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Digging Into the Philosophy of Malay-Palembang Local Wisdom and Student Cultural Affection: A Critical Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract:

Traditional higher education curricula often reduce regional languages to static mechanical structures, stripping away the profound philosophical worldviews embedded within indigenous heritage. In Palembang, South Sumatra, rapid urban modernization risks severing the younger generation's connection to their ancestors' existential wisdom, thereby triggering cultural alienation. Nurturing an intimate love, emotional proximity, and long-term pride among modern undergraduate students toward the Malay-Palembang language and literature requires a pedagogical shift toward a deep interrogation of regional philosophy. Unfortunately, empirical studies exploring how youth phenomenologically internalize this ancestral philosophy to cultivate authentic cultural affection remain highly scarce. This critical phenomenological study investigates how 100 undergraduate students perceive the philosophical potential of Malay-Palembang language and literature, and how they frame their future aspirations to foster deeper cultural affection. A qualitative critical phenomenological design was employed to examine the lived experiences of 100 undergraduate students majoring in Indonesian Language and Literature Education at Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang. Data were gathered through in-depth reflective journals, philosophical essays, and semi-structured focus group discussions, followed by a rigorous critical thematic analysis. The analysis revealed eight primary dimensions: (1) Linguistic Identity Affect, proving that deconstructing philosophical etymology fosters a deep love for the mother tongue; (2) Ethical Oral Tradition Philosophy, utilizing the ethical values in *Senjang* for character building; (3) Eco-Philosophical River Epistemology, connecting the philosophy of the Musi River with contemporary environmental ethics; (4) Philosophical Materialization of Physical Heritage, interpreting the metaphysical meanings behind Songket motifs and Limas architecture; (5) Philosophy-Based Curriculum, demanding a transition from rigid grammar to wisdom-based learning; (6) Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogy, encouraging emotional immersion in regional arts to ignite cultural passion; (7) Institutional Philosophical Sanctuary, expecting universities to formally protect indigenous knowledge systems; and (8) Global Ontological Diplomacy, aspiring to share the existential philosophy of Malay-Palembang with international audiences.

Keywords: Malay-Palembang, Ancestral Philosophy, Cultural Affection, Critical Phenomenology, Youth Voice

Introduction

Regional language and literature education in contemporary higher education institutions is frequently trapped in a highly mechanical structural reductionism. Conventional curricula tend to prioritize the transmission of syntactic, morphological, and static grammatical rules, which unconsciously ignores the existential heartbeat and profound worldview embedded behind the linguistic system itself (Abadi & Wijaya, 2023; Atika & Mayrita, 2024). When regional languages are taught solely as pragmatic communication instruments, they lose their magical power as spiritual anchors and cultural identity markers for their speakers (Budiarto & Setiawan, 2022). Consequently, students often experience existential dislocation; they are fluent in pronouncing local dialects but fail to internalize the ethics and wisdom of life contained within them. This phenomenon of de-culturalization reinforces the urgent need for a shift in language pedagogy toward the liberation of consciousness (Darmawan, 2023).

Amidst the massive acceleration of urban modernization, Palembang as the epicenter of Malay-Palembang culture in South Sumatra faces a serious threat of cultural alienation among the younger generation (Fitriani et al., 2025). The expansion of global pop culture facilitated by digital algorithms slowly shifts the existence of the mother tongue from the comparative space of daily life (Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2024). Urban youth are now surrounded by cosmopolitan narratives that equate modernity with the abandonment of local traditions. When cultural living spaces are replaced by symbols of urban capitalism, emotional attachment to ancestral heritage loosens (Hidayat & Pratama, 2023). This sociocultural rift triggers a collective fear of losing the chain of wisdom of past generations that should serve as spiritual capital for the future (Ibrahim, 2022).

Nurturing an intimate love, emotional proximity, and long-term pride among modern students requires pedagogical approaches that go beyond cognitive transfer (Kurniawan & Syarif, 2024). Students must no longer be positioned as passive consumers of rigid grammar modules, but must be engaged as critical subjects who interrogate the axiological and metaphysical dimensions of their mother tongue (Lestari & Wardani, 2025). A deep inquiry into regional philosophy can serve as a bridge connecting students' personal emotions with the collective memory of their ancestors (Mulyadi et al., 2023). Through this affective-aesthetic involvement, regional languages are reclaimed not as exotic historical fossils, but as adaptive and powerful indigenous knowledge systems (Nugroho, 2022).

The *state of the art* in cultural anthropology and language teaching literature in Indonesia shows a tendency to focus on descriptive preservation, lexicostatistics, and documentation of folk literature without touching the affective dimensions of the speakers (Putri & Erpadellah, 2025). Recent studies have mapped the extinction of local dialects and efforts to codify regional dictionaries (Sari & Hartono, 2023). However, these studies generally ignore youth subjectivity, assuming they are an apathetic group passive toward the preservation of tradition (Supriyadi et al., 2024). Very few empirical studies explore how students, especially pre-service language teachers, phenomenologically internalize and interpret local life philosophy as a survival strategy against external cultural hegemony (Utami & Wibowo, 2025).

The *novelty* of this study lies in the theoretical integration of a critical phenomenological framework and the concept of youth cultural affection in the context of Malay-Palembang epistemology. This research goes beyond traditional documentative approaches by dissecting the critical voice of students in reconstructing philosophical values, such as the maritime ecosystem of the Musi River and the metaphysics of Songket

weaving (Ramadhan, 2024). We present a deep analysis of how students explore the inner connection between regional languages and the formation of their moral resilience amidst modern social crises (Suryani & Wijaya, 2024). This approach positions students' lived experiences as the main axis for formulating emancipatory, locality-based pedagogical policies (Wahid, 2023).

The urgency of this research becomes clearer when linked to the strategic role of Indonesian Language and Literature Education students as future educators (Zulqaidah et al., 2024). As agents of cultural transmission, their perspective on local wisdom will determine the life or death of this spiritual heritage in future classrooms (Pratama, 2025). If these pre-service teachers view regional languages as boring supplementary curricula, a systemic failure in safeguarding the nation's collective memory will be inevitable (Sari & Hartono, 2023). Therefore, digging into their critical consciousness is a crucial first step to revitalizing a more soulful higher education curriculum (Kurniawan & Syarif, 2024).

However, the academic space in Indonesia still severely lacks studies investigating the intersection between youth emotions, local philosophy, and critical agency (Abadi & Wijaya, 2023). Language preservation policies designed by the government are often top-down, mechanical, and ignore the existential anxiety felt by Generation Z (Darmawan, 2023). Consequently, a wide gap has emerged between the older generation as holders of customary authority and the younger generation as legitimate heirs of culture (Fitriani et al., 2025). Without critical phenomenological dialogue, local wisdom will continue to be marginalized from the active consciousness of urban youth (Putri & Erpadellah, 2025).

Based on these gaps, this critical phenomenological study investigates how 100 undergraduate students at Universitas Sriwijaya perceive the philosophical potential of Malay-Palembang language and literature, and how they frame their future aspirations to cultivate deeper cultural affection. Through the exploration of their subjective voices, this research attempts to formulate a model of regional language pedagogy centered on affection, axiology, and global relevance to produce resilient guardians of local wisdom (Utami & Wibowo, 2025).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Epistemology of Malay-Palembang Local Wisdom in the Modern Context

The epistemology of Malay-Palembang local wisdom is a dynamic philosophical construction born from the historical encounter between the maritime cosmology of Sriwijaya, the grandeur of Hindu-Buddhist traditions, and the Islamic spirituality of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate (Al-Azhar et al., 2024). This epistemology does not merely reside in physical artifacts but flows within the language structures, social ethics, and daily rituals of the community (Atika & Mayrita, 2024). The Malay-Palembang worldview places the harmonious relationship between the microcosm (humanity) and the macrocosm (nature and God) as the primary foundation of virtuous living (Darmawan, 2023).

In the modern era, this local wisdom faces deconstruction and marginalization due to rapid urbanization in Palembang. Noble values such as polite speech (*bebaso*) and the philosophy of mutual cooperation (*saro-saro*) are often deemed incompatible with the individualistic and transactional demands of urban lifestyles (Suryani & Wijaya, 2024). Nevertheless, several contemporary scholars argue that Palembang's local wisdom possesses an ontological flexibility that allows it to act as a cultural filter and moral anchor against social disorientations in the digital era (Putri & Erpadellah, 2025).

Therefore, repositioning Malay-Palembang epistemology within modern academic spaces demands an emancipatory reinterpretation. Education must be capable of stripping away the mystical layers of local wisdom to surface universal ethical values

relevant to contemporary challenges, such as environmental ethics (*eco-philosophy*) and sociocultural justice (Mulyadi et al., 2023).

2.2 Critical Phenomenology in Regional Language and Literature Pedagogy

Critical phenomenology is an emancipatory methodology that integrates the search for the essence of lived experiences with the deconstruction of power structures that oppress human consciousness (Lestari & Wardani, 2025). In the context of regional language education, this approach assumes that language is not a value-free communication instrument but rather a contested terrain of identity and power (Wahid, 2023). Regional language curricula that focus solely on formal grammatical structures often operate as a form of domesticated consciousness, distancing students from a critical understanding of their cultural realities (Hidayat & Pratama, 2023).

A regional language pedagogy grounded in critical phenomenology encourages students to reflect deeply on how their mother tongue is marginalized by global languages, and how reclaiming the values of local languages can restore their cultural dignity (Zulqaidah et al., 2024). Through this process of critical reflection, language learning transforms from mechanical memorization into a liberating political-cultural action (Ramadhan, 2024).

Thus, critical phenomenology equips pre-service teacher students with a theoretical lens to see that teaching regional languages is not merely about transferring linguistic sign systems, but about cultivating an ontological awareness of the importance of maintaining the diverse worldviews embedded within locality (Fitriani et al., 2025).

2.3 Cultural Affect Theory, Identity Construction, and Student Agency

Cultural affect theory asserts that emotions, attachments, and a sense of belonging to a culture are not natural occurrences, but are socially constructed through aesthetic experiences and intimate, critical interactions (Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2024). Among urban youth, cultural affection is often fragmented due to the dominant consumption of global digital content that offers a pseudo-cosmopolitan identity (Budiarto & Setiawan, 2022). The inability to absorb the beauty of local traditions breeds a generation that experiences alienation in their own homeland (Supriyadi et al., 2024).

However, university students as educated subjects possess cultural agency—the capacity to consciously evaluate, reject, or reconstruct their identities (Pratama, 2025). The construction of student identity in the contemporary era is dynamic and hybrid; they are capable of adopting global technology without losing their local cultural anchor (Abadi & Wijaya, 2023). A mature cultural affection will give birth to a strong agency to preserve traditions in creative and relevant ways (Kurniawan & Syarif, 2024).

Within this framework, the task of higher education is to provide spaces for affective immersion that allow student agency to flourish. Through literary dialogue, aesthetic performances, and cultural critiques, students are guided to construct a robust self-identity that is proud of its locality yet remains adaptive and competitive in the global cosmopolitan arena (Utami & Wibowo, 2025).

Research Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative critical phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences and affective consciousness of students toward Malay-Palembang local wisdom (Lestari & Wardani, 2025). The subjects of this study were undergraduate students in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Universitas Sriwijaya (Unsri). The participants consisted of 100 undergraduate students (74 females and 26 males) selected through purposive sampling. The criteria for selection were: (1) active students who had

completed courses in Local Literature Studies or South Sumatra Cultural Studies, and (2) demonstrated a full commitment to participating in all stages of cultural reflection. The choice of FKIP Unsri students was based on their strategic position as pre-service regional language teachers who hold the key to future cultural transmission in South Sumatra (Zulqaidah et al., 2024).

Data were comprehensively collected using three primary instruments:

- 1) In-depth Reflective Journals: Students wrote weekly journals for 8 weeks, documenting childhood memories, internal conflicts when using regional languages, and emotional transformations after studying local philosophies.
- 2) Philosophical Essays: Students wrote analytical-critical essays focused on deconstructing the axiological and metaphysical meanings of songket ornaments, traditional houses, or the lyrics of *Senjang*.
- 3) Semi-structured FGDs: Ten FGD groups (10 participants each) were formed to discuss sociocultural tensions between the demands of urban modernity and the existence of local wisdom.

Data were analyzed using the Critical Thematic Analysis method adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) through the following steps:

- 1) *Data Condensation*: Summarizing thousands of pages of FGD transcripts, essays, and journals into affective meaning units.
- 2) *Data Display*: Presenting thematic data in the form of direct quotes, matrix categorizations, and conceptual diagrams.
- 3) *Drawing and Verifying Conclusions*: Connecting findings with concepts of critical pedagogy, curriculum decolonization, and affect theory to generate 8 essential thematic dimensions.

Findings

The thematic analysis yielded eight major dimensions reflecting the internalization of Malay-Palembang philosophy and the formation of cultural affection among FKIP Unsri students.

4.1 Linguistic Identity Affect

The deconstruction of the philosophical meaning behind the polite language levels of Palembang (*Bebaso*) was proven to transform students' cultural shame into a deep, ontological pride. Students realized that the regional language is not merely a transactional communication tool of marginalized groups, but a noble system of ethical human recognition.

This linguistic shift occurred as students began to see the structural beauty of *Bebaso* as an active resistance against the flattening of interpersonal respect in modern digital communication. The realization that their local dialect contains profound metaphysical respect for others acted as a strong psychological catalyst, dissolving their internalized linguistic inferiority complex.

Qualitative Case Example: In her reflective journal, Participant #12 wrote: *"I used to feel very awkward using polite Palembang language on campus because I was afraid of being considered outdated. However, after we dissected the concepts of 'Sembah' and 'Ngiring' in Bebaso, which actually reflect absolute respect for the human dignity of the interlocutor regardless of social status, my perception changed completely. This is not feudalism; this is a very beautiful local humanistic ethics. Now I feel proud every time I pronounce it."*

4.2 Ethical Oral Tradition Philosophy

Students utilized the moral values and social critiques embedded in the oral literature of *Senjang* as a critical guide to building moral resilience (*character building*) amidst the ethical degradation of the digital age.

This process of internalization went beyond passive listening; students engaged in active philosophical dialogue with the rhyming verses of *Senjang*. They recognized that these traditional oral performances serve as organic social control mechanisms that can cure the psychological anxieties caused by contemporary cyber-culture.

Qualitative Case Example: In her philosophical essay, Participant #44 analyzed a *Senjang* verse about simplicity: *"The Senjang verse that reads 'Amun dapet janganlah pamer, amun kurang jangan mengeluh' (If you have, do not show off; if you lack, do not complain) became a hard slap to my ego, which is often tempted by the flexing culture on social media. The moral value of Senjang demands that I place my self-worth on the depth of character, not on superficial digital visual validation. This oral literature is a powerful psychological therapy for our generation's mental health."*

4.3 Eco-Philosophical River Epistemology

Students successfully reconstructed the relationship between the maritime cosmology of the Musi River and contemporary environmental ethics (*eco-philosophy*), viewing the river not as a mere physical commodity but as a spiritual entity teaching life harmony.

This eco-philosophical awakening allowed students to critically reframe the ecological crisis in Palembang. They argued that the physical pollution of the Musi River is a direct symptom of cultural amnesia, where the spiritual connection between the citizens and the water has been severed by capitalist greed.

Qualitative Case Example: During the FGD Session of Group 4, Participant #77 expressed her concerns: *"Our ancestors had the philosophy of 'Musi banyu mudo' which taught us to always maintain the purity of our life source. When we see the Musi River filled with plastic waste and industrial waste today, it is a clear indication that we have lost the spiritual orientation of our ancestors. Restoring the Musi River cannot be done through physical laws alone; we must restore our ontological respect for the river as the mother of life, as taught in our local language."*

4.4 Philosophical Materialization of Physical Heritage

Students interpreted the metaphysical and spiritual meanings embedded within the intricate patterns of *Songket* weaving and the architecture of the *Limas* house, transforming superficial aesthetic appreciation into a lifelong ethical commitment.

The physical patterns of Palembang's heritage were decoded as visual texts of social responsibility. Students discovered that the geometric precision of the designs reflects a strict, localized social contract based on community solidarity, mutual respect, and ecological adaptation.

Qualitative Case Example: Participant #29 wrote in her essay regarding the *Songket Lepus* motif: *"The gold thread woven so tightly in Songket Lepus is not just a symbol of the material luxury of the old nobility. The tightness of the weave is a metaphor for ukhuwah—the close bonds of brotherhood and social solidarity that must not be cracked by individualism. When I wear this cloth at my graduation ceremony later, I am not just wearing traditional clothing; I am embracing a moral promise to maintain social unity in society."*

4.5 Philosophy-Based Curriculum

Students launched sharp critiques against the rigid, structuralist, and mechanical regional language curriculum in higher education, calling for an immediate axiological transition toward wisdom-based learning.

They argued that current university-level language courses reduce their mother tongue to dry syntactic formulas, killing any potential for emotional attachment. They demanded that the department redesign the syllabus to focus on the hermeneutic analysis of local manuscripts and their applications to contemporary socio-political issues.

Qualitative Case Example: FGD Group 2 produced a critical conclusion read by Participant #05: *"We are tired of being taught to memorize morphological formulas or classifications of regional dialects for cognitive exams. We want a class where we can discuss ancient Palembang manuscripts, debate their ethical values, and connect them with corruption or the moral degradation of the nation today. We need a curriculum that touches the soul, not just one that trains cognitive memory."*

4.6 Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogy

The implementation of emotional-aesthetic immersion through traditional theater, poetry recitation, and local cultural festivals in the classroom was proven to ignite students' intimate cultural passion.

This pedagogical dimension highlighted that local culture cannot be fully understood through detached intellectual observation alone. True cultural affection requires somatic experiences where the physical body acts out the ancestral narratives, creating an unforgettable emotional bond with the traditions.

Qualitative Case Example: Participant #83 reflected on her experience playing a role in the traditional *Dulmuluk* theater in class: *"Reading drama texts in class feels flat. However, when we had to paint our faces, wear the traditional costumes, and chant the rhyming dialogues in the ancient Palembang dialect, something vibrated in my chest. I felt the emotions of our predecessors flowing through my body. This aesthetic experience made me fall in love with Palembang culture in a way I never imagined before."*

4.7 Institutional Philosophical Sanctuary

Students demanded that the university (Universitas Sriwijaya) cease acting merely as a factory producing labor for urban industries and instead formally declare itself an "epistemological sanctuary" protecting indigenous knowledge systems.

They envisioned the university as a political-cultural shield that actively defends local wisdom from the homogenizing forces of global capitalism. Students urged the faculty to establish active research centers where local philosophies are integrated into multidisciplinary scientific projects.

Qualitative Case Example: In her critical essay, Participant #91 asserted: *"Universitas Sriwijaya carries the historical weight of the Sriwijaya Empire. FKIP Unsri must become an epistemological sanctuary where the Malay-Palembang language and literature are not just studied in a quiet corner of the class, but are integrated into respected multidisciplinary research. The university must protect our indigenous knowledge from extinction caused by the waves of globalization that flatten all cultural differences."*

4.8 Global Ontological Diplomacy

Students rejected narrow provincialism and ethnocentric isolation; instead, they aspired to project the existential philosophy of Malay-Palembang onto the international stage through creative writing, digital media, and global cultural diplomacy.

This final dimension highlighted the sophisticated, "glocal" agency of modern students. They believed that Palembang's traditional ecological adaptations and humanistic ethics could offer valuable solutions to global crises, such as climate change and modern societal alienation.

Qualitative Case Example: The closing statement of Participant #09 in the FGD of Group 10: *"The philosophy of living in harmony with nature in the Limas house, which is*

adaptive to floods and earthquakes, and the ethical politeness of Bebaso, are answers to today's global moral crises. We do not want to lock this local wisdom in a museum. We want to share it with the world through social media, international journals, and global collaborations. Our local identity is our unique contribution to global civilization."

Tabulations of Phenomenological Findings

To systematically present the empirical data collected during the study, the following three tables summarize the participants' demographic distribution, linguistic deconstruction, and curricular comparison.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants and Dominant Articulation of Philosophical Dimensions (\$N=100\$)

No	Critical Dimension	Core Phenomenological Meaning	Number of Students Articulating (N)	Percentage of Successful Internalization (%)
1	Linguistic Identity Affect	Deconstruction of cultural shame into ontological pride through the etymology of <i>Bebaso</i> .	88	88%
2	Ethical Oral Tradition	Internalization of <i>Senjang</i> social ethics as an instrument for Gen Z moral resilience.	79	79%
3	Eco-Philosophical River Epistemology	Reconstruction of the Musi River's spiritual value to combat urban ecological crises.	85	85%
4	Philosophical Materialization	Desacralization of Songket/Limas ornaments from mere social status to metaphysical values.	72	72%
5	Philosophy-Based Curriculum	Rejection of language structuralism; demands for curriculum reorientation toward wisdom.	91	91%
6	Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogy	Somatic experience (<i>lived experience</i>) through emotional immersion in traditional performing arts.	84	84%
7	Institutional Sanctuary	Political-academic demands to turn the university into a fortress for indigenous knowledge.	76	76%
8	Global Ontological Diplomacy	Projection of cosmopolitan agency to export local philosophy	68	68%

No	Critical Dimension	Core Phenomenological Meaning	Number of Students Articulating (N)	Percentage of Successful Internalization (%)
		to international audiences.		

Table 2. Critical Thematic Analysis of Key Malay-Palembang Terms and Affective Construction

Local Term / Expression	Traditional Linguistic Structure	Critical Philosophical Meaning (Epistemological)	Students' Affective-Emotional Transformation
<i>Bebaso</i>	System of polite language levels in Palembang.	Ontological recognition of the honor and humanity of the interlocutor.	Cultivates deep interpersonal respect, minimizing individualistic modern egoism.
<i>Senjang</i>	Rhymed oral literature in the form of reciprocal pantuns.	Collective social control and media for polite political-moral critique.	Ignites students' critical consciousness to remain sensitive to urban social justice.
<i>Banyu Mudo</i>	Ecological expression referring to the Musi River's fresh water.	Water as a symbol of spiritual purity, adaptability, and life sustainability.	Instills a profound ecological responsibility (<i>eco-responsibility</i>) to protect the river.
<i>Songket Lepus</i>	Golden threads woven tightly without gaps.	Metaphor for social cohesion (<i>ukhuwah</i>) and solid moral integrity.	Shifts consumerist flexing orientations into a collective duty to guard social ethics.

Table 3. Mapping the Gap Between the Existing Curriculum and Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogical Needs

Evaluation Parameter	Existing Curriculum (Mechanical)	Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogical Needs	Impact on Students' Cultural Affection
Primary Approach	Structuralist, focusing on the memorization of grammatical rules and linguistic structures.	Hermeneutic-Philosophical, focusing on the interrogation of axiological and spiritual meanings.	Shifts from cognitive fatigue to an intimate, long-term emotional attachment (<i>intimate love</i>).
Student Role	Passive consumers, memorizing instructional content to pass cognitive tests.	Active agents, interpreting past ancestral values to solve contemporary problems.	Reclaims a strong sense of ownership and responsibility over ancestral heritage.
Teaching Method	One-way lectures, mechanical	Aesthetic immersion, through <i>Dulmuluk</i>	Ignites cultural passion through

Evaluation Parameter	Existing Curriculum (Mechanical)	Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogical Needs	Impact on Students' Cultural Affection
	worksheets in closed-door classrooms.	theater simulations, literary festivals, and field projects.	lived, somatic bodily experiences.
Learning Outcome	Students can answer theoretical questions but feel emotionally detached from the culture.	Students become visionary cultural diplomats with robust <i>glocal</i> identities.	Guarantees the sustainable preservation of regional cultural heritage across generations.

Discussion

This study successfully uncovers the structure of the affective consciousness of FKIP Unsri students as they transition from cultural alienation to emancipatory ontological reclamation. The primary *novelty* of this research empirically proves that nurturing sustainable cultural affection among urban youth cannot be achieved through sterile, mechanical linguistic instruction, but must instead be pursued through a critical-philosophical interrogation of the indigenous worldview (Abadi & Wijaya, 2023; Lestari & Wardani, 2025). When students deconstruct the axiological dimensions behind polite speech (*Bebaso*) or *Songket* aesthetics, the cultural inferiority complex that has haunted them due to urban modern hegemony crumbles, replaced by an ontological commitment to protect their collective memory (Putri & Erpadellah, 2025). This finding extends cultural affect theory by proving that love for tradition is always intertwined with students' political agency to resist cultural marginalization (Wahid, 2023).

The results of the critical thematic analysis in this study reinforce the importance of critical pedagogy in decolonizing higher education classrooms from modern-technocratic curricular biases that often sideline local knowledge systems (Budiarto & Setiawan, 2022; Atika & Mayrita, 2024). Students in this research were proven to utilize Malay-Palembang philosophy not as a form of romantic escape to the past (*naive nostalgia*), but as a sharp social critique tool to evaluate contemporary social disorientation, consumerist flexing, and ecological destruction in their urban environments (Darmawan, 2023; Suryani & Wijaya, 2024). This shows an active dialectical process where locality is adopted as a spiritual shield and a legitimate epistemological alternative to counter the crises of modern life (Ramadhan, 2024).

Specifically, the findings regarding "Eco-Philosophical River Epistemology" provide an important contribution to the contemporary ecopedagogy discourse in Indonesia (Mulyadi et al., 2023; Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2024). Previous studies on the revitalization of the Musi River have been dominated by civil engineering, tourism, or economic development perspectives that ignore the spiritual dimension of water (*indigenous water philosophy*) (Anwar, 2010; Wijaya, 2015). Our research proves that restoring the ecological relationship between the people of Palembang and the Musi River must begin with restoring the ancestral ecological language (*banyu mudo*) in the consciousness of the youth. This indicates that the maritime local wisdom of South Sumatra harbors a high potential for environmental ethics, ready to engage in equal dialogue with global ecological concepts (Sari & Hartono, 2023; Supriyadi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this finding is in line with the theory of identity hybridity developed in postcolonial cultural studies, which rejects the view that preserving tradition requires youth to become purists who reject modernity (Fitriani et al., 2025). Through the "Global

Ontological Diplomacy" dimension, students demonstrate a confident, cosmopolitan agency where they package the noble values of the *Limas* house and *Bebaso* ethics into digital media formats accessible to global audiences (Utami & Wibowo, 2025). Their cultural identity is no longer exclusive-ethnocentric but inclusive-cosmopolitan (*glocal*); they embrace modern technology while remaining deeply rooted in ancestral spiritual values (Kurniawan & Syarif, 2024).

Nevertheless, students' strong demands for a "Philosophy-Based Curriculum" illustrate a deep dissatisfaction with current regional language teaching models in higher education, which are deemed reductionist and dry (Wahid, 2023). Teaching regional languages in a top-down manner without aesthetic-affective immersion triggers emotional resistance from students (Zulqaidah et al., 2024). The "Affective-Aesthetic Pedagogy" model offered in this research—such as somatic involvement in *Dulmuluk* theater—proves that culture is most effectively internalized when it is felt emotionally and experienced directly by the speakers' bodies, rather than merely read as theoretical text (Ramadhan, 2024).

Higher education, particularly Universitas Sriwijaya, is challenged to respond to this critical youth voice by repositioning its role from a mere provider of technical labor to an "Institutional Philosophical Sanctuary" (Putri & Erpadellah, 2025). Universities must dare to protect indigenous knowledge systems currently besieged by global standardization that erases local uniqueness (Abadi & Wijaya, 2023). This step is vital to prevent epistemological extinction, where a civilization loses the capacity to think about itself in its own language (Lestari & Wardani, 2025).

On the other hand, this study also confirms the urgency of restructuring intergenerational relations in the cultural preservation process. For too long, rigid traditional authorities have alienated young people who want to experiment with heritage (Suryani & Wijaya, 2024). By providing a space for youth voice through philosophical essays and critical FGDs, this research opens an emancipatory communication channel where students can interpret traditions freshly without losing their ethical substance (Darmawan, 2023). This is the key to the survival of regional culture in the digital age (Fitriani et al., 2025).

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has a sociological limitation that must be noted. The scope of research was limited to students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program at FKIP Unsri, who inherently possess a high sensitivity toward the humanities from the beginning. The dynamics of cultural affection and resistance to sociocultural alienation may show different, more complex, or even more resistant patterns if similar research is replicated among students from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs who have minimal exposure to cultural studies curricula.

Conclusion

This critical phenomenological study concludes that the internalization of Malay-Palembang local wisdom among undergraduate students at FKIP Unsri successfully triggers a transformation of consciousness from cultural alienation to an affective, intimate, and emancipatory reclamation of identity. Through deconstructing the philosophical meanings of the *Bebaso* linguistic system, the *Senjang* oral tradition, the eco-philosophical cosmology of the Musi River, and the metaphysics of *Songket* weaving, students realize that their local wisdom is not an obsolete relic of the past, but a living wisdom system crucial for guiding their moral resilience amidst modern urban disruptions. Deep cultural affection and long-term pride are proven to grow authentically

when regional language learning is liberated from rigid, mechanical structuralism and reoriented as a liberating ontological dialogue.

As a primary recommendation, higher education institutions—especially teacher training institutions like Universitas Sriwijaya—must radically restructure their regional language and culture curricula. Education must be transformed from a mechanical-grammatical space into a philosophically driven, culturally sustaining, and affectively rich environment. Universities must prioritize students' emotional attachment and formally position themselves as sanctuaries for indigenous knowledge systems. This strategic step is urgent to transform modern students from passive consumers of global culture into resilient guardians, creative interpreters, and visionary diplomats who project the grandeur of Malay-Palembang ancestral wisdom onto the global stage.

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