

Volume 1, Issue 1

Research Article

Date of Submission: 16 June, 2025

Date of Acceptance: 20 August, 2025

Date of Publication: 26 August, 2025

The Influence of Social Dynamics on Language Use at SMPN 7 Palopo

Armia*

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia

***Corresponding Author:** Armia, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo, Indonesia.

Citation: Armia. (2025). The Influence of Social Dynamics on Language Use at SMPN 7 Palopo. *J Interdiscip Hist Hum Soc*, 1(1), 01-02.

Abstract

Language, as a primary means of communication, plays an important role in shaping social interactions and reflecting group dynamics. In the school environment, particularly junior high schools, language is not only used to convey academic information, but also a medium for students and teachers to build relationships, and express identity.

The purpose of this observation is to understand the dynamics of communication among students and teachers at SMPN 7 Palopo, and to identify the social factors that influence language use in these interactions. This observation focuses on how language is used in various contexts in the school environment, both in formal situations such as in the classroom and in informal interactions such as in the canteen or school grounds.

This observation is expected to provide insight into how language is not only a means of communication, but also a medium that reflects social hierarchy and group identity within SMPN 7 Palopo. The data collected will be analyzed to identify patterns and trends in language use, as well as to understand the social implications of the observed communication dynamics.

Methodology

The research was conducted on October 20, 2024 through direct observation at SMPN 7 Palopo. Observations were made in classrooms and areas of student interaction outside the classroom. The main focus of the observation included the way students interacted with each other and with the teacher, the language used, and the differences in communication styles based on social context. Notes were taken on the use of Indonesian, local language, and slang in the context of formal and informal conversations. Data was obtained from:

- **Primary data:** In-depth interviews with students, teachers, and parents.
- **Secondary data:** Related literature, such as books, journal articles, and previous research.

Data collection techniques:

- Open-ended interviews to understand students' views and experiences.
- Observation of student interactions in the classroom and school environment to record formal and informal language variations.
- Documentation study of teaching materials to see the use of language. Data analysis used thematic analysis techniques to find patterns of language use influenced by social dynamics, such as social class, peers, and social media. Data validity was ensured through triangulation and peer analysis.

Findings and Analysis

The observation results show that students use Indonesian with regional dialects in their daily interactions. In conversations between students, they tend to use a casual language style, while when speaking with teachers, formal language use dominates.

Differences in language use are also seen from socio-economic backgrounds; students from higher economic backgrounds use more formal and complex vocabulary compared to students from lower economic backgrounds who are more likely

to use colloquialisms or slang. The influence of gender is also significant in the interaction.

Male students tend to speak more directly and dominantly, while female students are more empathetic and collaborative. When interacting, the language used by male students was more assertive, while female students used more subtle and polite language.

Discussion

This finding can be related to relevant sociolinguistic theories, such as William Labov's theory of language variation, which explains that variations in language use are often influenced by social factors such as age, gender and economic status. Code-switching was also evident in the students' interactions; they switched between local and Indonesian depending on the social context to show group identity or familiarity. This is in line with the concept of language communities, where certain groups use language variation to create a shared identity.

Conclusion

Language use at SMPN 7 Palopo is strongly influenced by the context of the situation.

In formal situations such as in class, students tend to choose more structured and polite language, while in informal situations, their language becomes more casual and includes slang. Gender and social status do not play a significant role in influencing language use; however, age and seniority affect the way students communicate, especially when speaking with peers. Although students speak politely to teachers, their language remains influenced by regional dialects, combining informal speech with formal structures [1-8].

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be put forward:

- **Promoting Linguistic Diversity:** Schools should continue to support and value students' use of regional dialects as part of their cultural identity, while ensuring that the language used in formal settings, such as the classroom, remains polite and professional.
- **Emphasizing Politeness in Communication:** Although students speak informally outside of class, it is important for schools to continue to reinforce the importance of politeness and respect in formal communication, especially in interactions with teachers and classmates in the educational environment.
- **Celebrating Cultural Diversity:** Schools can organize events that promote linguistic and cultural diversity, allowing students to learn about different languages and traditions. This will help strengthen students' sense of belonging while respecting Indonesia's cultural and linguistic diversity.
- **Creating an Inclusive Environment:** Schools should encourage an inclusive linguistic environment where all languages, whether national, regional or foreign, are respected. This will enhance students' communication skills and cultural awareness. By implementing these recommendations, SMPN 7 Palopo can create a more inclusive environment that values linguistic diversity while maintaining a professional academic atmosphere in formal interactions.

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