban setting in which Indonesian is dominant and Tidung has limited domains of use among children.

Based on these gaps, the study was guided by four research questions:

1. How is Tidung language learning implemented as local content in Grade 5 at SDN 028 Tarakan?
2. What factors support and inhibit the implementation of Tidung local-content learning?
3. How do school, family, policy, and cultural stakeholders interact in the Tidung language revitalization process?
4. What policy-to-practice revitalization model can be proposed based on the case findings?

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Tidung language learning as local content for Grade 5 students at SDN 028 Tarakan; to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in curriculum planning, teaching resources, teacher readiness, student participation, and stakeholder collaboration; and to formulate strategic recommendations for strengthening Tidung language learning as a sustainable revitalization program. The contribution of this article is twofold. Theoretically, it develops a policy-to-practice perspective on local-language revitalization in multicultural elementary schools. Practically, it offers an implementation roadmap involving material standardization, teacher capacity building, technology-based media, family participation, and continuous monitoring with customary institutions.

METHOD

Design and Rationale

This study used a descriptive qualitative case-study design. The design was selected because the research focused on meanings, experiences, and situated implementation rather than statistical measurement. The case-study approach was appropriate because SDN 028 Tarakan represents a school context where local regulation, classroom practice, teacher adaptation, and multicultural student backgrounds intersect in the implementation of Tidung as local content. This design made it possible to interpret not only what was implemented, but also how and why implementation was experienced differently by teachers, students, school leaders, parents, and cultural stakeholders.

The case was bounded by place, participants, curriculum focus, and time. The place boundary was SDN 028 Tarakan. The participant boundary was the Grade 5 local-content learning ecosystem, including the principal, one Grade 5 teacher, selected Grade 5 students, parents, Education Office representatives, and Tidung customary leaders. The curriculum boundary was Tidung language learning as local content. The time boundary was the August–October 2025 data-collection period. The focus was not to evaluate all schools in Tarakan, but to generate a situated explanation of how local-content language policy is enacted in one multicultural elementary-school case.

Research Context and Informants

The study was conducted at SDN 028 Tarakan, an elementary school implementing Tidung language learning as local content for Grade 5 students. The school context is characterized by urban heterogeneity: students come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, and Indonesian remains the dominant everyday language. The school was selected purposively because it had implemented Tidung local-content learning, served students from mixed ethnic and language backgrounds, and provided access to relevant policy, classroom, family, and cultural stakeholders. The case is not claimed to represent all elementary schools in Tarakan statistically; rather, it is treated as an analytically important case for understanding the policy-to-practice dynamics of local-language revitalization in a multicultural urban school.

Informants included the principal, Grade 5 teacher, Grade 5 students, parents, Education Office representatives, and customary leaders from the Tidung community. These groups were selected because each holds a different role in the local-content ecosystem: policy legitimacy, school management, classroom practice, learner response, home support, and cultural validation (see Table 1).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling. Students were selected with the assistance of the Grade 5 teacher to represent variation in gender, classroom participation, and ethnic/language background. Parents were selected because they were guardians of participating students and were able to explain home language practices. Education Office representatives were selected because of their role in local-content policy and monitoring. Customary leaders were selected because of their knowledge of Tidung language, cultural values, and revitalization concerns. In total, the study involved 22 informants.

Table 1. Informants, data sources, and analytical contribution

Participant/data source	Role in the study	Main information explored	Analytical contribution
Principal	School leader	- School policy, scheduling, institutional support, and resource constraints	- Contextual validation of implementation at school level
Grade 5 teacher	Main classroom implementer	- Planning, teaching methods, materials, assessment, pronunciation challenge, and teacher needs	- Primary evidence of pedagogical adaptation and implementation barriers
Grade 5 students	Learners	- Interest, participation, perceived difficulty, vocabulary learning, and use outside school	- Evidence of student engagement and limits of productive language use
Parents	Home environment	- Family support, awareness of cultural value, and use of Tidung at home	- Validation of the home-use gap and need for family involvement
Education Office representatives	Policy actors	- Legal basis, textbook support, monitoring, and teacher development plans	- Evidence of policy legitimacy and systemic support

Participant/data source	Role in the study	Main information explored	Analytical contribution
Customary leaders/cultural community	Cultural validators	- Language vitality, cultural meanings, customary values, and revitalization expectations	- Cultural interpretation and community-based recommendations
Documents and observation notes	Supporting data	- Curriculum documents, classroom activities, student learning behavior, and visual evidence	- Triangulation of interviews with observed implementation

Data Collection and Ethics

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews explored experiences in planning and implementing Tidung local-content learning, stakeholder support, perceived benefits, learning obstacles, and expectations for future improvement. A total of 22 interviews were conducted, consisting of one interview with the principal, one with the Grade 5 teacher, twelve student interviews, four parent interviews, two interviews with Education Office representatives, and two interviews with customary leaders. Each adult interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, while each student interview lasted approximately 15–25 minutes to respect children’s attention span and comfort. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission and then transcribed for analysis. When recording was not permitted, detailed field notes were written immediately after the interview.

Classroom observation focused on teacher-student interaction, student pronunciation practice, use of available media, response to vocabulary activities, and the extent to which learning was connected to daily culture. Four classroom observations were conducted during Grade 5 Tidung lessons. The observation protocol focused on five aspects: teaching materials used, teacher explanation and pronunciation modeling, student participation, productive language use, and links between classroom learning and cultural/home contexts. Observation notes recorded verbal interactions, student responses, learning activities, and visible use of media or materials.

Documentation included curriculum-related documents, teaching materials, policy references, and classroom records. The documents analyzed included the school’s local-content schedule, teacher-prepared vocabulary sheets, available learning materials, classroom records, and relevant local-content policy references. These documents were used to compare stated policy, teacher planning, and observed implementation.

Participants were treated confidentially, and the study used informed consent from the school and relevant participants. Because the study involved elementary-school students, ethical procedures were strengthened in several ways. Permission was obtained from the school before data collection. Parental or guardian consent was obtained for student participation, and student assent was requested in child-friendly language. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could stop answering at any time. All names were anonymized using codes, such as P1 for the principal, T1 for the teacher, S1–S12 for students, PA1–PA4 for parents, EO1–EO2 for Education Office representatives, and CL1–CL2 for customary leaders. Quotations were anonymized, and no identifying details were reported. To manage power relations with children, interviews were conducted in a supportive manner, questions were non-threatening, and the researcher avoided evaluating students’ answers as right or wrong.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The analysis combined inductive and deductive coding. Deductive codes were derived from the research questions, including policy support, teaching materials, teacher readiness, student engagement, home language use, community involvement, and revitalization strategy.

Inductive codes emerged from repeated reading of the data, including teacher improvisation, pronunciation anxiety, receptive vocabulary learning, symbolic parental support, and the school–home language gap. Coding was conducted in three stages. First, initial codes were assigned to meaningful excerpts from interviews, observations, and documents. Second, related codes were grouped into categories. Third, categories were synthesized into final themes. Ambiguous data were discussed among the research team, and conclusions were verified by returning to transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Member checking was conducted informally by confirming key interpretations with the teacher and principal. Peer debriefing among the authors was used to reduce individual interpretive bias. An audit trail was maintained through field notes, coding matrices, and theme-development records. An example of the coding process is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Example of coding matrix from raw data to themes

Raw data trace	Initial code	Category	Final theme
- “The lesson exists in the schedule, but books and audio materials are still limited.”	Formal implementation; limited resources	Policy–resource gap	Policy legitimacy and multi-level support
- “I usually prepare my own vocabulary list and use objects in the classroom.”	Teacher improvisation	Teacher adaptation	Teacher-led adaptation under material constraints
- Students repeated greetings together but did not initiate Tidung dialogue without teacher prompts.	Repetition; limited spontaneous use	Receptive engagement	Positive but mostly receptive student engagement
- “At home we usually use Indonesian, so I cannot always help my child practice Tidung.”	Limited home use	School–home gap	Heterogeneous urban language ecology
- Customary leaders suggested proverbs, stories, and pronunciation validation.	Cultural validation	Community support	Strategic revitalization needs

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented thematically to show the empirical basis of the case findings before moving to interpretation and implications. Each theme is supported by interview excerpts, observation notes, and document evidence. The discussion is integrated after each major result to connect the findings with previous studies and the proposed policy-to-practice model. Four main findings answer the research objectives: policy legitimacy created strong institutional support, teachers adapted learning under resource constraints, students responded positively but remained mostly receptive users, and community support was strong but not yet fully translated into daily language practice. These findings are summarized in Table 3 and visualized in Figure 1.

Table 3. Taxonomy of findings from Tidung local-content learning

Theme	Core evidence	Interpretation	Related construct	Pedagogical implication
- Policy legitimacy and multi-level support	Education Office policy, school support, customary leader involvement, and parent approval.	The program has strong symbolic and legal legitimacy as a revitalization effort.	Policy-to-practice implementation	Policy must be followed by materials, training, and monitoring.

Theme	Core evidence	Interpretation	Related construct	Pedagogical implication
- Teacher-led adaptation under material constraints	Teacher develops materials independently; student books and complete dictionaries are limited.	Implementation depends heavily on teacher creativity and individual capacity.	Teacher readiness and curriculum enactment	Develop standardized modules, audio resources, and pronunciation guides.
- Positive but mostly receptive student engagement	Students enjoy songs, stories, games, and vocabulary practice but rarely use Tidung outside school.	The program raises awareness but has not yet produced active young speakers.	Language awareness and cultural pride	Increase role play, dialogue, project-based tasks, and family assignments.
- Heterogeneous urban language ecology	Indonesian dominates home and public communication among mixed ethnic groups.	A school-only approach cannot sustain revitalization without domains of use beyond class.	Language vitality ecosystem	Create school-family-community language spaces and cultural clubs.
- Strategic revitalization needs	Stakeholders recommend books, teacher training, technology-based media, dictionary development, and monitoring.	Sustainable revitalization requires coordinated action and long-term commitment.	Ethnopedagogical sustainability	Implement a staged roadmap involving government, school, parents, and customary institutions.

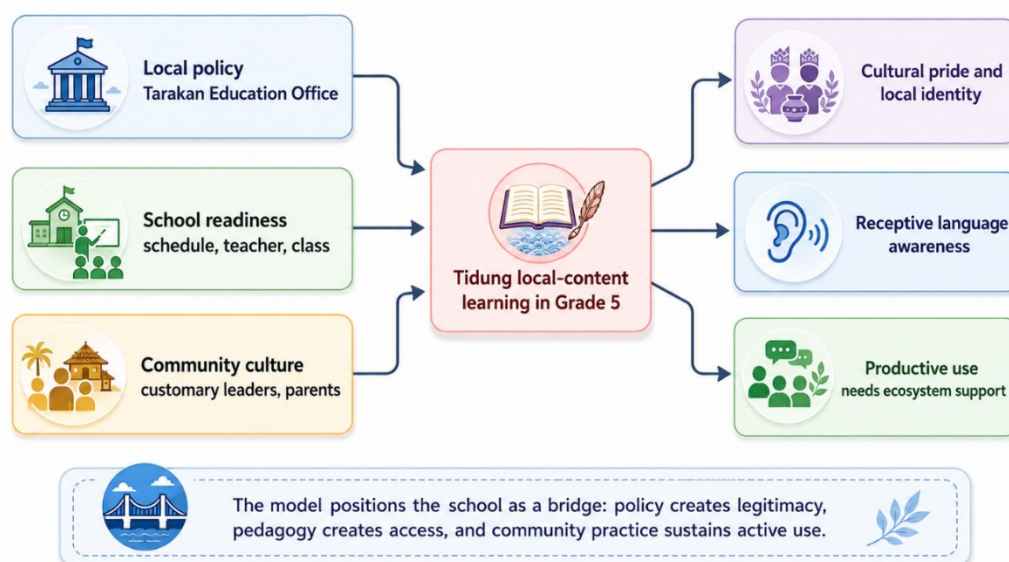


Figure 1. Policy-to-practice framework for Tidung language revitalization

Policy Legitimacy and the School as A Revitalization Bridge

The first finding indicates that Tidung local-content learning has strong policy legitimacy. The Education Office of Tarakan has established Tidung as a local-content subject, and the principal supports the program as a concrete contribution to preserving local culture. Customary leaders also view elementary school as an appropriate entry point because children

are still at an early stage of identity formation and language awareness. This alignment creates an important foundation: the program is not seen as an optional cultural activity, but as part of a formal educational responsibility.

The Education Office representative emphasized that local-content learning is intended to ensure that children in Tarakan recognize the cultural identity of the region. One policy actor stated, “The school is an important place to introduce Tidung because not all children learn it at home” (EO1). The principal expressed a similar view: “We support Tidung learning because students should know the local language of Tarakan, even if they come from different ethnic backgrounds” (P1). These statements show that Tidung learning has institutional legitimacy and is understood as part of cultural preservation.

Document analysis also confirmed that Tidung local content was included in the school schedule. However, the documents showed limited supporting materials, especially standardized student books and audio-based pronunciation resources. Thus, policy support was visible at the level of scheduling and institutional commitment, but less visible at the level of learning resources.

However, policy legitimacy alone does not guarantee pedagogical effectiveness. The classroom becomes the bridge between symbolic commitment and actual language transmission. At SDN 028 Tarakan, the school has provided space and schedule for Tidung learning, but implementation remains dependent on the teacher's capacity to transform limited resources into meaningful activities. This finding supports the view that revitalization through education must be understood as curriculum enactment, not merely curriculum inclusion. A language may appear in the timetable, yet remain weak if lesson materials, assessment formats, pronunciation support, and domains of use are not strengthened.

This finding refines previous studies on local-content curriculum and ethnopedagogy. Previous studies generally emphasize that local content strengthens cultural identity and contextual learning. The Tidung case confirms this view but adds an important qualification: cultural recognition is not the same as communicative revitalization. In a multicultural urban school, local-content learning first creates legitimacy and awareness, but its effect on language use depends on the availability of repeated practice, teacher competence, and social domains beyond the classroom.

The significance of this finding lies in the distinction between institutional preservation and communicative revitalization. Institutional preservation ensures that the language is recognized and taught. Communicative revitalization requires learners to hear, practice, use, and value the language in authentic contexts (M. N. Hakim et al., 2025; Muawanah et al., 2024; Wiltshire et al., 2024). The Tidung case shows that Tarakan has entered the first stage through policy support, but the second stage requires deeper ecosystem work involving teachers, parents, customary leaders, and media resources.

Teacher Adaptation, Material Scarcity, and the Need for Pedagogical Standardization

The second finding concerns teacher adaptation under material scarcity. The Grade 5 teacher reported that relevant materials aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum were still limited. Student books were not fully available, complete dictionaries were still needed, and audio-visual resources had not yet been systematically developed. As a result, the teacher prepared materials independently by selecting daily vocabulary, using objects in the classroom, introducing songs and stories, and encouraging students to repeat words orally. This practice demonstrates strong teacher commitment, but it also reveals a risk: when learning materials are not standardized, implementation quality may vary between classes and schools.

The teacher stated, “I often prepare the materials myself because the student book is still limited. I use simple vocabulary from daily life so that students can follow the lesson” (T1). Observation supported this statement. During one lesson, the teacher introduced Tidung words for greetings and classroom objects, wrote them on the board, pronounced them aloud, and asked students to repeat them together. The activity successfully attracted student attention, but

most responses occurred in chorus repetition rather than spontaneous student-to-student conversation.

Pronunciation emerged as a key technical challenge, especially because not all teachers are native Tidung speakers. In language learning, pronunciation is not a minor issue. It affects learner confidence, meaning, and the authenticity of transmission. When teachers are unsure of pronunciation, they may reduce oral practice and rely on vocabulary memorization. This can make learning more receptive than productive. Therefore, professional development for Tidung teachers should not only address curriculum planning, but also provide pronunciation clinics, audio models, microteaching, classroom language routines, and collaboration with native speakers or customary institutions.

A customary leader highlighted this concern by stating, “Pronunciation must be guided by people who really know the language, because children should hear the correct sound from the beginning” (CL1). This view indicates that community participation is not only symbolic but also pedagogically necessary. Customary leaders can support pronunciation validation, proverbs, oral stories, and culturally accurate expressions.

From a pedagogical perspective, the case suggests that local-content language learning should move from teacher improvisation to supported creativity (Kits & Meristo, 2025; Kupers & van Dijk, 2020; Mæland & Espeland, 2017; Santosa et al., 2025). Teacher creativity remains essential, particularly for making Tidung attractive to children from non-Tidung backgrounds. Nevertheless, creativity must be supported by structured modules, media banks, culturally validated vocabulary lists, and sample assessments. Without such support, the burden of revitalization falls too heavily on individual teachers (Baharuddin & Burhan, 2025; Montgomery-Anderson, 2013; Revina et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025).

This finding is consistent with previous research showing that teacher readiness and learning resources are central to curriculum implementation. However, the Tidung case differs from many general local-content studies because the teacher is not only delivering cultural content but also mediating a language that many students do not use in everyday life. Therefore, the challenge is both pedagogical and linguistic.

Student Response: Awareness, Enjoyment, and the Limits of Receptive Learning

The third finding shows that students generally respond positively when Tidung learning is presented through enjoyable and culturally meaningful activities. Students are interested when learning uses songs, games, storytelling, role play, and vocabulary linked to daily objects. This indicates that the affective dimension of local-language learning is important. Children who do not use Tidung at home may still develop curiosity and cultural pride if the language is introduced as something meaningful, enjoyable, and connected to local identity rather than as a difficult memorization subject (Figure 2).

Student interviews confirmed this positive affective response. One student said, “I like it when we learn through songs because it is easier to remember” (S3). Another student stated, “Some words are difficult, but it is fun when we repeat them together” (S7). These quotations indicate that students did not reject Tidung learning; rather, they needed learning modes that were playful, repetitive, and supported by clear pronunciation models.

At the same time, the findings also show a limitation: student learning remains largely receptive. Students can recognize words, repeat vocabulary, and understand cultural messages, but they rarely use Tidung spontaneously outside class. This conclusion was drawn from three data sources. First, classroom observation showed that students responded actively when the teacher prompted them, but few students initiated Tidung expressions independently. Second, student interviews showed that most students used Tidung only during class activities. Third, parent interviews indicated limited home practice. One parent explained, “At home we mostly use Indonesian, so my child rarely practices Tidung unless there is an assignment” (PA2). Another parent said, “We support the lesson, but not everyone in the family can speak Tidung” (PA4).

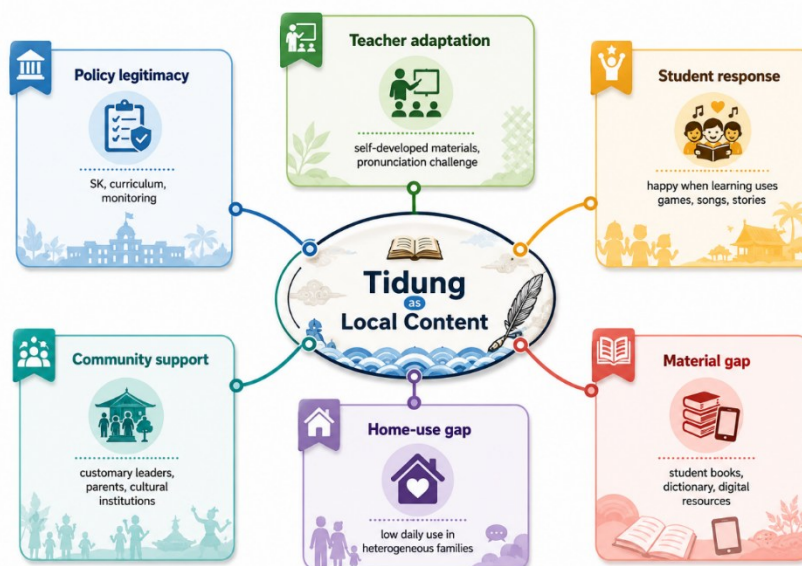


Figure 2. Thematic map of stakeholder-based findings

This gap is understandable in a heterogeneous urban environment where Indonesian is the main language of peer interaction. It also reflects the difference between language awareness and communicative competence. Awareness can be developed through classroom exposure, but active use requires repeated social practice across domains (Hicham et al., 2025; Montgomery-Anderson, 2013).

The observation notes provide a concrete example of receptive engagement. In one vocabulary activity, almost all students repeated the teacher's pronunciation of greetings and object names. However, when asked to make a short dialogue with a peer, several students paused, looked at the teacher, or returned to Indonesian. This pattern shows that students had begun to recognize and reproduce words, but they had not yet internalized Tidung as a language for spontaneous interaction.

This finding has important implications for learning design. Tidung lessons should increase opportunities for productive practice through short dialogues, classroom commands, role play, songs with movement, simple storytelling, family interview assignments, and project-based tasks such as creating mini dictionaries, comics, greeting videos, or cultural posters. Assessment should also move beyond written vocabulary recall toward performance-based evidence: students greeting others, introducing themselves, naming objects, retelling short cultural stories, or presenting a family-based Tidung phrase collection.

Compared with previous studies that often report positive attitudes toward local-language learning, this case offers a more specific distinction between positive engagement and productive use. The students' enthusiasm should not be overinterpreted as evidence of language revitalization. It is more accurate to state that the program has produced early awareness, cultural interest, and receptive vocabulary learning, but not yet sustained communicative use.

Multicultural Tarakan and the Ecosystem Gap Beyond the Classroom

The fourth finding concerns the ecosystem gap. Tarakan's multicultural character enriches social life but creates a challenge for the continuity of Tidung language use. Many students come from non-Tidung families or live in environments where Indonesian is the default language. Parents may support the program symbolically, but they may not be able to assist children in using Tidung at home. As a result, the school becomes a major site of exposure, yet it cannot provide enough frequency and naturalness of use by itself.

This ecosystem gap appeared clearly in parent and student interviews. A student stated, "I only use Tidung in class because my friends usually speak Indonesian" (S5). Another student said, "I know some words, but I do not use them at home" (S9). These statements show that

the limitation is not student disinterest, but the absence of natural domains of use.

Customary leaders emphasize that Tidung must be introduced early and connected with values, proverbs, and cultural identity. One proverb documented: *Sebais-Bais Ulun Ando Siro Ki Karatno, Sekarat-Karat Dengan Gaka Siro Ki Baisno* - was interpreted as a reminder that outsiders may have weaknesses and family may still have goodness. The proverb illustrates how language carries ethical and relational wisdom. Integrating such expressions into learning can deepen the cultural function of Tidung lessons and prevent the subject from becoming a purely linguistic exercise.

A customary leader explained, “If children only memorize words, they may forget them. But if they learn stories, advice, and customs, they will understand why the language matters” (CL2). This evidence shows that community knowledge can enrich the curriculum by linking vocabulary with cultural meaning.

The ecosystem gap suggests that revitalization should be designed as a networked program. School lessons need reinforcement through family tasks, extracurricular clubs, cultural festivals, local radio content, collaboration with customary institutions, and digital media (Hazarika, 2025; Matatula & Tupalessy, 2023). In this sense, technology can be useful not as a replacement for community practice, but as a bridge: audio pronunciation files, video stories, digital comics, online dictionaries, and short practice clips can extend exposure beyond the limited weekly lesson (Noviarini & Denata, 2025).

This finding challenges the assumption that school-based revitalization is sufficient once a local language is included in the curriculum. In multicultural Tarakan, the school functions as a revitalization bridge, not as the entire revitalization ecosystem. The bridge connects policy legitimacy, classroom exposure, cultural validation, and family/community practice. Without the last two elements, learning remains symbolic and receptive.

Stakeholder-based Synthesis

Stakeholder perspectives reveal broad support for Tidung local-content learning, but each group emphasizes different priorities. The Education Office highlights legal support, textbooks, training, and monitoring. The school emphasizes implementation space and institutional responsibility. Teachers emphasize materials, pronunciation, and student motivation. Students emphasize enjoyable learning and the absence of student books. Parents emphasize cultural recognition and harmony. Customary leaders emphasize urgency, cultural transmission, and the risk of language loss. This diversity is not a weakness; it is a resource for building a shared revitalization strategy.

However, the data also revealed some tension among stakeholder perspectives. Policy actors tended to emphasize formal support and future planning, while teachers emphasized immediate classroom limitations. Parents supported cultural preservation, but some could not provide language practice at home. Students enjoyed Tidung activities, but their use remained limited to teacher-led tasks. These differences show that revitalization requires coordination, not merely goodwill. Table 4 synthesizes these perspectives into an implementation matrix.

Table 4. Stakeholder-based implementation matrix

Stakeholder	Main support	Observed/expressed challenge	Strategic need	Expected outcome
Education Office	Legal mandate, textbook support, monitoring, training plans.	Need for digital resources, dictionary, and consistent teacher development.	Coordinate standardization, training, and monitoring.	Consistent implementation across schools.
School principal	Institutional support and scheduling.	Student books and learning resources are still limited.	Allocate time, resources, and partnerships.	School becomes a reliable revitalization domain.

Stakeholder	Main support	Observed/expressed challenge	Strategic need	Expected outcome
Teacher	High commitment and willingness to teach.	Limited materials; non-native pronunciation challenge; need for engaging methods.	Training, audio models, modules, lesson bank.	More confident and interactive teaching.
Students	Enjoy learning when it uses games, songs, and stories.	Low home use; limited productive speaking.	Role play, dialogue, projects, peer practice.	Greater confidence and active vocabulary use.
Parents	Positive attitude toward cultural preservation.	May not speak Tidung or use it at home.	Family-based assignments and cultural activities.	Increased exposure outside school.
Customary leaders	Cultural legitimacy and indigenous knowledge.	Declining young speakers and technology pressure.	Proverbs, stories, pronunciation validation, cultural visits.	Language learning carries cultural meaning.

Toward a Sustainable Revitalization Roadmap

Based on the findings, this study formulates a policy-to-practice revitalization model. The model emerged from the interaction of five empirical categories: policy legitimacy, teacher enactment, student engagement, family/community language domains, and monitoring. Its originality lies not in listing common recommendations, but in explaining the sequence and dependency among these components. In this case, policy creates legitimacy, teacher enactment creates classroom access, student engagement creates awareness, family/community practice creates communicative continuity, and monitoring sustains improvement.

The model differs from general ethnopedagogical frameworks because it does not assume that cultural content automatically becomes meaningful once inserted into the curriculum. It also differs from general language revitalization models because it highlights the specific role of multicultural urban schools where many learners are not heritage speakers of the target language. Thus, the model is specific to the Tidung/Tarakan case in its cultural content, but transferable as an analytical framework for other local languages taught in multicultural urban elementary schools.

In the short term, the most urgent actions are to complete student books, teacher guides, a validated vocabulary list, and audio pronunciation resources. In the same period, teacher training should be conducted continuously with support from native speakers, customary leaders, universities, and the Education Office. In the medium term, classroom learning should become more practice-based through role play, songs, games, storytelling, and project-based learning. Family involvement should also be strengthened through simple home assignments such as collecting Tidung greetings, interviewing grandparents or community members, and recording short pronunciation practice. In the long term, Tarakan needs a broader language ecosystem through extracurricular clubs, language festivals, digital dictionaries, community radio segments, and regular monitoring.

This roadmap is important because the research shows that Tidung learning at SDN 028 Tarakan has already created awareness, but awareness must be developed into use. The transition from awareness to use requires intentional design: students need reasons to speak, safe opportunities to practice, feedback from competent speakers, and social recognition that Tidung is valuable.

The model is built on three assumptions. First, local regulation is necessary but insufficient. Second, children's productive language use requires repeated practice across classroom, home, and community domains. Third, culturally validated resources are needed to

maintain linguistic accuracy and cultural meaning. The model also has limitations: it is derived from a single-school case, has not yet been tested longitudinally, and does not directly measure students' language proficiency. Therefore, it should be understood as an empirically grounded implementation model rather than proof of completed language revitalization.

Figure 3 visualizes the proposed roadmap and Table 4 give recommendations based on research findings.



Figure 3. Strategic roadmap for sustainable Tidung language learning

Table 5. Recommendations based on research findings

No.	Problem identified	Recommended action	Responsible actors	Timeframe
1	Limited contextual student materials	Develop student books, teacher modules, audio pronunciation files, and visual media.	Education Office, customary institutions, universities	Short term
2	Limited training for non-native teachers	Conduct continuous Tidung language and ethnopedagogy training.	Education Office, universities, native speakers	Short term
3	Weak pronunciation and dialogue practice	Use role play, songs, games, classroom commands, and short oral performance tasks.	Teachers and school leaders	Medium term
4	Low use at home and in the community	Create family-based assignments, cultural days, and parent workshops.	School, parents, customary leaders	Medium term
5	Risk of declining young speakers	Accelerate printed and digital Tidung dictionaries and child-friendly media.	Customary institutions and Education Office	Short-medium term
6	Need for cultural value integration	Integrate proverbs, oral histories, songs, and local stories into lessons.	Teachers, cultural experts, curriculum team	Continuous
7	Monitoring and evaluation need strengthening	Conduct monitoring at least twice per semester with stakeholder feedback.	Education Office and school quality team	Continuous
8	Need for youth engagement beyond class	Develop language clubs, festivals, competitions, digital comics, and short videos.	Schools, youth communities, cultural institutions	Long term

The findings contribute to local-content curriculum theory by showing that implementation must be examined as an ecological process. In the Tidung case, the school is necessary but not sufficient. The curriculum provides legitimacy, the teacher provides access, the classroom provides structured exposure, and the community provides authenticity. When

one element is weak, revitalization becomes partial. This explains why the program has succeeded in raising student awareness and cultural recognition but has not yet produced active young speakers (Ajjawi et al., 2024; Muthmainnah et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this study extends ethnopedagogical perspectives by emphasizing the concept of a policy-to-practice revitalization bridge. Local wisdom and local language cannot be integrated effectively if they remain at the level of policy rhetoric. They must be converted into teachable units, validated pronunciation models, meaningful cultural narratives, student-centered activities, and family-community routines (Hasanah et al., 2026; Maheswari et al., 2026). In a multicultural city, ethnopedagogy should not be interpreted narrowly as teaching only the heritage of one group (Chibuye & Singh, 2024; Mangera et al., 2026). Instead, it can function as inclusive cultural literacy: non-Tidung students learn to respect Tidung language as part of Tarakan's shared identity.

Practically, the study warns against treating local-content learning as an additional subject with minimal resources. If local language learning is scheduled only once a week and supported by limited books, it will likely remain symbolic. The stronger strategy is to make Tidung visible in school spaces, greetings, cultural events, digital media, and classroom routines. This would transform Tidung from a lesson topic into a living cultural resource.

This study has several limitations. First, it used a single-school case-study design; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all elementary schools in Tarakan. Second, the study relied on interviews, observations, and documents, so the findings may be influenced by social desirability bias, especially because teachers, parents, and policy actors may wish to present the program positively. Third, classroom observation was limited to the data-collection period and did not capture long-term changes in student language behavior. Fourth, the study did not directly measure students' Tidung language proficiency using a standardized test. Fifth, the study examined implementation and stakeholder perceptions rather than longitudinal revitalization outcomes. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of early institutional legitimacy, classroom exposure, and receptive student engagement, not as proof of sustained language revitalization among children.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Tidung language learning as local content in Grade 5 at SDN 028 Tarakan has created institutional legitimacy and early cultural awareness among students, but it has not yet demonstrated sustained communicative use. The program is supported by the school, Education Office, parents, and customary leaders, and students respond positively when learning uses songs, games, stories, and daily vocabulary. However, student engagement remains mostly receptive: students can repeat and recognize words, but rarely initiate Tidung communication without teacher prompting or use the language outside class.

The main contribution of the study is the policy-to-practice revitalization model, which explains that school-based local-language revitalization in a multicultural urban context requires sequential and coordinated support: policy legitimacy, teacher enactment, classroom exposure, family/community practice, cultural validation, and continuous monitoring. For Tarakan, the most urgent priorities are standardized student books and teacher guides, audio pronunciation resources, systematic teacher training, involvement of native speakers and customary leaders, family-based language activities, child-friendly digital media, and regular monitoring. Future research should test the model through classroom action research, design-based research, or longitudinal studies that directly examine students' productive Tidung language development over time.

RECOMMENDATION

Future research should conduct classroom action research or design-based research to develop and test Tidung learning models that can improve students' productive speaking skills and long-term language use.

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Future research should conduct classroom action research or design-based research to develop and test Tidung learning models that can improve students' productive speaking skills, classroom interaction, and long-term language use. Studies involving multiple schools are also needed to compare implementation patterns across different sociolinguistic contexts in Tarakan.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
St. Saenab	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	
Arina Restian	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Husamah	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The qualitative data supporting this study consist of interview transcripts, observation notes, and school documentation. Due to participant confidentiality and school privacy considerations, the raw data are not publicly shared. Anonymized excerpts may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and with permission from the school.

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