

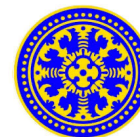
2024 Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) Conference, Canberra, Australia  
28 November 2024

# Enhancing Language-Culture and Economic Wellbeing of Minority Ethnolinguistic Groups in Indonesia

Zulfadli Abdul Aziz<sup>1</sup> and I Wayan Arka<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Australian National University, Australia and Udayana University, Indonesia



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Research Council**



**Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council**



**the  
endangered  
language  
fund**

# Outline of the talk

- Introduction
- Theoretical-conceptual Foundation
  - Linking language, culture, and economic well-being
- Case study: the Marori Project
  - Language-culture Documentation Research & community engagements for economic well-being
- Prospects and challenges
- Conclusion & final remarks

# Introduction and Context

## Aim of the talk:

- part of our long-term **language-culture documentation projects** in Indonesia
  - ✓ to bridge **language-culture well-being** with **economic well-being** in minority ethnolinguistic groups.



# Econ-linguistics & Eco-linguistics



- **Econ-linguistics: the intersection of linguistics and economics**

- Language may shape economic behaviour and decision-making, influencing trade, migration, and labour markets (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2020).
- Effect of cultural factors on economic wellbeing (Kearney, M.S and R Haskins 2020)
- Economic achievements are often reflected in linguistic practices, with language evolving in response to societal changes (Vassilenko et al., 2019).

Econlinguistics.org

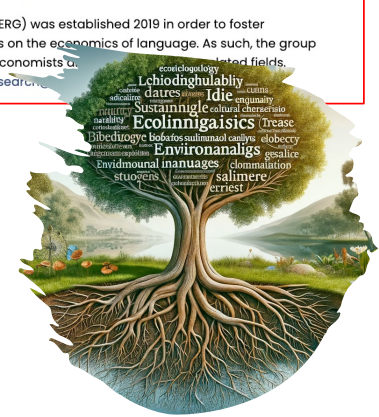
About Econlinguistics

Econlinguistics combines the fields of economics and linguistics. Using techniques from machine learning, natural language processing and econometrics, this emerging area of research is concerned with the economic impact of spoken and written language.

Economics is the study of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, which takes place in a complex system of verbal and written agreements. Econlinguistics aims at shedding light on the natural intersection of economics and linguistics. As such, econlinguistics is heavily concerned with the transmission of information between agents in an economic system.

Econlinguistics research group

The Econlinguistics Research Group (ERG) was established 2019 in order to foster interdisciplinary research with a focus on the economics of language. As such, the group consists of data scientists, financial economists etc. Please direct any inquires towards research@econlinguistics.org





# Econ-linguistics & Eco-linguistics



- **Eco-linguistics: the intersection of linguistics and ecological studies**

- It examines the relationship between **language and the ecological environment**, focusing on how language reflects and influences environmental issues and **how it is affected by ecological changes** (Haugen, 1972, Mühlhäusler, 1996, Grenoble, 2011, Chen, 2016, among others).
- It integrates insights from linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and cognitive studies, highlighting the bidirectional interactions between language and the environment (Minyar-Beloroucheva & Sergienko, 2024).

Econlinguistics.org

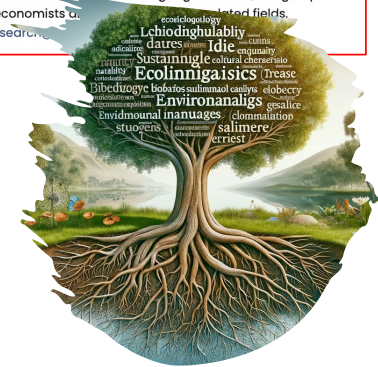
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Our case studies in Indonesia: *methods & approach*

- Understanding **language-culture and economic well-being** variables
- Mixed-methods approach:
  - **Ethnographic** methods based on **fieldwork experiences** in Indonesia: **Merauke, South Papua**, and Barrier Islands regions
  - **Questionnaires** from different regions across Indonesia.



The Mentawai Sikerei or Clan Head

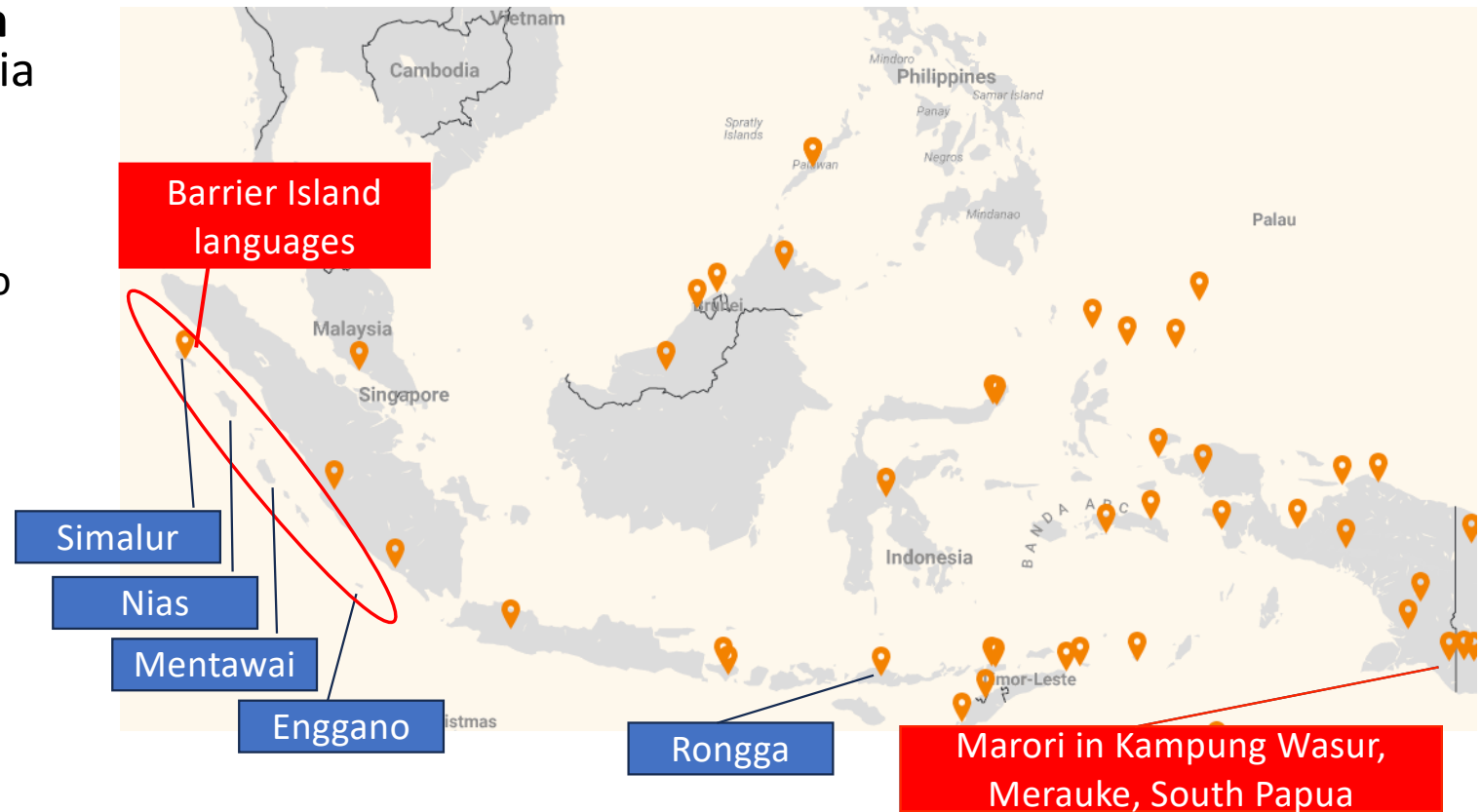


The Marori Dancer with his tifa /drum

# Some background in recent progress in language documentation in Indonesia

(Arka 2018, Florey & Himmelmann, 2010; Sawaki & Arka, 2018, among others)

- Over **35 documentation projects** across Indonesia funded by the ELDP, DoBes, AHRC & ARC, including:
  - Marori, Marori, Enggano & other Barrier Islands languages





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# The economic dimension of modernity:

Infrastructure developments & their unprecedented ecological changes have long-term negative impacts on the well-being of minority languages



- **Modern economy and modern education** (cf. language policy):
  - prospects of **employment** in modern **multilingual Indonesia**, with Indonesian (and English) highly instrumental to economic prosperity
- **Migration, cheap transportation, and new economic opportunities:**
  - **accelerated mobility** and **intensified inter-group contact** in (previously remote, inaccessible) areas of minority speech communities

Mopah Airport, Merauke, West Papua

4/12/24

Paradigm shifts in language and cultural studies

9

# Theoretical-conceptual Foundation: Linking Language, Culture, and Economic Well-being

- **Well-being is multidimensional**



## Security & Stability:

- **State of language & culture vitality**  
(of different degrees: vibrant, marginalised, endangered, moribund?)

## Social well-being (Mayhew 2023):

*A situation where **income levels** are high enough to cover basic needs, where there is no poverty, and where there is easy access to social, medical, and educational services.*

Are there cultural & linguistic practices that may serve as **economic capital**?

# Theoretical-conceptual Foundation: Linking Language, Culture, and Economic Well-being

## Comparative studies beyond Indonesia

- **Economic benefits of bilingualism**

- Findings from Mexico and other regions: how **bilingualism** and cultural retention improve **job prospects, wages, and community engagement** (Diego and Panu 2023, Saarikivi and Marten 2012).

- **Economic Benefits from Linguistic Identity**

- The Roswell Voice Project, Georgia (US): Linguistic identity served as an **economic asset**, leveraging **unique history to attract residents, businesses, and visitors** through a "glocalized" blend of cultural preservation and global economic engagement (Kretzschmar, Jr. 2016)

- **Benefits of Cultural Participation**

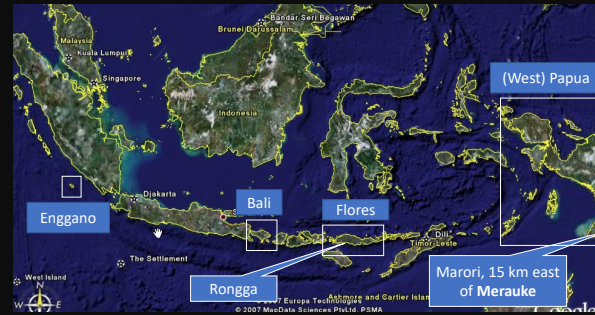
- How participation in traditional arts **bolsters cultural knowledge, identity, and connectedness** (Hinks 2012).
- Music, dance, theater, arts and crafts play an **incredibly important role** in Bali's tourism industry and are integral to its identity as a global cultural destination.





# Case Study: Marori, Merauke, South Papua Province

- ARC-funded SNG languages Project (2011-2015)
- ELDP Ethnobotany Documentation Project (2016-2017)
- On-going follow-up small-scale projects in collaboration with NGOs and the local government





## Econ-linguistics: 3-stage process of connecting linguistic-cultural capital for economic wellbeing

- **HOW** (in the context of **capacity building**):  
**language-culture wellbeing**  $\leftrightarrow$  **economic wellbeing**

**i. self-awareness/attention to culture-language maintenance**

- ii. capacity to undertake language-culture maintenance efforts/projects
- iii. economic/financial independence/wellbeing (at the individual and community levels)



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## Native Papuan Orchid Nursery:

### Connecting Entrepreneurship and local ethnobotany documentation

- *Pak Domi, a Marori speaker,  
with his native Papuan orchid  
nursery in Kampung Wasur*





# MAHUZE MANDIRI

## ‘Self-sufficient MAHUZE’: Eco-tourism

- **Mahuze**: one of the Marori clans
- **Mahuze Mandiri**: a local community-based NGO in Kampung Wasur, which runs **ecotourism and other related projects, directed by Mr Agustinus Mahuze**:
  - Incorporating culture and language documentation outcomes into the ecotourism initiative
- Programs of Mahuze Mandiri include
  - **recreation centre with swimming facility and walking tracks** featuring Musamus (termite mounds) and an **ethnobotanical garden**.



Agustinus Mahuze



# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



Stage for taking selfie photos, BIRAS Bathing Park, Wasur

# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



Mahuze Mandiri corner at the National Sport Week (or Pekan Olah Raga Nasional) Papua 2022



# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



Wasur Wallaby Sanctuary





# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



*BIRAS* Bathing Park, Wasur





# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



Modern Playground for children  
at BIRAS Bathing Park, Wasur





# Pictures showing Wasur's rich ecology and ecotourism-related activities



(Roadside) Stalls at BIRAS Bathing Park



# Eco-tourism: Community-based initiatives and engagements



Community meetings to identify needs and eco-tourism objects

# Eco-tourism: Community-based initiatives and engagements



Community involvements in the survey of eco-tourism objects





# Local Marori arts

In collaboration with NGOs and the local Gov't of Merauke

- Marori Cultural & music shows
- Arts exhibitions
- 2025 grants of IDR 500 million (or AUD 50,000) for the Marori Cultural Gallery



**WASUR JAZZ Festival**

**DUKUNG MUSIK LOKAL DAN PARIWISATA WASUR**

NIKMATI KONSER MUSIK DENGAN SOUND KONSER SERTA PANGGUNG DAN TATA CAHAYA YANG ELEGAN DAN INDAHNYA CAMPING DI ALAM KAMPUNG WASUR PADA MALAM HARI

**POOL STAGE TEATER WASUR KAMPUNG MERAUKE - PAPUA SELATAN**

OPEN GATE 15.00 - FINISH

SABTU - MINGGU

**7.8**

**DESEMBER 2024**

**WASUR JAZZ Festival 1st**

**10 GRUP JAZZ . KONTEMPORER MUSIK KOLABORASI MUSIK TRADITSIONAL MARORI MUSIK ESSAMBLE MUSISI JAZZ NASIONAL**

INFORMASI : 0822-3000-7827

POWERED BY : **TERUMBU KARANG** EVENT ORGANIZER



Creating cultural-linguistic resources  
for local economic development

*Prospect and challenges  
(beyond Merauke)*

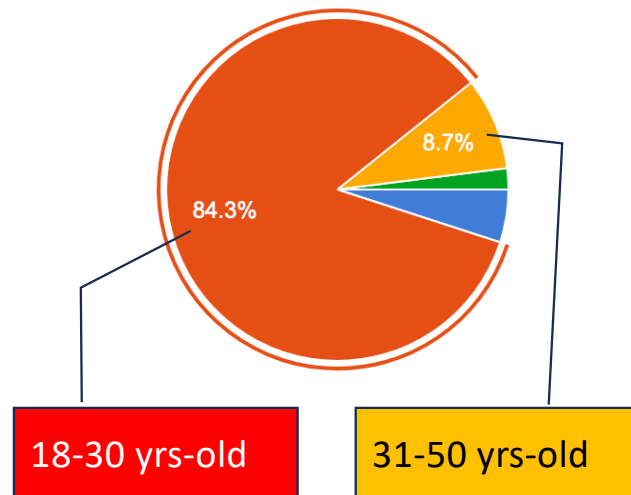
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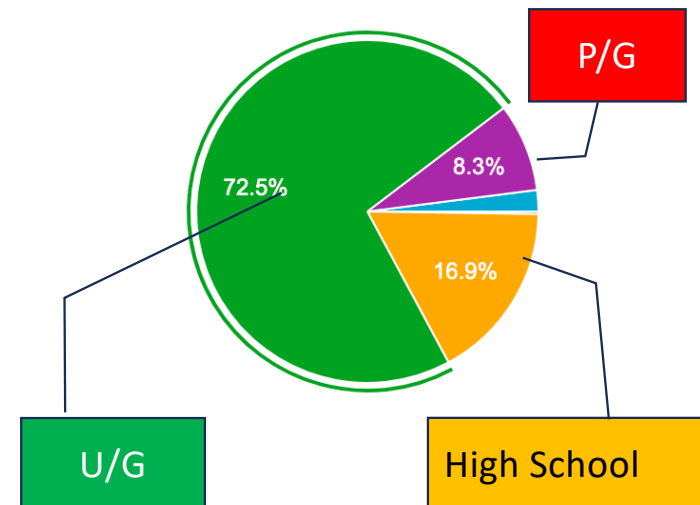
# Questionnaires: some background of the respondents

- Total: 405 respondents across Indonesia from different demographic groupings
- While not fully representative, the data provide insights into potential cultural-linguistic capital and the perceived priorities/needs for economic wellbeing.

Age groups:



Education:

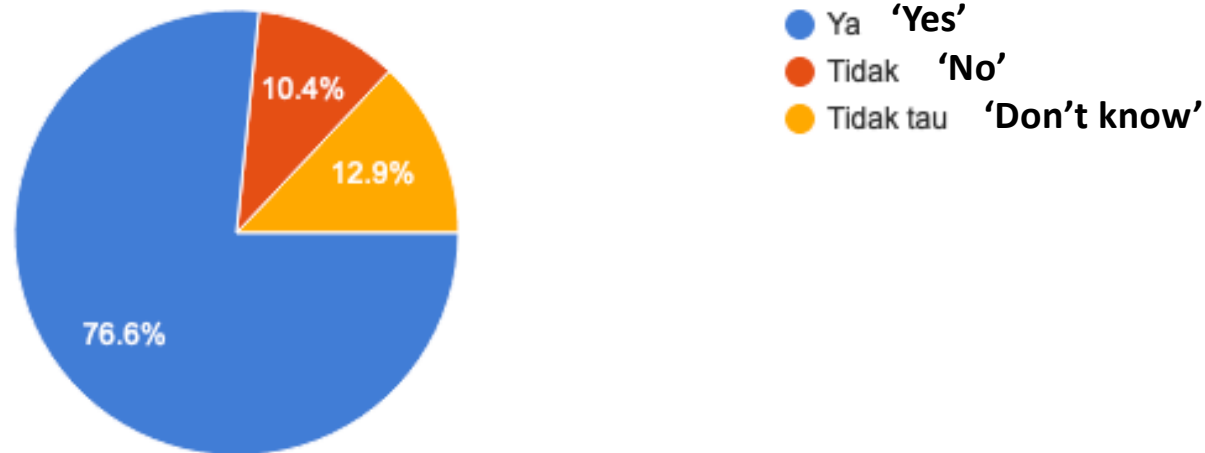




Findings:

## The external recognition of existing local culture as capital

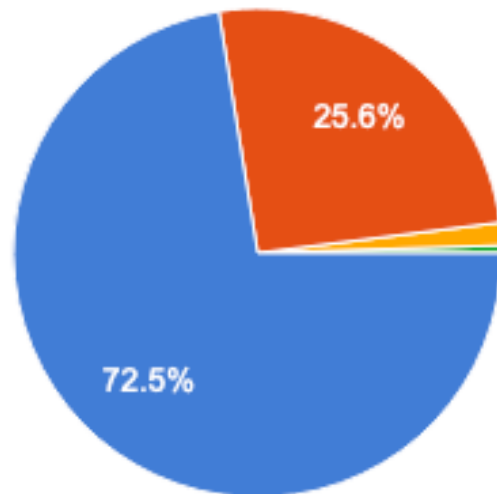
*Is your local culture (traditions, dances, crafts, languages) already well-developed, and could it gain greater national or international recognition?*



Findings:

## Connection of local culture preservation and economic capital

*How important do you consider preserving local culture and regional languages as economic assets?*



● Sangat penting 'very important'

● Penting 'important'

● Tidak terlalu penting 'not so important'

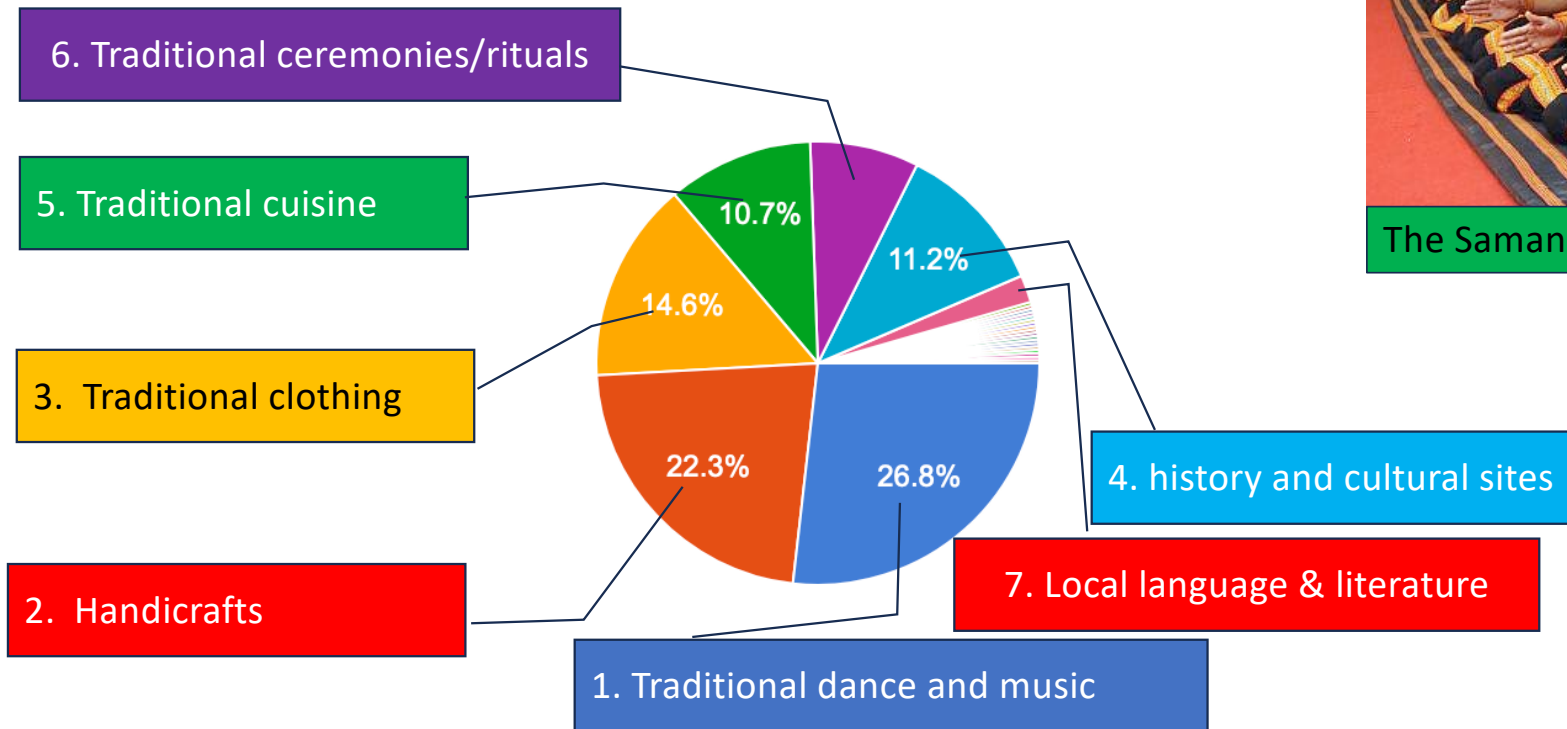
● Tidak penting sama sekali 'absolutely unimportant'



# Findings:

## The cultural asset with the greatest economic value

*Which aspects have the greatest potential to attract tourists or have economic value?*

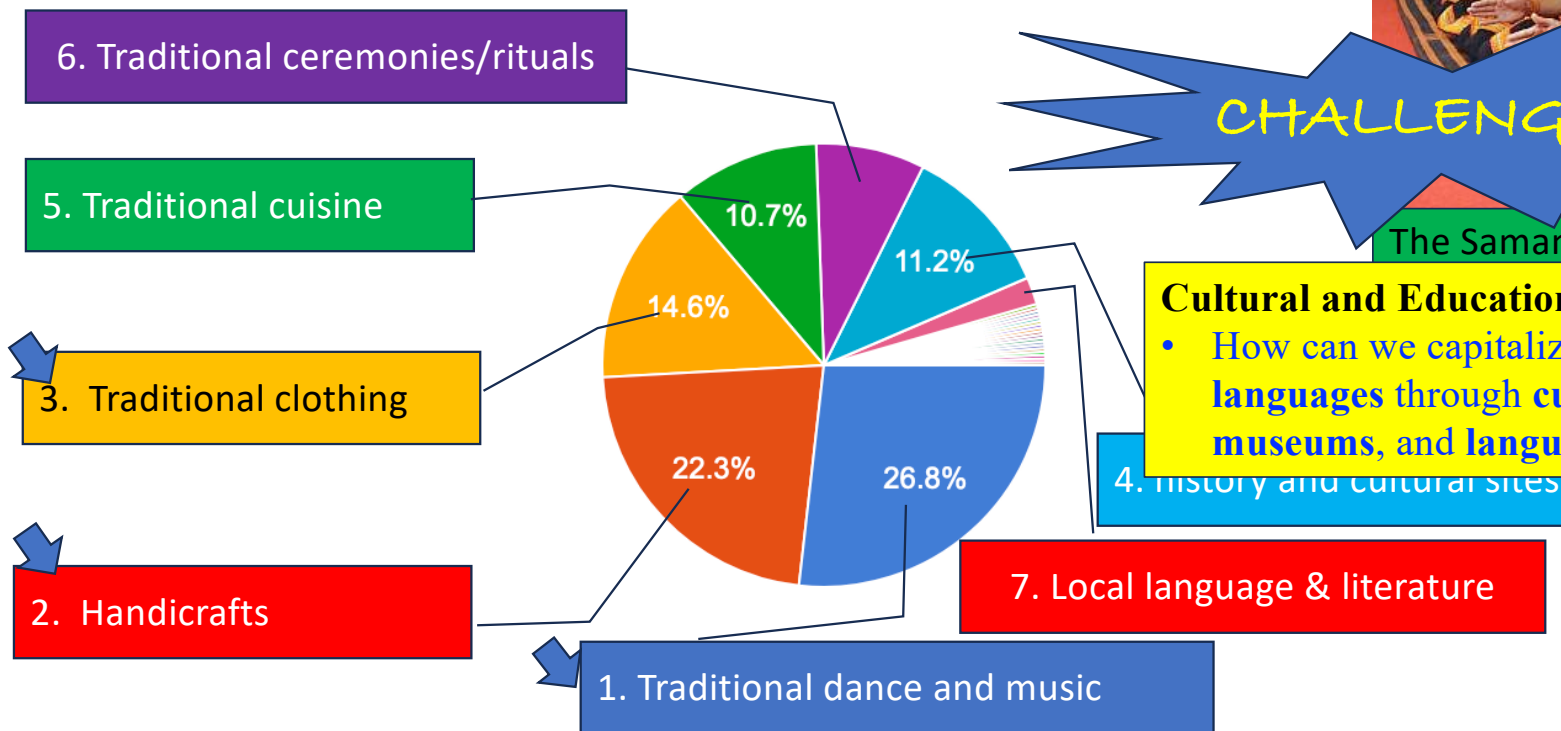


The Saman Dance from Aceh, Sumatra

# Findings:

## The cultural asset with the greatest economic value

*Which aspects have the greatest potential to attract tourists or have economic value?*



**CHALLENGES?**



The Saman Dance from Aceh, Sumatra

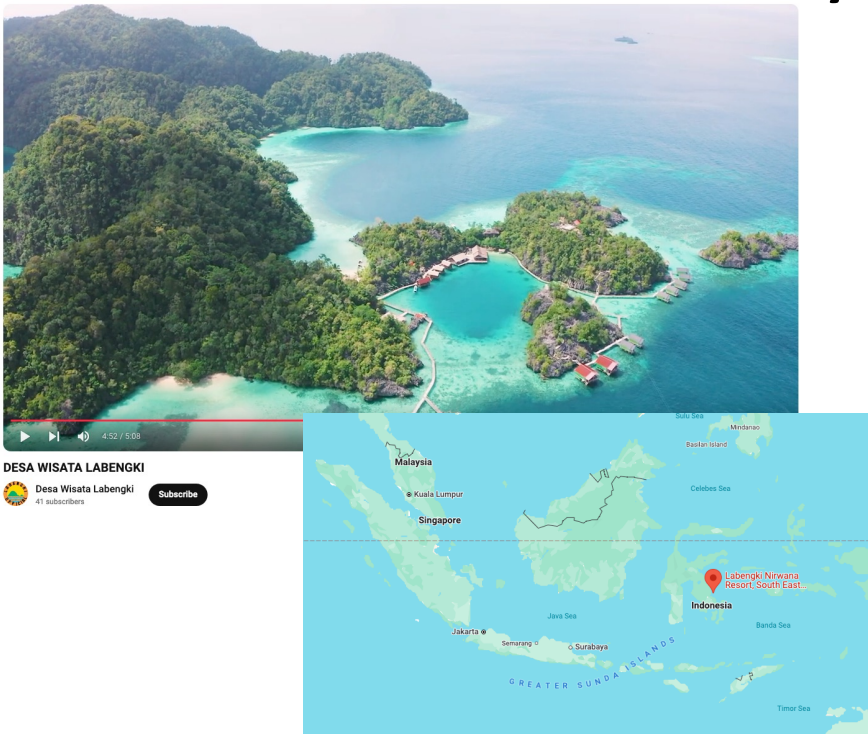
**Cultural and Educational Tourism:**

- How can we capitalize on the uniqueness of **local languages** through **cultural experiences, living museums, and language-themed** activities?



# Indonesian Village Tourism Competition: nature-based vs. culture-based, or mixed nature & culture

- 2024 village tourism competition organized by Indonesian **Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy**



# FINDINGS: Recommended priorities?

Do you have any other ideas or **recommendations regarding the development** of local culture and language to boost the local economy?

No.	Category	number of responses
1	Local capacity for cultural integration (e.g. Culture in Education, Training, and Forming Communities)	79
2	Local infrastructure (e.g. Improving/Building Facilities) for Tourism	67
3	More on Culture and Social Media Promotion in Digital Age	58
4	Holding Cultural Festivals and Exhibitions	48
5	More measures for Preserving Local Culture and Language	47
6	Culture-based small and middle-size businesses	40
		<b>339</b>



Mapping eco-tourism potential



Trans-Papua Road running through Wasur National Park, Merauke



# Prospects & Challenges

based on our field experience and Questionnaire data

- **Balancing** economic development vs. authenticity, not to dilute or commodify heritage.
  - **Heritage as marketable assets** as tourism:  
**Avoiding exploitation** or fostering negative sentiments like "selling your culture."
  - **Navigating global vs local dynamics** demands while preserving unique local identities.
- **Engaging diverse stakeholders:** Aligning academic-linguistic goals vs. economic objectives
- **Sustainability** in the long term:
  - how **not to rely heavily** on external resources
  - the indispensable role of **consistent government (or other external) support** to ensure the resilience of preservation initiatives.

# Concluding remarks

- Language-culture well-being and economic well-being are interconnected and worth exploring as a theme of both academic and practical significance, particularly for ethnolinguistic minorities.
  - Despite their relevance, this connection remains underexplored in language-culture documentation projects in Indonesia and beyond.
  - The Marori community initiatives as a follow-up of the Marori Project Documentation, Merauke, South Papua may serve as a good model
- Key challenges include **balancing** economic growth with cultural authenticity, **aligning diverse stakeholder goals**, **monetizing heritage responsibly**, **navigating global-local dynamics**, and ensuring **long-term sustainability** through government support.



Takwerte

Terima kasih

Thank  
you

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