

# Aksara Jawa: Do the Javanese Students can Read and Write It?

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**Abstract.** The Javanese language is one of the languages used by people in Indonesia. However, one issue arises when many people speak in Javanese while only a few people can read and write in the alphabet of the Javanese, which is called Aksara Jawa. This Aksara Jawa is mainly used to write Javanese. In its development, it is also used to write several other regional languages, such as Sundanese, Madurese, Sasak, and Malay, as well as historical languages, such as Sanskrit and Kawi. The Javanese script is a derivative of the Indian Brahmi script through the Kawi script and is closely related to the Balinese script. The Javanese script was actively used in Javanese literature and daily writing from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century before being replaced by Latin letters. Nowadays, 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Aksara Jawa is learned by students at school as a local language lesson. Some schools provide it while the rest is not. A question comes out; do the Javanese generations (students) nowadays can write and read the Aksara Jawa? The result shows that in many elementary schools until junior high school, students cannot read and write in Aksara Jawa.

**Keywords:** Endangered, aksara Jawa, writing, reading

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## 1 Introduction

The Javanese language is one of the biggest spoken languages in the world. It is placed in the 11<sup>th</sup> most extensive language spoken by Javanese people in Indonesia and many people from other countries like Suriname and New Caledonia. In the last issues, people talk about their anxiety about the endangered of the Javanese language, because many children nowadays, taught by their mother and surrounded by the national language (Indonesian) or Even English and Mandarin. However, the Javanese language still has its 'glory' with a total amount of 85 million speakers.

What is the endangered issue then? It does not matter about the speaker but the written context language matter. With the huge number of speaker of Javanese, one question arises and need to be answered, do the Javanese speakers can read and write the

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Javanese script? Then this research was conducted to answer this question, taking in a specific area that is Primary students (elementary and junior high school) who can speak Javanese.

The writing system of Javanese script is changed over the centuries. The distinctive writing system of Javanese (aksara Jawa) changed over the centuries, following the course of the cultural history of Java, from the Hindu period, through the Islamic period, into the colonial period. In this study, we will focus on the Javanese script that is a derivative of the Indian Brahmi script through the Kawi script from the Hindu period [1][2].

The Javanese script is different from the alphabet that is usually used by students. it uses rarely in daily activity and is written in a special place like in a museum or manuscript. Still, Javanese students taught the Javanese script as one of the subjects in the school curriculum. Some schools make it the local language subject and some schools do not provide it in their school curriculum [3][4]. In addition, the study of Javanese script is not as easy as learning a language with the Latin alphabet. Javanese script is one of the special characters that need to be studied specifically [5][6]. The difficulty of learning Javanese script, “the students consider learning Javanese script to be difficult particularly in distinguishing and memorizing Carakan, and memorizing Sandangan and Pasangan with its writing rules” [7].

This study aims to know whether the Javanese students can write and read the Javanese script or not. the research methodology, the research result, discussions, conclusion, and also suggestions for the next researcher are provided as the detailed answer to the research question.

## **2. Method**

This study uses quantitative methodology as the research method. This methodology was chosen because of the exact one to gain the data needed to answer the research question. Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques.

Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon [8][9].

The participants in this research are elementary and junior high school students. They came from 11 different schools. Some schools taught Javanese script and some schools are not. The elementary school is divided into two kinds of school that is National Elementary School and Islamic elementary school. In addition, junior high school is divided into two kinds of schools is National junior high school and Islamic junior high school.

The instrument used in this research is a questionnaire. some questions related to the student's skill in reading and writing the Javanese script are provided in the questionnaire [10]. After getting the data collection, the data is run by manual calculating and process it into percentage form. The percentage data are divided into two parts; 1) percentage per- school-based 2) overall data based.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

The result of the questionnaire was processed into percentages. There are five kinds of data that can be supported to answer the research question. The four data will be delivered the detailed information of each kind of school-based and the final data will be provided the compilation of all of the students' answers from all the schools.

First. Some participants came from 5 national elementary schools (SDN). They are in 9,10,11 and 12 years old students and 3, 4, 5, 6 graders. The result of their Javanese script reading and writing skills is, 100% of them cannot read and write the Javanese script, so none of them can write and read the Javanese script.

Second. Some participants came from 2 Islamic elementary schools (MI). they are 8, 9,11, and 12 years old students and in 3, 4, 5, 6 graders. The result about their Javanese script reading and writing skills is, 85,7% of them cannot read and write the Javanese script, so 14,3% of them can write and read the Javanese script.

Third. Some participants came from 3 National Junior High schools (SMPN). they are 12, 13, 14 years old students and in 7,8,9 grader. The result about their Javanese script reading and writing skills is, 54,5% of them cannot read and write the Javanese script, so 45,5% of them can write and read the Javanese script.

Fourth. Some participants came from 1 Islamic Junior High school (MTS). they are 12, 13, 14, 15 years old students and in 7,8,9 grader. The result about their Javanese script reading and writing skills is, 83,3% of them cannot read and 66,6% cannot write the Javanese script, so 16,6% of them can read and 33,3% can write the Javanese script.

Final. The number of students who cannot read the Javanese script is 81,4% while the number of students who can read it is 18,6%. In addition, the number of students who cannot write the Javanese script is 79% while the number of students who can write it is 21%.

From the result, we may take a note that Javanese Script is endangered. In contrast with the amount of Javanese speakers, only a few of them can write and read the Javanese script. The learning Javanese script is considered difficult because Javanese script is no longer used as daily reading and writing medium [11].

#### 4. Conclusion

The endangered of Javanese script because of the few amount of readers and write in it. Most of The Javanese students cannot read and write the Javanese script. The result shows that 81,4% of the students cannot read and 79% of them cannot write the Javanese script. From this result, we may make a line that even the students speak Javanese, they are not merely can read and write the Javanese script. They write the Javanese language with Latin Alphabets instead.

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