

# Utilization of the Bongal Site for Learning Indonesian Language History: An Archaeoanthropological Study

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**Abstract**—This research stems from dissatisfaction with how the history of the Indonesian language is taught in universities, which cannot explore historical sources relevant to the language. Therefore, this paper aims to identify archaeological evidence at the Bongal Site, Jagojago Village, Central Tapanuli Regency, which can be used as a new resource for learning the history of the Indonesian language. This research applies an archaeoanthropological approach, with data collection including observation of archaeological findings, interviews with residents, and review of related literature. The discovery of tin inscriptions and wooden boards inscribed with Old Malay script at the Bongal Site shows that this site has essential values related to the history of the Old Malay language, which can be utilized as more sophisticated learning materials in universities. The uniqueness of this site also lies in the older age of its inscriptions compared to the epigraphy of tombstones and Tamil inscriptions at the Old Lobu Site, Barus. In addition, this research proposes using this historical site in a web-based learning model, which will facilitate the learning process and increase accessibility. Thus, the results of this research offer a new approach to developing the learning of the history of the Indonesian language that is more innovative, relevant, and connected to local historical heritage.

**Index Terms**—archaeoanthropological study, Bongal site, Indonesian language history

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian citizens are proud that the Indonesian language has been recognized as an official language of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) since November 20, 2023, at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, France. As a result, Indonesian became the 10<sup>th</sup> official language acknowledged by the UNESCO General Assembly (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2023: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023), followed by English, Arabic, Mandarin, French, Spanish, Russian, Hindi, Italian, and Portuguese. Of course, in addition to being one of the official languages of UNESCO, Indonesian is the official language of Indonesia and is widely

spoken throughout Southeast Asia in places such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam. Furthermore, there are other small Indonesian-speaking communities outside Southeast Asia in the Netherlands and Suriname. In the local context, Indonesian is understood as a regional language that is developed and enriched in the development of Indonesia.

Indonesian is a unifying language for Indonesians and is used in as many as 718 regional languages in Indonesia, 90% of which are spread across eastern Indonesia. Papua has 428 languages, Maluku is home to 80 languages, East Nusa Tenggara has 72 languages, and Sulawesi has 62 languages (Delima et al., 2024). Due to the many languages, Indonesia is the second largest country after Papua New Guinea, with the most significant number of regional languages. Indeed, Indonesian has a long history of policy and power (Andrian, 2020). Indonesian moves as an entity that is contested in the field of power. Policy forms a system formed on the authority of something to determine, rule, represent, and manage a matter through the Indonesian language field.

Malay gave birth to the Indonesian language, which is still used throughout the Indonesian archipelago as a unifying language today (Mamonto, 2023). Mamonto also claims that, influenced by the emergence of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, the development of the Indonesian language began with the maritime trade of Nusantara traders in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This development continued until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Islamic kingdoms emerged, and European imperialists began arriving in the archipelago. During that period, Malay was used as the language of trade, politics, and cultural instruction.

Today's Indonesian language is a symbol of national unity and integrity (Rabiah, 2013). As voiced by Indonesian youth in the declaration of the Youth Pledge on October 28, 1928, the Indonesian language and nationalism are two things that cannot be separated from one another. It also plays an important role in developing education, national culture, and science and technology (Boxtel et al., 2016; Kertiasih, 2019).

To understand the history of Indonesian language development, one need only start with some inscriptions written on stones found in Palembang, Jambi, and Bangka Island, some of which date back to the Sriwijaya Kingdom, evidence of the beginning of the Indonesian language (then Malay) (Almasyhur et al., 2024; Blagden, 1913). The inscriptions are written in Old Malay and use Pallawa letters (Chaer, 2010). In addition, based on paleographic research, the oldest document containing the Old Malay language is an inscription found in the Sajamerta Village adjacent to Pekalongan (Central Java), dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Kridalaksana, 2018). The inscription is older than the Kedukan Bukit inscription in Palembang. Another Old Malay inscription in Central Java dates to 792 A.D., namely the Manjucrigra inscription at Sewu Temple (Yogyakarta-Solo border). An Old Malayu inscription was also found in the coffee garden near Bogor and dated 854 Caka (942 A.D.).

This paper reveals new historical traces of the Indonesian language based on archaeoanthropological research and studies. Malay culture can be interpreted as the result of Malay humans' creation, taste, and intention. Related to this, Prayogi (2016), in an archaeoanthropological study titled "The Dynamics of Malay Cultural Identity in Archaeoanthropological Review", found that Malay people are both indigenous people and migrants with all their discourses and cultural elements who have inhabited the Malay region (pp. 2-3). Archaeoanthropologically, Malay culture can be traced from the results of the material objects in various forms of artifacts of Malay culture that are widely spread throughout the Malay-Southeast Asia-Pacific region. Archaeoanthropologically, the cultural identity of the Malay people is still subject to multiple opinions. Archaeological remains show that, in fact, Malay humans already had their own culture and dialects and underwent changes with other cultures along with the increasingly complex patterns of human life.

Prayogi also mentioned that there are new concepts and offers related to the cultural identity of the Malay people, namely the Southeast Asian cultural civilization (Prayogi, 2016). This is motivated by Malay humans being geographically closer to the Southeast Asian region. Ultimately, Prayogi concluded that the archaeo-anthropological review still did not solve the problem of Malay identity with all its cultural derivatives. Prayogi's article shows that archaeoanthropology studies the relationship between archaeology and anthropology, especially in research on prehistoric humans and ancient civilizations (Cœdès, 1930). Archaeoanthropology is a branch of anthropology that examines the relationship between culture and the remains (artifacts, fossils, archaeological sites) of the past. According to experts, archaeoanthropology combines cultural anthropology and archaeology to understand how humans survived and interacted with their environment in the past.

Archaeoanthropology studies archaeological evidence and anthropological data to understand the development of human cultures from the past. Louis Leakey is one of the most famous archaeoanthropologists and ethnographers (Clark, 1989). He is known for his research in East Africa that helped us understand human origins. Other archaeoanthropologists such as Binford (1964, 1972, 1983), Goodall (1990), and Johanson (1985) also made significant contributions to the field. Archaeoanthropological research stems from the curiosity that drives a person to visit a place suspected of containing historical relics. Archaeologists examine many relics of society after humans recognize language and writing. Archaeologists use archaeological sources such as written sources (inscriptions) and artifacts or tools (weapons and kitchen utensils), among others, at the Bongal Site. This site is in Jagojago Village, Badiri Subdistrict, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province, western Indonesia.

The North Sumatra Archaeology Center's research from 2019-2020 uncovered important archaeological findings around Bukit Bongal, including artifacts, ecofacts, and wooden structure remains. Among these were two inscriptions on wooden and tin artifacts found in Jagojago Village (Boechari, 2012; Soedewo, 2023). These inscriptions are key to understanding the history of the Indonesian language. The present research explores the Bongal Site's contribution to

developing the Indonesian language, focusing on how Old Malay evolved into Indonesian. By analyzing the language and cultural traces at the site, the study provides insights into the historical context of Indonesian language development. This approach also emphasizes the role of these findings as educational tools for learning the Indonesian language. By merging archaeoanthropology with the history of the Indonesian language, the research offers a fresh perspective on Malay culture's influence on the formation of Indonesian as a unifying global language.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Archaeoanthropology*

Archaeoanthropology is a discipline that combines archaeology and anthropology to study human life through artifacts and other material evidence, providing an overview of the social and cultural aspects of past societies. Archaeology focuses more on analyzing the physical objects left behind, while anthropology examines the behavior and social structure of the community. By combining these two fields, archaeoanthropology allows us to understand the artifacts and the social and cultural context behind them. This research uses an archaeoanthropological approach to explore the relationship between archaeological findings at the Bongal Site and the socio-cultural developments that influenced the Indonesian language (Tilley, 1994).

Furthermore, this research investigates how artifacts from the Bongal Site, such as tools, pottery, and buildings, can provide clues about past communities' social activities and communication. An archaeoanthropological approach allows the analysis of the relationship between these artifacts and language development. These findings illustrate the interaction between the people at the site and other groups, which can influence their language development. For instance, trade interactions or cultural exchanges with other regions can enrich the vocabulary and language structures used by the people of the time (Binford, 1983).

Likewise, we can also understand how the social structure of the Bongal Site community influenced language development through this approach. Archaeoanthropology makes examining social patterns reflected in past societies' settlements, social practices, and culture possible. This research aims to identify how language was used in specific social contexts, such as whether language was used differently among the elite or other social groups and how changes in social structure impacted language use at the time. This approach provides a deeper understanding of Indonesian language development through a social and cultural lens (Jacoby & Kibbee, 2000).

Ultimately, this research utilizes archaeoanthropological theory to comprehend the connection between language and culture at the Bongal Site. This research uncovers the role of language in that cultural context by studying archaeological findings that depict daily social life, such as worship spaces or social gathering places found at the site, providing insight into how language is used in religious rituals or the formation of cultural identity. Thus, the Indonesian language is understood as a product that is not only based on linguistic rules but also the result of the complex interaction between culture, history, and language reflected in these archaeological sites (Christie, 2001; Schiffer, 2001).

### B. *Linguistics Contact*

Linguistic contact is a theory that studies the interaction between two or more languages occurring within one community or region, which can affect changes in language structures and elements. When two languages encounter each other, this can give rise to various linguistic phenomena, such as vocabulary borrowing and changes in phonology, syntax, and morphology. This theory focuses on how the languages involved influence each other in adopting new words and changes to more complex language structures. This contact can happen for several reasons, such as trade, migration, colonization, or social interaction in communities that use multiple languages (Christie, 2001; Song, 2010; Thomason & Kaufman, 2023).

In this theory, interlanguage influence can take the form of borrowings, which is when one language adopts words or expressions from another language, as well as structural changes, where grammatical elements such as affixes, word order, or the way words are formed are influenced by another language (Agus et al., 2024; Garing, 2016; Iwuala & Imu, 2021; Morante & Sporleder, 2012; Salija et al., 2017). Vocabulary borrowings usually occur in words related to technology, culture, or novelty. Meanwhile, structural changes happen when languages interact over a long period, affecting grammar and sentence structure. For instance, in the history of Old Malay, many words from Sanskrit entered the language due to cultural and religious influences from the Srivijaya kingdoms (Adelaar, 2005; Christie, 2001; Teeuw, 1959; Zoetmulder, 2004).

Linguistic contact can also create the phenomenon of code-switching or code-mixing, where speakers switch from one language to another or combine elements from two languages in a single sentence or conversation. This occurs in societies that actively use multiple languages and shows how language can adapt to external influences. These changes relate to word borrowing and affect social communication patterns, ways of thinking, and the formation of new cultural identities. This process shows how languages evolve due to the social and political factors involved in interlanguage interaction (Christie, 2001; Haugen, 1950; Wurm & Wilson, 1977).

### C. *Contextual Learning Theory in Indonesian History Teaching*

Contextual learning theory highlights the importance of linking learning with students' experiences and environment. This approach emphasizes that education will be more meaningful if the material taught is relevant to students' daily lives

so they can more easily relate the knowledge learned to their social context. Contextualized learning allows students to see the connection between the material taught and the reality around them, making it more meaningful and applicable. In this case, the theory is very relevant to research that uses the Bongal Site as a context for understanding the history of the Indonesian language because this site can present a more precise portrayal of the language development in the lives of past communities (Brown, 2007).

This research adopts a contextual learning approach to connect the teaching of the history of the Indonesian language with the Bongal Site as a tangible source of learning. Through this site, students can learn how the Indonesian language evolved along with social and cultural changes reflected in artifacts and archaeological findings. For example, artifacts found at the Bongal Site can reveal how language was used in social interactions, trade, and other cultural activities, providing deeper insights into language development in the historical context of past societies. Thus, learning Indonesian will cover the technical aspects of the language and the cultural context behind it (Ambrose et al., 2014).

The contextual learning theory also helps students understand language regarding social and cultural change. Language learning (Feiman-Nemser, 1983), often seen as simply the study of linguistic rules and vocabulary, can be better understood within a broader social framework if taught with a contextual approach. In this case, learning Indonesian through a site like Bongal allows students to see how language developed alongside cultural changes, interactions between social groups, and other factors that shaped society at the time. This will enable students to connect linguistic aspects with deeper cultural and social contexts, enriching their understanding of the evolution of Indonesian (Bruce & Calhoun, 2024; Gagne et al., 2005; Garim et al., 2023; Idawati et al., 2025; Wirawan et al., 2023).

By adopting contextualized learning, students can see the direct relevance between the material being studied and their real lives, which enhances engagement and understanding. The Bongal site is a learning object, allowing students to relate archaeological findings to language development in society. This context-based learning also encourages students to think more critically about the relationship between language, culture, and history and how these three elements influence each other (Harianto et al., 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Zuchdi & Nurhadi, 2019). The contextual approach supports more interdisciplinary learning by combining different disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology, and linguistics, thus providing a complete and more in-depth picture of the history of the Indonesian language (Anthony, 1990; Schunk, 2012).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

This research used a qualitative approach, centering on the Bongal Site to investigate how its archaeological discoveries help explain the development of Old Malay and its impact on the Indonesian language while examining the interplay between local and external cultural influences that shaped the language.

#### B. Procedure for Collecting and Analyzing Data

This study utilized qualitative methods to fully explore phenomena through non-numerical data, including interviews and observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Researchers analyzed artifacts and inscriptions at the Bongal Site, focusing on Old Malay and cultural aspects, and interviewed residents to gain insights into the historical and cultural importance of the discoveries. A detailed review of literature, such as books, articles, and research papers, helped broaden the understanding of Old Malay and the development of the Indonesian language. The data was analyzed in stages, with coding used to identify significant themes related to the language's history and Malay cultural identity. Overall, the research aimed to enhance the understanding of the Indonesian language's historical development and the Malay culture's contributions.

#### C. Population and Samples

The population of this study is the archaeological findings at the Bongal Site, which include artifacts, inscriptions, and other objects found at the site. The research sample includes artifacts containing writings, inscriptions containing language elements, and interviews with local people who know the site and the history of the Indonesian language. In addition, the sample includes relevant literature documents, both from written sources and oral traditions.

#### D. Materials

This study examines artifacts and inscriptions from the Bongal Site that provide valuable information about Old Malay. It also incorporates insights from resident interviews, highlighting the region's history and culture. A review of relevant literature further places the study within the broader framework of the Indonesian language and Malay cultural history (Harris, 2002). The research culminates in a detailed report that discusses the findings on the Bongal Site's role in understanding the development of the Indonesian language, aiming to offer a precise and unbiased account that enriches academic and general knowledge.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Ancient Malay: Archaeoanthropological and Linguistic Findings

The Bongal Site, located in Jagojago Village, Badiri Sub-district, North Sumatra, provides important evidence of the history of the Indonesian language. Discovered by gold miners in the tidal lands of Tapanuli Bay, it yielded a variety of artifacts, such as Middle Eastern pottery, glass, ceramics, metal objects, wooden artifacts, tin inscriptions, inscribed wooden boards, coins, and money printers, dating back from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. These findings suggest that between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., the area served as a hub for production, trade, and cultural exchange, where Chinese, Indian, Arab, local, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic influences converged. This ties the Bongal Site to the archipelago's spice trade route, which the Indonesian government currently emphasizes. Research by Soedewo (2023) shared in events like the Sigarda Forum, Mimbar Budaya podcast, and BRIN's Kebinekaan webinar has provided insights into the paleographic and linguistic aspects of the Bongal inscriptions, underscoring the site's significance in Indonesian language history.



Figure 1. Video Still of Tin Inscription of Bongal Site and Other Sumatran Inscriptions in Sumatra  
 Link 1. <https://www.youtube.com/live/zgwZaSXEP8U?si=GUGO5Ru1Gg6M90cu>



Figure 2. Video Still of Bongal Site Tin Inscription  
 Link 2. <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSYR4G2eF>



Figure 3. Video of Bongal Site, Indonesia's Hidden History  
 Link 3. [https://youtu.be/ZFp9gz0Rc?si=ad\\_9-n-1Fbn1JCgC](https://youtu.be/ZFp9gz0Rc?si=ad_9-n-1Fbn1JCgC)

Soedewo (2023) mentioned that the Bongal Site inscriptions, dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., are written in Pallawa Grantha and Post Pallawa scripts. The language primarily features terms from the Wur language family, with significant influences from Indo-Aryan languages, particularly Sanskrit. Excavations indicate that the Bongal Site was a diverse cultural hub from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The oft-studied Old Lobu Site in Barus in North Sumatra is around two

centuries younger. Artifacts from Bongal, including coins from the Umayyad (694 to 713 A.D.) and Abbasid (760 A.D.) dynasties and ceramics from the Tang Dynasty (7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) and Persia (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), were found. The tin plates feature post-Pallava, ancient Javanese, and proto-Batak scripts, often inscribed with mantras. Carbon dating of palm fiber and wood inscribed with Pallawa characters showed dates from 663 to 778 A.D. and from 668 to 778 A.D., respectively. Notably, a wooden inscription from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century in Pallawa Grantha is rare, as wood typically lasts over a millennium.



Figure 4. Wooden Board With the Date 668-778 A.D. at the Bongal Site (Soedewo, 2023)

Gold miners found at least six inscription materials at the Bongal Site, five of tin and one of wood. The six inscriptions were found in an excavation pit in the Bongal area, Jagojago Village, Badiri District, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. According to the Mimbar Budaya webinars, podcasts, and Soedewo's "*Maritime Southeast Asia History, Culture, and Religion*" chapter, three types of scripts were identified at the Bongal Site: Pallawa Grantha, post-Pallawa (ancient Sumatra), and proto-Batak (Soedewo, 2023, pp. 42-44). The vocabulary in the Bongal Site's metal inscriptions can be categorized into two language groups: Austronesian (formerly Malay-Polynesian) and Indo-Iranian (Indo-Aryan). Soedewo (2023) lists Austronesian words such as *ku*, *tutup*, *tan'an*, *mandhin'ar*, *tida*, *baruj'ar*, *cari*, *jahat*, *kataña*, *sabutaña*, *marujar*, and *san'ddi*. For instance, *tutup*, which originates from the Austronesian term *tutup* (Wurm & Wilson, 1977), retains its original pronunciation and meaning, demonstrating linear inheritance.

The word *tan'an*, an old Malay term, originates from the Austronesian word *tan/an* (Wurm & Wilson, 1977), retaining its original sound and meaning through linear inheritance. Terms like *tida*, *barujâr*, *jahat*, and *marujar* are found in inscriptions from the Srivijaya period, such as the Palas Pasemah and Kedukan Bukit inscriptions. For example, the twelfth line of the Palas Pasemah Inscription includes the word *j*, while the seventh line has *niujari*, and the sixth line of the Kedukan Bukit Inscription features *man'ujarsi* (Boechari, 2012). The word *jahat* in the Bongal Inscription and *j'ahat* in the Palas Pasemah Inscription both still appear in modern Indonesian, meaning "bad" or "evil," while in ancient Javanese, it referred to something "ruined" or "destroyed" (Zoetmulder, 2004).

In the Bongal Inscription, the word *tida* is used similarly to how it appears in the eighth line of the Palas Pasemah Inscription, in the phrase *tida bhakti*. In both cases, *tida* acts as a negation marker, signifying the absence or non-occurrence of an action or condition (Garing, 2016; Iwuala & Imu, 2021; Morante & Sporleder, 2012). This usage is akin to how *tida* functions in modern Indonesian and Malay, where it negates the word or phrase that follows. In both inscriptions, *tida* indicates the rejection or absence of a particular situation or action. Despite their different historical contexts, using *tida* as a negation marker demonstrates continuity in language, remaining relevant in ancient texts and contemporary Indonesian and Malay.

The phrase *tida baruj'ar* in the Bongal Inscription translates to "not speaking" or "not saying something." The term *baruj'ar* (or *marujar*) originates from a root meaning "to speak" or "to utter." The *bar-* prefix forms an active verb, indicating that the subject is engaged in speaking. When used in the negative form *tida baruj'ar*, it implies a prohibition or advice against speaking (Saliya et al., 2017). The related form *marujar* underscores the significance of the act of speaking. These expressions highlight societal norms governing when speaking or remaining silent is appropriate, reflecting cultural rules or regulations. In addition, the stem prefix in the Bongal tin inscription is also found in the Lokan "atha Gunung Tua statue inscription, notably in *barbvat* (to make). The prefix *batang-* in *barujar* parallels Malay/Indonesian prefixes like *berujar* (to say), *kata* (to say), and *berkumpul* (to gather). Similarly, *mar-* in *marujar* is akin to Batak *mar-* in words like *marhata* (to say) and *mardalan* (to walk). The word *manujarsi* in the Kedukan Bukit inscription shows how the *ma-* prefix and *-i* suffix modify the base word *say*, changing its form and meaning. This affixation process, used in Indonesian/Malay, alters verbs to indicate new meanings or aspects, demonstrating how word morphology works in ancient inscriptions (Agus et al., 2024).

The *niujari* form in Srivijaya-era inscriptions is an example of a passive verb formed through affixation. It consists of the prefix *ni-*, the base *ujari* (meaning "to speak" or "to utter"), and the suffix *-i*. In Indo-Aryan-influenced languages, the prefix *ni-* is commonly used to create passive verbs, changing the meaning of the base word to show that the subject is

receiving the action rather than performing it. Therefore, *niujari* translates to “spoken” or “said.” Furthermore, the Bongal inscription contains words from Indo-Iranian (Indo-Aryan) languages, such as *swaha*, *om*, *buddha*, and *brahma*, revealing the strong linguistic influence of these languages on the period. These terms were crucial in the religious and cultural practices of the time, especially within Buddhism and Brahmanism (Christie, 2001; Haugen, 1950; Song, 2010; Thomason & Kaufman, 2023). The presence of these words highlights the use of Sanskrit and other Indo-Aryan languages in communication, particularly for religious and administrative purposes in the Srivijaya kingdom. The inscription offers evidence of the linguistic and cultural exchange between Srivijaya and South Asian traditions.

Furthermore, *Om* is a sacred Sanskrit word, usually used as an introduction to mantras or words of praise. *Sw* “*ah*” *a* is a Sanskrit word used when offering to the gods; an exclamation, which can be translated as *Yuddha*, is a Sanskrit word meaning war, fight, and battle. *Cela* is adapted from the Sanskrit *chala*, meaning lie and evil. *Warsa* is adopted from Sanskrit, which means year. *Siddhi* is a Sanskrit word that means success, perfection, intelligence, or extraordinary ability. *Khala* is a Sanskrit word that means evil, dishonorable, or fraudulent. *Bajra* is adapted from the Sanskrit *vajra*, which means diamond, lightning, and ‘hard one’ (Zoetmulder, 2004).

### B. The Evolution of the Old Malay Language and Its Influence on the Indonesian Language

Experts argue that Old Malay was the lingua franca of Southeast Asian traders, especially in the archipelago (Indonesia). The vocabulary of Old Malay was heavily influenced by Sanskrit, which in the early centuries A.D. became the language of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures that began to be recognized in Southeast Asia so that words were absorbed in the form of sacred words. Other terms still use Sanskrit vocabulary, but the grammar is in Old Malay. Indonesian is an evolution or development of the Old Malay language. Indonesian evolved and expanded from the Malay language, which has served as a lingua franca for communication in the archipelago and across much of Southeast Asia. However, Indonesian in modern times has very different characteristics from Malay because it has been mixed with many foreign languages.

The Malay language, which originated in the first millennium, is referred to as Old Malay and belongs to the Austronesian language family. The Malay language has experienced multiple layers of foreign influence over two millennia through trade between nations, religious expansion, colonization, and emerging socio-political developments. The earliest version of Malay derived from the Old Malayo-Polynesian language spoken by the first Austronesian migrants to Southeast Asia. Over time, it evolved into Old Malay as Indian religious influences spread throughout the region, likely accompanied by using the Kawi and Rencong scripts.

Old Malay includes certain words that are still present today but are not understood by contemporary speakers, while the modern language is broadly identifiable in Classical Malay, written in 1303 A.D. (Teeuw, 1959). The Old Malay language found in the source inscriptions uses Sanskrit vocabulary. It uses the Pallava and Brahmi scripts, so some adjustments were made to accommodate the Old Malay phonology, which differs from Sanskrit. Archaeologists and linguists did not initially use a specific name to refer to the language found in Malay inscriptions discovered in Sumatra and Java. Linguist Blagden (1913) and archaeologist Cœdès (1930) used references such as “ancient form” or “most ancient text” of Malay, while linguist Gabriel Ferrand used the name Malayo-sanskrit (“Malay-Sanskrit”) in his 1932 paper (Adelaar, 2005). Indologist J.G. de Casparis started using Oud-Maleise (“Old Malay”) in his first volume of Indonesian Inscriptions, published in 1950 (Almasyhur et al., 2024). The name was later used by Teeuw (1959) in writing an Old Malay short article on the history of the Malay language.

### C. Utilization of the Bongal Site as an Indonesian Language Learning Resource

The Bongal site provides valuable historical and linguistic insights for language learning through its inscriptions and artifacts. Exploring this site helps students understand the evolution of the Indonesian language, expands their vocabulary, and gives them a better appreciation of their nation's linguistic heritage. Moreover, the site supports constructivist learning theory, as students can relate new knowledge to prior experiences. Learners can also use the Bongal site to connect classroom lessons with real historical contexts for a more profound, more contextual learning experience.

The concept of language ecology, which examines the link between language and its cultural context, further justifies including this site. The Bongal inscriptions highlight linguistic and social interactions, showing how language evolves with societal changes. This research can inform new language education methods by incorporating historical materials. Integrating the Bongal site into lessons boosts language skills while preserving cultural heritage, emphasizing the value of local resources in Indonesian education. Educators should design activities that align with children's developmental needs, focusing on goals, structure, environment, and management (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

Bruce and Calhoun (2024) stated that learning models contain five essential components: 1) syntax, which is the sequence of activities, steps, or phases of the implementation of the model; 2) a social system (the role and relationship of children with social beings); 3) reaction principles (how the teacher views and responds to children to what is done); 4) a support system (the requirements and support); and 5) instructional and accompanying impacts. Syntax, here, is the implementation of an Indonesian history learning model. The model consists of several steps:

1. Students learn independently online and openly. While studying the history of the Indonesian language, students can use smartphones (e.g., Android and iOS tablets). The result of this course is that students who meet the learning objectives of the Indonesian language course are competent in the history of the Indonesian language material.

2. Students study the Indonesian Language History learning module, tracing the archaeoanthropology of the Bongal Site. The learning module is developed with site-based content containing the following steps:
  - a) Select a suitable learning site, such as <https://sejarahbahasaindonesia.com/>, that aligns with the topic. The web-based learning process begins with choosing content that meets learning objectives. Ensure the site offers valuable, relevant information and is designed with engaging graphics, a user-friendly layout, and easy navigation.
  - b) Ensure the site can be accessed smoothly and has features supporting learning, such as text, images, videos, articles, discussion forums, and interactivity. This helps learners to understand the learning material better.
  - c) Explore the site for information on Indonesian history relevant to the study topic.
  - d) Follow the instructions or guidelines provided by the site to access learning materials, such as watching videos, reading articles, or taking quizzes.
  - e) Study the historical materials on the site carefully and note the key points you want to understand.
  - f) Use interactive tools such as discussion forums, chats, documentary videos, maps, and photo galleries to deepen your understanding of Indonesian history.
  - g) Note the essential things learned while accessing the learning site. A good web-based learning syntax will pay attention to the availability of reference sources that learners can use to explore the learning materials, for example, providing links to reliable sources relevant to the learning material.
  - h) Keep updated on Indonesian history by visiting the site regularly to get the latest information about the progression of the Indonesian language history you are exploring.
  - i) Participate in assignments and exercises to solidify your comprehension. Utilize interactive features such as quizzes, exams, and discussion forums to improve your learning and evaluate your understanding of Indonesian history.
  - j) Engage in site activities like discussion forums or online classes. Share and discuss what you have learned with friends or lecturers, both online and offline, to enhance your understanding. Join forums or groups to exchange knowledge and experiences with others interested in Indonesian history.
  - k) Participate in forums or discussion groups on the site to share knowledge and experiences with others interested in the same topic, such as Indonesian history.
  - l) After finishing the learning site, evaluate your grasp of the material and revisit earlier steps to strengthen your understanding if necessary. Web-based learning should also incorporate assessments and feedback to gauge learners' comprehension.
3. By studying the module, students are expected to have the ability to:
  - a) Conceptualizing the archaeological traces of Indonesian language history.
  - b) Describe the historical archaeological traces of the Indonesian language.
  - c) Can check and recheck the history of the Indonesian language.
  - d) Have basic skills related to utilizing Indonesian historical archaeological trace sites.
  - e) Recognize the characteristics of Indonesian language historical sites.
  - f) Recognize various cultural heritage sites and Indonesian history learning website applications and
  - g) Utilize devices wisely, effectively, efficiently, safely, and productively.
4. In this site-based Indonesian language course, students must follow the following conditions:
  - a) Read the learning objectives to understand the target of each module.
  - b) Read the competency achievement indicators to understand the objects used as measurement criteria to achieve the objectives.
  - c) Read descriptions of learning materials to gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards the competencies to be achieved.
  - d) Perform the learning activities listed in the module.
  - e) Work on exercises and the End of Module Test (TAM).

By incorporating the natural environment, appropriate resources, and technology, teaching the history of the Indonesian language can be more engaging and effective for students. Integrating historical sites like Bongal into the learning process allows students to connect with the past and better understand Indonesia's cultural and historical development. Learning directly from the site through observation and analysis of artifacts encourages critical thinking and helps students link historical events with language and culture (Boxtel et al., 2016; Harris, 2002). The use of technology further enriches the learning experience by providing interactive and accessible tools (Gagne et al., 2005; Zuchdi & Nurhadi, 2019). This method also promotes collaborative learning, enhancing knowledge of history and social skills (Harianto et al., 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2009), making the educational experience more dynamic and meaningful.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

“Red Coat! Never forget history!” was the message given by Bung Karno to emphasize the importance of history in the journey of the Indonesian nation. Although many students consider history a boring topic, the importance of studying history cannot be ignored as it can provide insight into the past, which, in turn, helps us understand the current and future situation. The Old Malay language used during the Sriwijaya and Majapahit kingdoms became the basis for the Indonesian

language. As the connecting language of Southeast Asia, Malay evolved through the influence of foreign cultures and languages, especially Sanskrit, to eventually become the Indonesian language we speak today.

Studying the history of the Indonesian language is crucial in shaping the character and the nation's identity. Universities have a fundamental function in advancing science, including researching the history of the Indonesian language. The Bongal site, which stores Old Malay inscriptions, can be used as a learning resource that enriches our understanding of the history of the Indonesian language. By utilizing web-based learning technology, students can access information more quickly and learn the history of Indonesia in a way that is more interesting and relevant to the times. This approach will help make learning Indonesian history more meaningful and build awareness of national identity.

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