The Influence of Local Languages on English Speech Community Interaction

Lady Maysuri Ma'rufi[1], Anhar[2], Maria Stela Febry Kondoatie[3], Andi Hikmayani Makmur[4], Saiful[5], Nur Qalbi[6]
Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia[1-6]
Email Korespondensi: ladymaysurimarufi@gmail.com , anharbimambojo@gmail.com, mariastelafebrykondoatie@gmail.com, hikmayanimakmur@gmail.com saiful@unismuh.ac.id qalbi@unismuh.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the influence of local languages on interaction within English-speaking communities in Indonesia. In multilingual societies, local languages function not only as tools of communication but also as markers of cultural and social identity. This research employs a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach to explore individuals' lived experiences in using local languages alongside English in daily interactions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires involving members of English-speaking communities from diverse local language backgrounds. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to language use and interaction. The findings reveal that the integration of local languages into English interactions enhances mutual understanding, strengthens social relationships, and creates a more inclusive and comfortable communicative environment. Moreover, the use of local languages contributes to the reinforcement of individual and group identity and increases speakers' confidence when communicating in English. These findings highlight the role of local languages as cultural bridges in multilingual English-speaking communities and suggest important implications for language studies and culturally responsive language education practices.
Keywords: *local languages, social interaction, English-speaking communities, cultural identity, multilingual society*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh bahasa daerah terhadap interaksi dalam komunitas penutur bahasa Inggris di Indonesia. Dalam masyarakat multibahasa, bahasa daerah tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat komunikasi, tetapi juga sebagai penanda identitas budaya dan sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup individu dalam menggunakan bahasa daerah berdampingan dengan bahasa Inggris dalam interaksi sehari-hari. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan kuesioner yang melibatkan anggota komunitas penutur bahasa Inggris dari berbagai latar belakang bahasa daerah. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema yang berulang terkait penggunaan bahasa dan interaksi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi bahasa daerah dalam interaksi berbahasa Inggris dapat meningkatkan saling pengertian, memperkuat hubungan sosial, serta menciptakan lingkungan komunikasi yang

lebih inklusif dan nyaman. Selain itu, penggunaan bahasa daerah berkontribusi dalam memperkuat identitas individu dan kelompok serta meningkatkan kepercayaan diri penutur saat berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris. Temuan ini menegaskan peran bahasa daerah sebagai jembatan budaya dalam komunitas penutur bahasa Inggris yang multibahasa dan memberikan implikasi penting bagi kajian kebahasaan serta praktik pendidikan bahasa yang responsif terhadap budaya.
Kata kunci: *bahasa daerah, interaksi sosial, komunitas penutur bahasa Inggris, identitas budaya, masyarakat multibahasa.*

INTRODUCTION

In multilingual societies, language use cannot be understood merely as a technical means of communication but must be examined as a sociocultural practice embedded in power relations, identity negotiation, and social positioning. Indonesia, with its extensive linguistic diversity, presents a compelling context in which English functions as a global and institutional language, while local languages continue to serve as carriers of cultural identity and social solidarity. Within English-speaking communities, the interaction between English and local languages reflects more than code choice; it reveals how speakers strategically negotiate belonging, authority, and comfort in communication. While English is often associated with modernity, education, and global mobility, local languages retain symbolic capital that affirms speakers' cultural roots and social intimacy. Previous research has tended to emphasize the instrumental benefits of English proficiency, often marginalizing the sociolinguistic value of local languages. This study critically addresses this gap by examining how local languages influence interaction within English-speaking communities, particularly in shaping comprehension, confidence, and identity construction. By situating language use within sociolinguistic and interactionist frameworks, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of multilingual communication beyond purely linguistic competence.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of individuals who actively use both English and local languages in social interaction. The phenomenological design was selected to foreground participants' subjective meanings and interpretations of language use, which are central to understanding sociolinguistic phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Participants were drawn from English-speaking communities in linguistically diverse regions of Indonesia using purposive sampling, ensuring that informants possessed both English proficiency and sustained engagement with local languages. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires, allowing for methodological triangulation and enhancing the credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2014). Interviews explored participants' perceptions of identity, comfort, and interactional dynamics, while observation enabled the researcher to examine language practices in naturalistic settings. Questionnaires supported the qualitative data by identifying recurring patterns of language use. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis

procedure, involving systematic coding and theme development. Interpretation was conducted reflexively, considering broader sociocultural contexts and acknowledging the researcher's positionality, in line with qualitative research rigor (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that local languages play a significant and multifaceted role in shaping interaction within English-speaking communities. Rather than obstructing communication, the integration of local languages into English discourse functioned as a pragmatic and affective resource that enhanced mutual understanding and interactional comfort. Participants reported that local language elements helped clarify meaning, soften conversational tone, and establish relational closeness, particularly in informal contexts. This suggests that communication effectiveness in multilingual settings cannot be reduced to grammatical accuracy in English alone, but must account for sociocultural resonance. Moreover, the use of local languages contributed to the reinforcement of individual and collective identity, enabling speakers to maintain cultural authenticity while engaging in global communication. These findings support symbolic interactionist perspectives that view language as a key medium through which social reality and identity are constructed (Blumer, 1969; Gee, 2014). However, the results also raise critical questions regarding linguistic hierarchy, as English remains dominant in formal and institutional domains, potentially limiting the legitimacy of local languages. Thus, while local languages function as cultural bridges, their use also reflects ongoing tensions between global linguistic norms and local identity preservation. This study underscores the need for language education and policy to adopt a more critical, culturally responsive approach that recognizes multilingual practices as assets rather than deviations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that local languages are not peripheral to English interaction in multilingual communities but function as essential sociocultural resources that shape meaning, identity, and relational dynamics. The findings challenge dominant monolingual and English-centric assumptions by showing that communicative effectiveness is deeply tied to speakers' ability to mobilize local linguistic repertoires alongside English. Through a phenomenological lens, this research reveals that local language use enhances interactional comfort, reinforces individual and collective identity, and enables speakers to negotiate social belonging without compromising their engagement in global communication. Importantly, the study highlights persistent tensions between the symbolic value of local languages and the institutional dominance of English, underscoring the need for more critical and inclusive approaches in language education and policy. By foregrounding lived experiences and multilingual agency, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of sociolinguistic interaction in multilingual contexts and calls for future studies to further interrogate power, ideology, and equity in global English use.

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