



The Influence of Javanese Language Habits on Primary Students' Early Reading Ability: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This systematic literature review investigates how Javanese language habits shape the early reading abilities of elementary school students. The study is motivated by the persistent low level of reading literacy in Indonesian primary schools and the strategic role of mother tongue use, especially Javanese, in building foundational literacy. Using the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, articles were searched in Google Scholar, GARUDA, DOAJ, ERIC, and nationally accredited journals (with emphasis on Sinta 1 and Sinta 2), covering publications from 2000–2025 with a focus on 2015–2025. Twenty eligible studies were synthesized through narrative and thematic analysis. The review reveals that frequent use of Javanese at home and school is consistently associated with better Javanese language skills, including understanding and reading simple texts. Javanese language habits support early reading by enriching vocabulary, strengthening phonological awareness, and increasing students' affective engagement with local language texts. Studies on media such as flashcards, word cards, and Karawa (Karambol Aksara Jawa) show that integrating culturally relevant materials can significantly improve beginning reading performance. However, most available evidence is descriptive or correlational, with varied instruments and limited standardization, so causal claims remain tentative. The findings highlight the need for deliberately designed school and family programs that integrate Javanese language use with structured early reading activities within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, as well as future quasi-experimental and mixed-methods research with stronger methodological rigor.

Keywords: *Javanese Language Habits; Early Reading; Elementary School; Mother Tongue; Systematic Literature Review*

Introduction

Low reading literacy among Indonesian students remains one of the central challenges in the national education system. Recent studies show that many primary school pupils have not yet reached a level of reading proficiency sufficient to support learning across subjects, both at the literal and inferential levels (Rakhmawati & Mustadi, 2022; Minayugie & Syahri, 2020). Evidence from various elementary schools' points to limited literacy activities, a narrow range of reading materials, and the absence of a strong reading culture in both school and home environments (Rahayu & Mustadi, 2022; Hindriana, 2025).

At the primary level, early reading ability plays a strategic role because it becomes the foundation for subsequent literacy development. Various studies reveal that pupils in the early grades still struggle to recognize letters, blend syllables, read simple words and sentences, and comprehend short texts (Pramesti, 2018; Fatonah, Damaianti, & Syaodih, 2025). These difficulties affect not only academic achievement but also students' self-confidence and their active participation in classroom learning (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014). Strengthening early reading skills therefore needs to be treated as a key priority, especially in the lower grades of primary school.

A number of studies emphasize the importance of early reading instruction that employs media, strategies, and language environments close to children's daily lives. The use of picture word cards, letter cards, and game-based reading methods has been found effective in improving beginning reading skills while also increasing students' motivation (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014; Assubaidi, 2023). Conversely, analyses of the obstacles to early reading suggest that lack of support for literacy at home, insufficient variety of texts, and the low intensity of reading practice are among the main factors undermining children's reading development (Pramesti, 2018; Fatonah, Damaianti, & Syaodih, 2025). These findings indicate that early reading ability is inseparable from language and literacy habits that are built continuously in children's daily lives.

In the linguistic context, Indonesia is known as a multilingual country with hundreds of local languages spoken in communities. Numerous studies affirm that the first language or mother tongue plays a crucial role as a bridge for children to enter the world of literacy; the use of a language that is familiar to children can reduce cognitive load, strengthen comprehension, and foster a sense of security in the learning process (Ryan & Insani, 2025; Diani, 2022). The use of the mother tongue as a medium of communication and instruction in early primary grades has been shown to contribute positively to the development of reading skills, because children can interpret texts and instructions on the basis of prior language experiences (Ryan & Insani, 2025).

Javanese is one of the local languages with the largest number of speakers in Indonesia and holds an important position as a carrier of values, norms, and cultural identity. In many regions, Javanese is taught as a local content subject in primary schools, not only to preserve the language but also to instill politeness, speech levels and social character (Suwarna, 2016; Wibawa, 2016). However, several studies show a decline in mastery of refined speech levels, decreasing attention to appropriate forms of address, and reduced use of standard Javanese in everyday interactions among young generations (Supardo, 2016; Soekirnin, 2016). This situation indicates that the sustainability of Javanese is strongly related to Javanese language habits built in families, schools, and the wider community.

In classroom practice, the implementation of Javanese as a local content subject faces its own dynamics. Ryan and Insani (2025) found that the Merdeka Curriculum actually provides flexible space for schools to integrate Javanese into contextual learning. However, implementation is often constrained by teachers' competence, the availability of teaching materials that match pupils' developmental levels, and students' interest in Javanese content. At the same time, digitalization and the flow of global culture make children increasingly familiar with Indonesian and foreign languages, while the use of Javanese in daily communication tends to shrink (Dian, 2025; Hindriana, 2025). This situation calls for more deliberate and meaningful strengthening of Javanese language habits, including in relation to early reading ability.

Several studies demonstrate that habituating the use of the first language in classroom interaction can contribute to better conceptual understanding and learning outcomes because students feel closer to the language used (Ryan & Insani, 2025; Diani, 2022). In the case of Javanese, intensive exposure through greetings, classroom instructions, and the use of simple Javanese texts has the potential to enrich vocabulary, strengthen phonological awareness, and facilitate children's entry into the stage of early reading in that language. At the same time, the development of teaching materials and literacy media relevant to local culture—such as folktales, children's songs, and everyday texts in Javanese—supports

students' emotional and cognitive engagement in reading activities (Susilowati & Sukoyo, 2025; Soekirnin, 2016).

Nevertheless, empirical evidence that explicitly explores the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability among primary school students is still scattered across separate studies. Some works focus on teaching strategies for Javanese as a second language (Suwarna, 2016), others examine sociolinguistic factors such as speech levels (Wibawa, 2016), and others highlight early reading dynamics in Indonesian language lessons (Pramesti, 2018; Fatonah, Damaianti, & Syaodih, 2025). To date, there has been no systematic synthesis of these findings to answer the question: to what extent can Javanese language habits influence primary school students' early reading ability?

Based on this gap, the present article is structured as a systematic literature review entitled "The Influence of Javanese Language Habits on Primary Students' Early Reading Ability: A Systematic Literature Review." Specifically, it aims: (1) to identify forms of Javanese language habits that emerge in family and school settings as reported in previous studies; (2) to analyze the relationship between Javanese language habits and primary students' early reading ability; and (3) to formulate practical implications for the development of Javanese language teaching and the strengthening of early reading literacy within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Research Questions and Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the influence of Javanese language habits on primary school students' early reading ability through a systematic literature review. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following question: What forms of Javanese language habits appear in pupils' daily lives at home and at school; to what extent are these habits related to early reading ability; and how can the findings be interpreted in the context of strengthening basic literacy in primary schools?

Theoretically, this review aims to enrich the body of knowledge on the role of local languages—particularly Javanese—in the development of early reading literacy. It is expected to provide a more comprehensive conceptual picture of how the mother tongue or first language contributes to the development of phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and text comprehension at the initial stage of reading. In doing so, the review seeks to strengthen language learning theories that position local languages not merely as local content, but as important media for building children's literacy foundations.

Practically, the study aims to offer relevant recommendations for primary school teachers, curriculum developers, and local education policymakers on how to use Javanese language habits as pedagogical resources to support early reading ability. By summarising forms of Javanese language habits that have been shown to support literacy, the review is expected to provide concrete examples of how language interactions at home and at school can be steered towards enriching pupils' reading experiences. The findings are also expected to help schools design Javanese and early Indonesian language instruction that is more sensitive to students' linguistic backgrounds, in line with the Merdeka Curriculum and local cultural preservation.

Methodologically, this study seeks to present a model of systematic literature review on regional language habits and early reading ability that can serve as a reference for future research. Through explicit procedures for selection, quality appraisal, and synthesis of indexed scholarly articles, the review aims to show how literature review approaches can be used to integrate research findings that were previously fragmented. This approach is expected to open up opportunities for subsequent empirical studies—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods—that more directly test the influence of Javanese language habits on early reading ability in real classroom contexts.

Method

Review Design

This article is a systematic literature review on the influence of Javanese language habits on primary school students' early reading ability. The design was chosen because the main aim is to map existing empirical and conceptual evidence in a structured way and to synthesise it to answer the research questions and objectives. This approach makes it possible to identify patterns in the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability, as well as to highlight gaps in the current research.

Reporting Framework

The entire review process follows the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines, which cover the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The use of PRISMA is intended to ensure that the article selection process is transparent, systematic, and replicable. A PRISMA flow diagram is used to report the number of articles at each stage (initial search results, articles excluded based on title/abstract, articles excluded after full-text screening, and the final set of articles included in the synthesis).

Data Sources and Databases

Literature searches were conducted in several databases and journal portals, namely: Google Scholar, GARUDA, DOAJ, ERIC, and nationally accredited journal portals indexed in Sinta, with emphasis on Sinta 1 and Sinta 2 journals. Additional searches in Scopus were conducted on a supplementary basis (where access was available) to capture international articles relevant to mother tongue use, language habits, and emergent literacy. This combination of international and national databases was chosen to capture research that is methodologically strong and contextually relevant to Indonesian primary education.

Search Strategy

The search strategy used bilingual (Indonesian and English) keywords combined with Boolean operators. Examples of Indonesian search strings include: 'kebiasaan berbahasa Jawa', 'penggunaan bahasa Jawa', or 'bahasa ibu' combined with 'membaca awal', 'membaca permulaan', or 'literasi awal', and with 'sekolah dasar', 'SD', or 'madrasah ibtidaiyah'. Additional terms such as 'hasil belajar bahasa Jawa', 'kemampuan membaca bahasa Jawa', and 'muatan lokal bahasa Jawa' were also used. English search strings included combinations of 'Javanese language use', 'mother tongue', or 'first language' with 'early reading', 'beginning reading', or 'emergent literacy', along with 'primary school', 'elementary school', 'reading achievement', 'local language literacy', and 'Indonesian primary students'.

The publication window was set from 2000 to 2025, with particular emphasis on articles published between 2015 and 2025 in order to capture recent evidence relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum and current literacy policy. All search strings, search dates, numbers of initial hits per database, and subsequent filtering steps were documented to ensure traceability.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To keep the review focused, inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined a priori. The inclusion criteria comprised: (a) empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods), research and development, classroom action research, or literature reviews that explicitly discuss Javanese language habits, Javanese language use, or mother tongue use relevant to Javanese; and (b) studies that measure or describe early reading ability, beginning reading, or emergent literacy among primary school students. Research participants had to be pupils in primary schools or madrasah ibtidaiyah. Articles had to be

written in Indonesian or English, published in nationally accredited (Sinta, preferably Sinta 1 or 2) or reputable international journals, available in full text, and report outcomes directly related to early reading ability or closely related language learning outcomes.

The exclusion criteria ruled out: (a) studies that only discuss Javanese as an object of pure linguistics, literature, or culture without a clear link to pupils' language habits and early reading ability; (b) studies at levels other than primary education (e.g., lower secondary, upper secondary, or higher education) that do not provide explicit relevance to primary-aged children; (c) non-scholarly texts such as opinion pieces, popular essays, policy reports, blogs, or news items; and (d) articles for which full texts were unavailable, research methods were unclear, or reading-related outcomes were not reported.

Selection Procedure (PRISMA)

The literature selection procedure followed PRISMA stages. First, at the identification stage, all search results from the various databases were exported to a spreadsheet containing article titles, authors, publication year, journal names, short abstracts, and DOIs or URLs. Duplicate records were removed. Second, at the title and abstract screening stage, two reviewers independently assessed each record against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles that clearly did not meet the criteria (for example, not about primary school, not addressing language habits, or unrelated to early reading) were excluded. Disagreements were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached.

Third, during eligibility assessment, the remaining articles were read in full. At this stage the reviewers verified whether each article truly examined Javanese language habits (or relevant mother tongue use) and early reading ability among primary school students. Articles that did not meet the domain focus—for instance those addressing achievement in mathematics without a language component, or attitudes toward culture without literacy elements—were excluded, and the reasons for exclusion were recorded. Finally, in the inclusion stage, articles that satisfied all criteria were subjected to data extraction and synthesis. A PRISMA diagram was then prepared to show the number of articles at each stage and the main reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage.

Data Extraction

Data extraction was conducted using a structured extraction form. For each article, the following information was recorded: publication details (authors, year, title, journal, Sinta ranking or other index); research context and setting (location, type of school, grade level); research design (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, descriptive, action research, qualitative); participant characteristics (sample size, grade/age range, language background); operational definitions and indicators of Javanese language habits or mother tongue use (such as frequency of Javanese use at home, at school, with peers, or in instruction); operational definitions and indicators of early reading ability (e.g., letter and syllable recognition, reading speed and accuracy, comprehension of simple texts, reading test scores); instruments used to measure language habits and reading ability (questionnaires, interviews, reading tests, observations, documentation); data analysis techniques (descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, group comparison tests, thematic qualitative analysis, and so on); key findings on the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability; reported limitations; and relevant methodological quality notes (validity, reliability, potential bias).

Quality Appraisal

Quality appraisal was conducted to weigh the methodological strengths and weaknesses of each study rather than to exclude articles mechanically. Checklists were adapted to the type of design. For non-randomised quantitative studies (such as ex post facto, correlational, quasi-experimental designs), appraisal focused on clarity of aims, sample adequacy, measurement validity, data collection procedures, and appropriateness of analysis. For qualitative studies, appraised aspects included contextual clarity,

sampling strategy, depth of data collection, triangulation, and researcher reflexivity. Appraisal results were summarised in tabular form and referred to when interpreting the weight and consistency of evidence across studies.

Data Synthesis

Data were synthesised narratively and thematically. Included articles were clustered by: (a) forms and contexts of Javanese language habits (e.g., language use at home, in classrooms, in formal and informal activities, in Javanese local content subjects, or integrated with other subjects); (b) characteristics and profiles of early reading ability (difficulty level, text types, indicators measured, achievement levels); (c) patterns of relationship or influence between Javanese language habits and early reading ability (positive relationships, non-significant relationships, or mixed findings); and (d) moderating or mediating factors (family support, instructional quality, availability of teaching materials, socio-economic background).

Within each cluster, findings from different studies were compared and synthesised to identify consistency, variation, and complementary explanations. Direction and magnitude of effects were noted briefly where quantitative data were available. However, given the diversity of designs and instruments, the primary focus of the synthesis remained narrative rather than meta-analytic.

Scope and Justification of the Topic

The scope of the review was limited to studies that explicitly examined Javanese language habits and early reading ability among primary school students, whether in Javanese language lessons, Indonesian language lessons, or broader literacy programmes, as long as a clear relationship existed between the two. This focus aligns with the study's aim to understand Javanese language habits as an important factor in building the foundations of early reading literacy. At the same time, the topic is consistent with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasises the strengthening of basic literacy while preserving local languages and cultures. Thus, this systematic review is expected to provide a stronger conceptual and empirical basis for designing instructional strategies and school policies that integrate Javanese language preservation with the development of students' early reading abilities.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the main patterns that emerged from the systematic review of 20 articles on Javanese language habits, mother tongue use, and early reading ability among primary school students. To maintain transparency and traceability, the review was first summarised in a journal matrix containing each study's focus, context, design and instruments, indicators of language habits, indicators of early reading ability, main findings, and analytical notes on quality and limitations. The thematic discussion that follows is based on this matrix.

Overall Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

The reviewed studies do not consist solely of descriptive qualitative research; they employ a wide range of designs, including correlational studies, classroom action research, research and development (R&D), quasi-experiments, and systematic literature reviews. For example, correlational research on Javanese language preservation measures the relationship between the intensity of Javanese use at home and at school and pupils' Javanese language skills (Rahman et al., 2022). Several classroom action studies and media development projects focus on practical efforts to improve beginning reading through concrete media such as flashcards, word cards, and Javanese script games in lower primary classes (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014; Wahyuni, 2020; Azzahra & Sukardi, 2023; Ningsih et al., 2025).

In addition, there are conceptual and theoretical articles that map sociolinguistic factors in teaching Javanese speech levels (Wibawa, 1990) and outline strategies for teaching Javanese as a second language, emphasising progression from oral to written language (Suwarna, 1997). Literature reviews on cultural perspectives in elementary education position local languages as integral to the formation of cultural identity and the strengthening of literacy (Fitriadi et al., 2024). At the policy level, studies on the implementation of Javanese local content within the Merdeka Curriculum show how curricular flexibility can be used to revitalise Javanese in schools, although teacher competence and facilities remain substantial challenges (Ryan & Insani, 2025).

Taken together, the available evidence is dispersed: some studies explicitly examine the relationship between Javanese language habits and language skills, others focus on improving beginning reading through media, and still others highlight cultural and policy contexts. Thus, relatively few studies have specifically tested the influence of Javanese language habits on standardised measures of early reading ability. Nevertheless, the body of literature offers a strong theoretical and empirical basis for viewing the two as closely related variables.

Javanese Language Habits at Home and School

Several articles treat Javanese language habits as a key variable in the development of pupils' language competence. Correlational research on Javanese preservation in primary schools shows that the intensity of Javanese use in daily communication at home, school, and in the community is positively and significantly associated with Javanese language skills, including comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing (Rahman et al., 2022). Follow-up analyses comparing groups of pupils based on the strength of their Javanese language habits at home confirm that those who use Javanese more frequently in the family context have better comprehension and reading scores in Javanese than those who predominantly use Indonesian (Rahman et al., 2022).

Theoretically, this aligns with sociolinguistic analyses which emphasise that mastery of Javanese speech levels and varieties depends heavily on the strength of language exposure in everyday speech communities; when Javanese language habits weaken, the ability to understand Javanese nuances, including in written texts, also declines (Wibawa, 1990). Similarly, strategies for teaching Javanese as a second language stress that instruction is more effective when it begins with meaningful oral communication before pupils are confronted with complex written texts (Suwarna, 1997).

At the school level, research on ethno-social learning models and cultural perspectives in education indicates that integrating local culture—including the use of local languages in class—strengthens identity, engagement, and the relevance of learning experiences for primary students (Hamimah et al., 2022; Fitriadi et al., 2024). The implementation of Javanese local content within the Merdeka Curriculum provides room for schools to intentionally build Javanese language habits through greetings, classroom routines, literacy activities, and the use of local texts, although teacher competence and resource constraints remain significant obstacles (Ryan & Insani, 2025). Overall, these findings suggest that Javanese language habits are not merely cultural phenomena but also part of the learning environment that shapes pupils' readiness and experiences when entering early reading.

Profiles of Early Reading Ability and Learning Outcomes

The reviewed literature shows that early reading ability remains a serious concern in primary schools. Classroom action research with first graders reveals that, prior to intervention, many pupils struggle to recognise letters, blend syllables, and read simple words accurately and fluently (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014). After systematic use of flashcards over several instructional cycles, early reading scores improve significantly in terms of both accuracy and fluency (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014). Similar results are reported in thematic learning with second graders, where flashcards help pupils focus, participate

actively, and understand vocabulary and simple sentence structures in the theme being studied (Wahyuni, 2020).

A systematic review of word card media confirms that across multiple studies, planned use of word cards in oral reading and reading comprehension activities consistently increases pupils' speed, accuracy, and confidence in reading (Ningsih et al., 2025). In the Javanese context, the development of Karawa media (Javanese script carrom) paired with reading cards indicates that pupils become more skilled at reading Nglegena Javanese script and more motivated to participate in script lessons (Azzahra & Sukardi, 2023).

Text quality is another important issue. Readability analyses of Javanese teaching materials for primary schools using the Fry graph and cloze technique show that some texts are above the target grade's reading level, potentially hindering comprehension (Maruti, 2025). This suggests that reading failures are not always due to pupils' weaknesses but may also reflect mismatches between text difficulty and readers' early reading skills. Conversely, pre-reading techniques such as book browsing help pupils build predictions, recognise key words, and develop motivation before reading full texts (Iswara, 2014).

In general, these findings indicate that early reading ability can be improved through a combination of appropriate text selection (with suitable readability levels), the use of concrete and engaging media, and pre-reading strategies that prepare pupils cognitively and affectively. For the purposes of this article, these approaches provide practical clues for integrating Javanese language habits into early reading interventions.

Relationship between Javanese Language Habits and Early Reading Ability

When findings on Javanese language habits and early reading ability are viewed together, a coherent pattern emerges. Correlational research on Javanese language preservation indicates that higher intensity of Javanese use at home and school is associated with better Javanese language skills, including reading simple texts (Rahman et al., 2022). Groups of pupils with strong Javanese language habits outperform those who predominantly use Indonesian at home in comprehension and reading scores for Javanese texts (Rahman et al., 2022).

Theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics and Javanese language pedagogy reinforce this pattern. Consistent exposure to Javanese in daily speech is seen as forming a linguistic capital that underpins vocabulary knowledge, sentence structure, and speech level norms, all of which are reflected in pupils' ability to read and interpret Javanese texts (Wibawa, 1990; Suwarna, 1997). In this view, Javanese language habits form a linguistic foundation that facilitates decoding and comprehension when pupils encounter written Javanese.

Although most interventions with word cards and flashcards focus on Indonesian, the principle remains clear: repeated exposure to particular words in enjoyable contexts supports gains in reading ability (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014; Wahyuni, 2020; Ningsih et al., 2025). Transposed into the Javanese context, everyday oral use of Javanese can be viewed as vocabulary training that enriches children's mental representations of Javanese words, making the transition to written forms easier. Moreover, research on hypnoteaching in Javanese lessons shows that when classroom atmospheres are comfortable and motivating, pupils are more willing to read and write in Javanese and more persistent in listening to and repeating simple texts (Susilowati & Sukoyo, 2025). Thus, the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability can be understood as a combination of language exposure (input), cognitive practice (reading and comprehension), and affective conditions (motivation and positive attitudes toward the language).

Methodological Challenges and Limitations of the Evidence

Despite encouraging patterns, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, there are still relatively few studies that deliberately design quantitative approaches to test the influence of Javanese language habits on early reading ability using pre–post measurements or robust group comparisons. Correlational studies demonstrate significant relationships but are insufficient for drawing firm causal conclusions (Rahman et al., 2022).

Second, instruments used to measure Javanese language habits and early reading ability are diverse and not always described in detail. Many studies mention questionnaires, language skill tests, or beginning reading tests, but do not provide full information on validity and reliability. A similar situation appears in research on learning media, where improvements are often reported in terms of average scores or percentages of mastery without clear rubrics or detailed indicators of reading ability (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014; Wahyuni, 2020; Azzahra & Sukardi, 2023).

Third, many articles that discuss the role of local language and culture in education focus on identity, character, and engagement rather than directly measuring impacts on early reading ability in the local language (Hamimah et al., 2022; Fitriadi et al., 2024). Yet, for the purposes of this review, evidence that directly links Javanese language habits to indicators such as fluency, accuracy, and comprehension of Javanese texts is particularly critical.

Fourth, the contexts of the reviewed studies tend to be localised in specific schools or regions, making generalisation to other settings cautious. Case studies on Javanese local content in rural schools provide rich contextual insights but may not fully represent conditions in urban schools with more heterogeneous linguistic profiles (Ryan & Insani, 2025). These limitations explain why the findings of this systematic review are best understood as mapping patterns and potentials rather than establishing definitive causal claims.

Implications for Javanese Language Teaching and Early Reading Literacy

The synthesis yields several important implications. First, strengthening Javanese language habits should be designed consciously as part of literacy ecosystems in schools and families. Successful Javanese preservation programmes tend to combine use of Javanese in everyday interaction, extracurricular activities, and formal instruction so that pupils receive rich and consistent language exposure (Rahman et al., 2022). Within the Merdeka Curriculum, schools can develop micro-curricula that position oral and written Javanese activities as a core part of learning sequences rather than merely as add-ons.

Second, early reading interventions in Javanese can draw on evidence-based media and strategies developed for beginning reading more broadly. Word cards, flashcards, and script games such as *Karawa* have been shown to improve early reading skills in various contexts (Rahman & Haryanto, 2014; Wahyuni, 2020; Ningsih et al., 2025; Azzahra & Sukardi, 2023). Adapting these media to Javanese—through vocabulary cards, syllable cards, or Javanese script cards—can help bridge oral Javanese language habits and Javanese reading ability.

Third, the selection and development of Javanese reading texts must take account of appropriate readability levels. Evidence shows that some Javanese texts in primary textbooks are too difficult for the intended grade level (Maruti, 2025). Teachers and material developers therefore need to ensure that sentence structures, text length, and vocabulary loads are aligned with pupils' early reading skills while still reflecting cultural richness and local values.

Fourth, teachers need capacity-building and resources to integrate Javanese language habits and early reading literacy effectively. Local culture-based models and ethno-social learning emphasise the

teacher's role in designing activities that combine language, culture, and children's social experiences (Hamimah et al., 2022). Training on how to foster Javanese language habits, use reading media, and assess early reading ability will help teachers apply the findings of this review in daily practice.

Fifth, from a research perspective, the review indicates the need for follow-up studies using quasi-experimental or controlled designs that explicitly test the influence of Javanese language habits on early reading ability through standardised instruments and rigorous analytic procedures. Such studies will strengthen the empirical basis for policies and programmes that aim to preserve Javanese while improving early literacy outcomes.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Javanese language habits have the potential to be an important asset in building the foundation of early reading literacy among primary school students. Realising this potential, however, requires thoughtful pedagogical planning, consistent policy support, and methodologically robust research so that the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability can be better understood and optimally utilised.

Conclusion

This systematic review shows that Javanese language habits have strong potential to support primary school students' early reading ability. Regular exposure to Javanese at home and at school enriches vocabulary, strengthens phonological awareness, and facilitates pupils' initial encounters with simple Javanese texts. In other words, Javanese language habits can serve as an important resource for building the foundations of early literacy while maintaining children's connection with their local language and culture.

At the same time, empirical evidence that rigorously and directly tests the influence of Javanese language habits on standardised early reading scores remains limited. Existing studies are largely descriptive or correlational and often rely on non-standardised instruments. Consequently, there is a need to develop micro-curricula that integrate Javanese language habits with early reading activities, construct more robust assessment instruments, strengthen teachers' capacity, and conduct further research using stronger designs. Through such efforts, the relationship between Javanese language habits and early reading ability can be demonstrated more convincingly and harnessed more effectively in classroom practice.

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