

## Regional Language Traces in the Use of Indonesian: A Case Study of Student Linguistic Interaction

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**Abstract-**This research investigates the factors influencing the use of Indonesian and regional languages among vocational high school students. Utilizing a qualitative research design and a case study approach, the study explores the impact of regional languages on students' use of Indonesian during daily school interactions. Data were gathered through observations and interviews with students, which were then subjected to a detailed case study analysis. The findings indicate that students often code-switch between Indonesian and regional languages during the learning process. While regional languages are predominantly used in peer interactions for better mutual understanding, Indonesian is more frequently employed in teacher-student interactions, particularly when answering questions. Despite teachers' efforts to promote the use of Indonesian, regional languages persist in informal settings. This study underscores the dynamic relationship between regional languages and Indonesian, highlighting the necessity for language policies that support multilingualism within educational settings.

**Keywords:** Regional Language Traces, Language Use, Educational Linguistics, Bilingualism, Vocational Education.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language is an integral part and an outcome of cultural diversity. It serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a reflection of the ways of thinking specific to a cultural context. The notion that language is a prerequisite for thinking underscores its crucial role in shaping culture. In conceptualizing humans as homosymbolicum, or symbol-using beings, language signifies a complexity that transcends the mere thinking capability associated with homo sapiens, who are considered merely thinking beings.

In the Indonesian context, the diversity of

languages and cultures presents a pertinent topic, especially regarding the coexistence of the Indonesian language amid a multitude of local languages and cultures. In education, the Indonesian language plays a significant role in supporting students' intellectual, social, and emotional development. At the same time, local languages also hold essential roles that should not be overlooked, as both Indonesian and local languages contribute to students' success across various fields of study (Chaesar, 2021).

People, communities, and nations use language as a tool to interact and communicate, as well as to express their feelings about various

natural situations and circumstances. The way people express themselves through language is influenced by their personal thoughts and individual circumstances. The use of language within a society reflects its cultural values and can also illustrate the social conditions of that society. Hence, the relationship between language and culture is very intimate. In this context, social and cultural realities can be analyzed through a linguistic approach. One branch of linguistics, which comes from the Latin word "lingua" meaning "language," focuses on the study of language itself. Through linguistic studies, we can better understand and explain the complex phenomena related to language use in society (Fachriyah et al., 2022).

Communication is an essential aspect of language and linguistic studies. The term "language" here encompasses not just a single language but includes all forms of languages used for interaction between speakers. This includes local languages, the Indonesian language, and foreign languages. This focus of linguistic study emphasizes that the manner in which individuals communicate is deeply influenced by their culture and social environment. It illustrates that language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a reflection of the social behaviors and values of a community. Language, as a form of human social behavior, plays a crucial role in interactions among individuals (Mahendra et al., 2022).

Language goes beyond being merely a sequence of words; it mirrors the social values upheld by a linguistic community. Therefore, when using language, it is vital for individuals to always adhere to the norms established by their society. This means that language should be used with politeness and respect, in line with prevailing societal rules. In essence, the way we use language is a testament to our cultural and social adherence, underscoring the importance of courteous and respectful communication.

Many local languages are used in Indonesian villages as the primary means of daily communication, while Indonesian is more often utilized by individuals who have formal education or are employed in specific sectors such as education, office work, and similar fields. For most villagers, including farmers, fishermen, and housewives, Indonesian is not deemed essential for their day-to-day interactions. The local language, regarded as the mother tongue, is seen as crucial to preserve and nurture. Consequently, students, particularly those in

vocational high schools (SMKs), tend to use local languages more frequently than Indonesian (Rahmi & Syukur, 2023).

Given Indonesia's status as the fourth most populous nation globally and its vast archipelago boasting rich ethnic and cultural diversity, Indonesian holds significant strategic value both regionally and internationally. Language serves as a cornerstone of daily interactions, and proficiency in language is closely tied to progress in the era of globalization. However, a dynamic interaction exists between Indonesian and local languages in contemporary society. Parents frequently encounter this challenge, which becomes further compounded when teenagers or schoolchildren also utilize specific dialects (Puspitasar & Devi, 2019).

In Indonesia, it's common for people to communicate using multiple languages in their daily lives. The term "bilingualism" typically describes the capability and practice of using two languages. However, there's a distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism. Bilingualism pertains to an individual's ability to use two languages, whereas multilingualism refers to the habitual use of two or more languages in daily interactions. The former is often labeled as bilingualism, while the latter is referred to as multilingualism (Bhakti, 2020).

Currently, adhering to the correct and official usage of the Indonesian language is increasingly challenging. This difficulty stems from a lack of awareness among language users regarding proper language usage. Addressing this issue requires collective efforts from various stakeholders, including the government, educators, employees, and the community. Raising awareness among readers about the significance of maintaining proper Indonesian language usage is a crucial step. Often, Indonesian is perceived solely as a means for daily communication or as a subject taught for educational purposes. However, within the academic realm, proficiency in using Indonesian accurately and formally is highly valued and expected (Romdhoningsih, 2022).

The utilization of Bahasa Indonesia within the school setting remains limited. Often, teachers and students unwittingly resort to local languages during interactions. However, Indonesian holds a pivotal role in schools as it facilitates the expansion of knowledge and skills, preserves cultural diversity, and propels advancements in science and technology. Crucially, it fosters polite and effective

communication between students and teachers.

Over time, students' language patterns have undergone changes, influenced by social media and daily interactions, starting from elementary school. Hence, it becomes imperative for teachers to continually monitor students' language development within the school environment. Consequently, educational programs must be designed to enhance students' language proficiency, starting from elementary levels up to higher education institutions such as SMASS/SMK, ensuring mastery of fundamental language skills (Hartati & Anwar, 2023).

Apart from ingrained community traditions, the prevalence of local languages in school settings is also influenced by students' varying degrees of proficiency in using Indonesian, particularly in adhering to officially regulated spelling and grammar. Additionally, some students feel uneasy employing formal Indonesian outside of prescribed contexts, exacerbating their inclination towards local languages. This widespread use of local languages indirectly affects the prominence of Indonesian as the national language. Nevertheless, contemporary dynamics illustrate a coexistence of both local and Indonesian languages.

Furthermore, substituting Indonesian with other languages in daily interactions can detrimentally impact students' mental and psychological well-being. For instance, such behavior may induce feelings of embarrassment and reluctance to engage with peers from rural or urban backgrounds due to perceived inadequacies in Indonesian proficiency, including errors in vocabulary and syntax. Consequently, students who resort to language switching may become susceptible to criticism and social stigma (Nurjanah & Habibah, 2018).

The utilization of multiple languages in communication scenarios, including within educational contexts, is prevalent. This phenomenon arises from the fact that each student possesses at least two languages: their mother tongue (B1) and Indonesian (B2), which serves as the language of instruction during schooling. Consequently, there exists an interlanguage interaction characterized by mutual influence between the first language (B1) and the second language (B2) in bilingual individuals.

This mutual influence between B1 and B2 signifies that B1 can impact B2, and vice versa. Such interaction occurs in individuals who fluidly alternate between both languages. It is assumed

that students' proficiency in B1 surpasses that in B2 since B1 is the language acquired and utilized from childhood within the family, whereas B2 is acquired upon entering school. Given the superior mastery of B1 and the more frequent opportunities to use it compared to B2, it is likely that a student's proficiency in B1 will influence their usage of B2 (Puspitasar & Devi, 2019).

As it is widely acknowledged, students frequently utilize various local languages in their daily interactions. This phenomenon arises due to some students' limited grasp of standard Indonesian usage, coupled with their discomfort in employing this language outside of formal or official contexts. Consequently, they often blend Bahasa Indonesia with local languages, both in speech and meaning. However, the widespread use of these local languages is not expected to significantly impact the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia, the country's official language (Rahman, 2016).

Research in this area can seek to pinpoint the factors influencing language usage among vocational secondary students. Given that language profoundly shapes our daily lives and language proficiency is increasingly crucial in the globalization era, understanding these influences becomes imperative. Thus, the research problem formulation revolves around investigating the impact of regional languages on the usage of Indonesian and devising strategies to mitigate the prevalence of regional languages undermining Indonesian.

This issue is pertinent because current observations reveal inappropriate language mixing among students, prompting the need for intervention. However, contemporary trends also show a growing acceptance of bilingualism, where individuals seamlessly switch between local languages and Indonesian.

This study aims to identify the factors influencing the use of Indonesian and regional languages among vocational high school students. It explores the impact of regional languages on students' use of Indonesian during daily school interactions and seeks to develop strategies to balance the use of both languages in educational settings.

The key research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do regional languages influence the use of Indonesian among vocational high school students?

2. What strategies can be implemented to balance the use of regional languages and Indonesian in educational settings?

## **II. METHODS**

The methodology employed in this research is qualitative, specifically utilizing a case study approach. This method was selected to delve deeply into the intricate phenomena surrounding the impact and incorporation of local languages in the usage of Indonesian by students. The case study approach proves particularly apt for this investigation as it permits a meticulous and holistic scrutiny of the students' linguistic interactions within their natural school milieu, furnishing elaborate and nuanced insights into their language utilization patterns.

The primary focus of this research lies in examining how local languages either influence or meld into the utilization of Indonesian by students during their daily interactions at school. Consequently, the students emerge as the principal subjects of this study. By centering on their linguistic behaviors, the research endeavors to unveil the underlying dynamics and contextual factors that mold their usage of Indonesian within a multilingual environment.

To achieve the research objectives, diverse instruments were employed to evaluate distinct facets of the students' language proficiency and usage. These instruments encompass assessments of students' writing comprehension, which entails appraising their capacity to write in Indonesian, taking into account elements such as coherence, grammar, vocabulary, and overall writing prowess. Additionally, grammar assessments were conducted to gauge the students' grasp of Indonesian grammar rules, encompassing syntax, morphology, and sentence structure. Moreover, response evaluations were carried out to scrutinize students' reactions to information conveyed in Indonesian, evaluating their comprehension and adeptness in effectively interacting using the language.

Data collection for this study was executed through two principal techniques: observations and interviews. Direct observations were conducted in the school environment to capture real-time interactions among students and between students and teachers. This method provided firsthand insights into the organic use of language across varied contexts and situations. Furthermore, structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and potentially parents to gather

comprehensive information on their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences pertaining to the use of Indonesian and local languages. Interviews facilitated the exploration of personal narratives and subjective insights that might not be readily observable.

The collected data underwent analysis using a case study approach, employing specific qualitative analysis methods such as content analysis. Content analysis entailed transcribing and systematically analyzing the interviews and observations. This method involved coding the data into categories, identifying themes, and interpreting emergent patterns. Through this analytical process, the research aimed to construct a comprehensive understanding of how local languages influence the use of Indonesian among students, elucidating both the positive and negative effects and the factors contributing to these linguistic interactions.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Indonesian holds a pivotal role within Indonesian society as it serves as the national and official language of the country. It is widely utilized by individuals as a requisite means of interaction, collaboration, and communication. Numerous endeavors are continually undertaken to ensure the refinement and preservation of the Indonesian language, thereby showcasing its distinct identity. These efforts encompass the implementation of language standardization policies, formulation of terminology guidelines, and establishment of absorption guidelines. Language is an indispensable aspect of life, facilitating interactions and enabling individuals to fulfill their objectives. It functions as a systematic entity, characterized by a structured arrangement of components that adhere to established patterns and can be readily identified (Chaer, 2021).

Indonesian serves as the language of instruction in education. In a country, language is needed to carry out learning activities in schools. Therefore, using more than one language will interfere with education. Students who come from other countries can easily communicate with each other or with their teachers if they use one language. Indonesian is the only language that can fulfill the needs of a national language. In addition to these functions, the use of Indonesian as a medium of instruction in education can make students more aware of Indonesian or their own language (Nurjanah & Habibah, 2018).

In our locality, it's common for students to predominantly use local languages in their daily communication, despite the school's requirement that all students should possess proficiency in Indonesian for interactions with teachers and during the learning process. Factors such as family background, language constraints, and environmental influences can significantly impact students' proficiency in Indonesian. This situation entails both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, embracing local languages fosters a deeper appreciation of Indonesian culture, strengthens ethnic and regional identities, and enhances communication familiarity. However, there are also negative consequences to consider. For instance, the prevalence of regional languages can pose challenges for individuals from different regions to understand each other, complicating interregional communication. Moreover, foreign nationals seeking to learn Indonesian may struggle due to the complexity arising from diverse vocabulary usage across different local languages. Additionally, excessive reliance on local languages may lead to a gradual decline in proficiency and familiarity with Indonesian among the population. In the context of languages such as Nias, communication serves as a vital tool for cooperation, interaction, and self-identification, intrinsically intertwined with the cultural context and situational dynamics. Languages fulfill various functions, including conveying information, self-expression, influencing others, and evoking imagination or aesthetic appreciation, ultimately shaping social interactions and dynamics within communities (Bawamenewi, 2020).

It is possible that we can find out the benefits of using local languages in learning. Research conducted by Freeman and Freeman in Mahsun (1999) shows that students who study in schools with their mother tongue as the language of instruction tend not to experience difficulties in following teaching and learning activities with the second language of instruction. Meanwhile, the negative effect of using local languages, namely making Indonesian more difficult to use. Nonetheless, in accordance with applicable rules and regulations, learners are required to use appropriate and ethical Indonesian at all times. So, the actions that need to be taken to prevent it all can be started in the family environment, if in the family often use regional language then parents should also be able to train children to be able to speak Indonesian which at least if the child

speaks does not mix the two languages, namely regional language and Indonesian, then in the world of education the role of the teacher is very important here. Indonesian language teachers have a very important role in fostering and developing Indonesian language. This is because the role of teachers, especially in the world of education, can be used as an example to foster Indonesian language both in the educational environment.

As the national language, Indonesian has a very important position and function in Indonesian society. The use of Indonesian which is a necessity for language is often used by people's lives in general to interact, cooperate and communicate. Language standardization policies, terminology guidelines, absorption guidelines and so on, continue to be carried out so that the Indonesian language reaches perfection and can show its identity. Indonesian language teachers have a very important role in fostering and developing Indonesian language. This is because the role of teachers, especially in the world of education, can be used as an example to foster Indonesian language both in the educational environment.

Based on interviews conducted with students, it is evident that they frequently resort to using local languages as a preliminary step in the learning process. This indicates a prevalent tendency among students to rely on their native languages as a foundation for initiating their educational endeavors. However, this practice appears to be at odds with the official status accorded to Indonesian as the state language, as stipulated by Law No. 24/2009. Particularly, the utilization of regional languages within the school curriculum seems incongruent with the mandate outlined in the legal framework. Chapter III, Article 29, Paragraph 1 of the aforementioned law expressly states that "Indonesian shall be used as the language of instruction in national education," emphasizing the primacy of Indonesian as the medium of instruction across educational institutions in the country.

Research indicates that students maintain the use of both Indonesian and local languages throughout the learning process. It's observed that conversing with classmates in the local language is often perceived as more accessible than communicating with teachers in Indonesian. Many students find it easier to express themselves using the local language rather than Indonesian when interacting with teachers. However, findings suggest that while students

predominantly utilize local languages during casual interactions with peers, they tend to employ Indonesian more frequently when responding to academic inquiries.

The study highlights that teachers advocate for the consistent use of Indonesian by students. It reveals that teachers do not typically endorse the simultaneous use of local languages and Indonesian during learning sessions, indicating a preference for the exclusive use of Indonesian. Furthermore, data suggests that teachers predominantly employ Indonesian when engaging with students during instructional activities, whereas local languages persist in informal interactions with students outside the classroom.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Language serves as a foundational element of human existence, serving as the primary vehicle for communication. It plays a pivotal role in facilitating interactions among individuals, communities, and nations, enabling the conveyance of ideas and emotions across various contexts. The nuances of language expression often reflect one's personal thoughts and lived experiences.

However, students may encounter difficulties in language mastery, particularly when they engage in code-switching or mix multiple languages during communication. Ideally, students should attain proficiency in the official language, in this case, Indonesian, encompassing both written and spoken forms. This linguistic challenge often stems from the influence of students' mother tongues. The enduring presence of regional languages persists as students frequently utilize their native languages in their daily exchanges, including within educational settings. Consequently, the pervasive influence of their mother tongue inevitably impacts their aptitude for accurately employing the standardized language.

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