

LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS OF ADOLESCENTS IN MUARA BASUNG VILLAGE, PINGGIR, BENGKALIS, RIAU

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ABSTRACT

Language is the main means of social interaction that not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of the identity and social position of its speakers in society. This research is motivated by the phenomenon of diversity of economic and educational backgrounds in Muara Basung Village which is suspected to affect the variation in language use among adolescents, such as the use of slang, mixing codes, and shifting the level of formality. The purpose of this study is to describe the variation in language use by social class, identify differences in language style choices, and analyze the influence of the social environment on the way adolescents communicate. The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. The research subjects consisted of adolescents aged 13–18 years on Jalan Banjaran, Muara Basung Village. Data were collected through participatory observation techniques by observing direct verbal interactions as well as documentation in the form of recorded conversations and social media activities. The results of this study are expected to show that social class differences that include the economic and educational levels of parents significantly create different linguistic patterns in adolescents. In conclusion, the use of language in adolescents in Muara Basung Village functions as a status symbol that forms self-identity and shows closeness or distance between certain social groups. This research makes a theoretical contribution to the sociolinguistic development of the relationship between social structure and language variation.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the main means in the process of social interaction of the community which not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of the social identity, cultural background, and social position of the speakers. In sociolinguistic studies, language is seen as a reflection of social structure, including the differences in social classes that exist within a community. This is in line with the main theory from Sumarsono (2022) which states that a person's social status is automatically reflected in the level of formality and choice of language variations he uses when communicating. The phenomenon of language use has become very dynamic in adolescent groups, who are psychologically in the phase of searching for identity and tend to adjust the way of language to the social environment, education level, and family economic conditions. Putri and Erni (2021) in their research also emphasized that the selection of language variation is highly determined by the speech environment and the social context in which the interaction takes place.

Several previous studies have examined language variation in adolescents from various perspectives. Pratama et al. (2022) in the journal *Konfiks* shows that adolescents tend to use informal language variations and code mixing that are

strongly influenced by the development of digital media. In line with that, research by Auliah et al. (2022) in the journal *Manifestasi* revealed that social class and education factors are important variables that determine the use of formal and non-formal languages. Internationally, Penelope Eckert (2000) through her work *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* emphasizes that linguistic variation is a social practice that is actively used by speakers to affirm the identity of their social groups. In addition, Sari and Erni (2021) in a sociolinguistic study show how language elements such as code mixing become part of identity expression in communication. Although much research has been done on adolescent language, studies that specifically link language variation to social class backgrounds in developing rural environments such as Muara Basung Village are still limited.

Muara Basung Village has the characteristics of a community with a diverse economic and educational background, which is suspected of creating a certain status symbol through language. This difference is not only seen in the choice of vocabulary, but also in the speaking style and level of formality when interacting in a family and peer environment. Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to describe the variation in language use in adolescents based on the background of social classes in Muara Basung Village. In addition, this study aims to identify differences in language style choices and analyze how the influence of the social environment shapes the communication patterns of adolescents. Through this research, it is hoped that it can be understood more deeply about the relationship between social structure and linguistic practices in adolescent groups in rural areas through the framework of Sumarsono's sociolinguistic theory.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand and describe in depth the phenomenon of language variation used by adolescents based on their social class background in rural environments. The descriptive method is used to describe linguistic facts that arise naturally in daily life without giving specific treatment or intervention to the research subject. Through this approach, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the forms of language variation used by adolescents as well as the social factors that influence the use of these language variations.

The research was carried out on Jalan Banjaran, Muara Basung Village, Pinggir District, Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province. The research location was chosen because it has heterogeneous social characteristics in terms of socio-economic conditions so that it is possible to find a variety of diverse language use among adolescents. The study subjects were adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years old and domiciled in the study area. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling by considering the representation of different social classes, namely the lower, middle, and upper social classes. The grouping of social classes is based on several indicators, such as the level of education of the parents, the type of work of the parents, the economic condition of the family, and the ownership of assets that reflect the socioeconomic status of the family.

Data collection was carried out through participatory observation techniques, documentation, and interviews. Participatory observation was carried out by means of the researcher directly engaging in the adolescent social environment to observe the use of language that emerged in various informal communication situations. Through this observation, researchers can obtain natural and authentic data on vocabulary choice, language use, code mixing, and other forms of language variation used by adolescents. In addition to observation, documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data in the form of conversation recordings, field notes, and screenshots of adolescent communication interactions on social media that were relevant to the focus of the research. To strengthen the data obtained, the researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with several informants to obtain information about the socioeconomic background of the family and their views on the use of language in daily life.

The validity of the data in this study was obtained through source triangulation techniques and triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data obtained from various informants from different social classes, while technical triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of observations, documentation, and interviews. The application of triangulation aims to increase the validity and credibility of data so that the research results obtained can be scientifically accounted for.

Data analysis is carried out continuously from the data collection process until the research is completed. The analysis refers to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model which includes the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data condensation stage, researchers select, group, and simplify data that are relevant to the focus of the research. Furthermore, the condensed data is presented in the form of descriptions, tables, and conversation excerpts to facilitate the interpretation process. The last stage is carried out by drawing conclusions based on the patterns found regarding the relationship between social class and adolescent language variation. The results of the analysis were then interpreted using sociolinguistic studies so that they could provide a deeper picture of the influence of

social class on adolescent language use in rural environments.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the study showed that there was a significant variation in language use among adolescents in Muara Basung Village based on their social class background. Adolescents from social classes with higher economic levels and parental education tend to have access to a wider variety of languages, including the use of foreign terms and more standard Indonesian in certain situations. In contrast, adolescents from lower social class backgrounds are more likely to use regional languages mixed with slang in their daily interactions. Preliminary observation data showed that vocabulary choice and speech style functioned as markers of group identity in the Jalan Banjaran area.

Language choice among adolescents in Muara Basung Village not only serves as a communication tool, but also as a strategy to show social position. This phenomenon is in line with the sociolinguistic theory that language is a reflection of the social structure of society. The use of code-switching found in upper-middle-class teenagers is often used to gain social recognition or demonstrate a certain level of intellect. On the other hand, the use of intense variations of non-formal language in certain groups of adolescents becomes a form of in-group solidarity. This reinforces the view that the social environment, especially the economic and educational status of the family, is the main determinant in shaping the communicative competence of adolescents in rural areas.

Table 1. Respondents Based on Socio-Economic Background in Muara Basung Village

Yes	Initials/age/education	Situation	Social Class	Economy	Dominant Language Variations
1	DS (14) SD	Situation 1	Low-end	Low	Mix code
2	RH (18) High School		High-end	Height	Mix code
3	RA (16) SD	Situation 2	Middle class	Height	Mix code
4	VP (14) Junior High School		Middle class	Height	Mix code
5	VA (18) SMA		Middle class	Intermediate	Mix code
6	DW (18) SD		Middle class	Low	Mix code
7	HS (17) SD	Situation 3	Middle class	Low	Mix code
8	AL (18) SMA		Middle class	Low	Mix code
9	SM (18) High School		Middle class	Intermediate	Mix code
10	SF (18) SD		Low-end	Low	Mix code
11	HA (18) SD		Low-end	Low	Mix code
12	HS (17) SD		Middle class	Low	Mix code
13	DP (15) Junior High School		Middle class	Intermediate	Mix code
14	ZA (17) High School		Middle class	Intermediate	Mix code
15	RH (18) High School	Situation 4	High-end	Height	Mix code
16	HM (18) PT		Middle class	Intermediate	Regional languages
17	FA (18) PT		High-end	Height	Regional languages
18	RP (18) PT		High-end	Intermediate	Regional languages
19	Elementary School (18) PT		Middle class	Intermediate	Regional languages
20	GS (18) PT		Middle class	Intermediate	Regional languages

21	BP (18) PT	High-end	Top	Regional languages
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Situation 1: Digital Competitive Space (Online Games)

Context of the Situation:

This speech takes place in a virtual ecosystem when two subjects are engaged in a competitive online game. The psychological pressure to achieve victory triggers the collapse of social barriers, so control over linguistic taboos becomes very low.

Respondent Data:

DS (Object 1): Initials DS, 14 years old, elementary education, low economy.

RH (Object 2): Initials RH, 18 years old, high school education, high economics.

Supporting Conversation Data:

DS (14 yrs/SD): "Isss dick-dick"

DS (14 yrs/SD): "Cokk is kenak kali cok dog-dogs"

RH (18 yrs/high school): "Pantek"

RH (18 yrs/high school): "Mati tu cok, please cok"

Variable Analysis:

The data showed a linear correlation between age maturity and formal education filters. DS (14 yrs/SD) repeatedly uses the taboo of vital organs and animals as a mechanism of spontaneous emotional catharsis. On the other hand, RH (18 years old/high school) who has a more established economic background shows social distance; He tends to choose taboo as an instrument of solidarity ("cok") or a marker of regional identity ("pantek") rather than a purely vulgar swearing. According to Soemarsono (2022), education functions as an instrument of linguistic censorship that disciplines individual speech. In subjects with low levels of education, the distance between thought impulses and speech production tends to be very thin, so that in stressful situations, taboos are used straightforward due to the lack of internalization of formal language variations.

Situation 2: Social Interaction (Phone/Online Acquaintance)

Context of the Situation:

Some teenage boys are interacting over the phone to get acquainted with a girl. This environment represents an egalitarian pattern of rural youth association, where language is used as a tool to validate the existence of groups.

Respondent Data:

RA, VP, VA, DW, HS, AL (Objects 3-8): Age 14–17 years, Elementary–High School Education, Low Economy.

Supporting Conversation Data:

DW (17 years old/high school): "Singles, so what can you do? So what's the story?"

DW (17 yrs/high school): "Budeknya bujanganam"

VA (15 yrs/junior high school): "Abang siraja guk-guk hahaha"

Variable Analysis:

The conditions of the lower-middle economic environment create a space for permissive communication against formal taboo norms. DW's subjects use the diction "single" and "bujanganam" which have undergone a neutralization of meaning. Lack of exposure to the academic environment makes the lexical lose its shock power and transform into an element of daily diction. According to Soemarsono (2022), this phenomenon reflects a value shift. In the lower class, words that are normatively considered taboo are actually changed to a symbol of in-group solidarity. Foul language here is not an instrument of aggression, but rather a marker of familiarity.

Situation 3: Traditional Communal Space (Warung Malam)

Context of the Situation:

Night stalls function as transitional public spaces that bring together working-class identities with traditional norms (the presence of community leaders).

Respondent Data:

SM, SF, HA, HS, DP, ZA, RH (Objects 9-15): Age 17–19 years, Elementary–High School Education, Low/Medium Economy.

Supporting Conversation Data:

HA (17 years): "Who is the ustadz?"

RH (18 years old): "If he goes home, he won't be home, damn it"

DP (18 years old): "No nets, dog"

S.S. (18 years old): "Come on, I'll be back tomorrow."

Variable Analysis:

The use of the swear words "dog" and "hell" reflects the outspoken communication pattern of working-class society. However, sociolinguistic flexibility is seen when the subject is able to make speech adjustments (code accommodation) to be more polite when crossing paths with authority figures (Ustadz). According to Soemarsono (2022), social structure and hierarchy of authority remain strong determinants in shaping language attitudes. Although the speakers have a low economic background, adherence to traditional social strata (religious leaders) is able to suppress the use of various languages of the working class in order to maintain harmony.

Situation 4: Academic-Informal Space (Students)

Context of the Situation:

The interaction took place in a café (student gathering room). This context requires individuals to present their self-image as a professional intellectual group.

Respondent Data:

HM, FA, RP, SD, GS, BP (Object 16-21): Age 18, Student (Higher Education), Higher Economics.

Supporting Conversation Data:

BP (18 years old): "You can't tell me about you doing laundry"

S.S. (18 years old): "Stay in the Closet and Lose Your Virginity"

SD (18 years old): "Ihh ga no bath"

Variable Analysis:

Higher education is the most dominant variable that creates a total elimination of the use of the lexical vulgar taboo. Even though they discuss personal topics (physical hygiene issues), their diction choices are maintained. The use of modern absorption terms such as "laundry" confirms their position in better economic and social stratification. According to Soemarsono (2022), this phenomenon is a manifestation of the use of "Learned Language". Students pursue linguistic prestige to validate their higher social position and establish social distance with the group below them in order to maintain social dignity.

Table 2. Classification of language usage by situation

No	Situation	Communication Situation	Taboo linguistics	Language functions	Indications of social class
1	Situation 1	Play online games	Dog, dick, pantyhose, cock, single	Emotional expression (angry, upset, cooperative)	Informal relaxed environment
2	Situation 2	Telephone and reasoning	Rude speech, ridicule	Jokes, dominance, group intimacy	Promiscuity, heterogeneous
3	Situation 3	Hanging out at the stall	Dog., Bacot	Relaxed interaction of solidarity	Lower middle social environment
4	Situation 4	Hanging out at the café	Light coarse language	Jokes, intimacy	Casual environment of habit

Table 3. Factors that influence adolescent language by social class

No	Factors	Description	Impact on language
1	Social environment	Peer interaction	Foul language is considered appropriate
2	Communication situation	Games, hang out, joke	Triggers emotions and potentiaries
3	Social proximity	Close relationships	Foul language in solidarity
4	Social class	Non-formal environment	Minimal use of standard language

DISCUSSION

The variety of languages used by adolescents cannot be separated from the social conditions that underlie their lives. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is part of the social practices that speakers use to establish identity, demonstrate group membership, and adjust to the environment in which they interact. Therefore, differences in economic, educational, and social backgrounds result in different patterns of language use in each social group. The findings of this study show that the language practice of adolescents in Muara Basung Village is a reflection of the social structure that exists in the community.

According to Sumarsono (2022), language variations arise due to the social diversity and function of language in society. Language is not used uniformly by all members of society, but undergoes adjustment according to the social status, education level, and communication needs of the speaker. In the context of this study, education level is one of the factors that affect the ability of adolescents to choose the form of language used. The higher the level of education a person has, the wider the variety of languages mastered, allowing speakers to adjust the use of language to the context of communication they are facing. On the other hand, limited access to education leads to the use of a simpler variety of languages and tends to be influenced by the immediate social environment.

In addition to education, the social environment has a very important role in shaping adolescents' language habits. Adolescence is a phase when individuals seek recognition from their peers. As a result, the various forms of language that develop within social groups are often adopted as part of a shared identity. Pratama et al. (2022) and Nasution et al. (2022) explain that the variety of non-formal language used by adolescents serves as a symbol of group solidarity and a means of forming social identity. The use of certain language is not only intended to convey a message, but also to show emotional closeness and to reinforce the boundaries between one's own group and other groups.

This phenomenon is related to the concept of *in-group solidarity* in sociolinguistic studies. Group solidarity is created when group members use the same form of language and understand it together. In such conditions, the meaning of a word does not always follow the normative meaning that applies in the wider society. Speech that is considered impolite in a formal context can turn into a symbol of familiarity when used in a group that has close social ties. This shift in language function suggests that the meaning of language is highly dependent on the social context in which it is spoken.

On the other hand, the use of mixed codes found in adolescent interactions suggests a process of adjusting social identity through language. Sari and Erni (2022) stated that code mixing and code switching are communication strategies used by speakers to adjust to the situation while displaying certain identities. In adolescent life, the use of diverse language elements is often a symbol of modernity, familiarity, and social prestige. Thus, mixed code not only serves as a communication tool, but also as a means of self-representation in the social environment.

This study also shows that the communication situation is an important factor that determines the choice of language. In sociolinguistic theory, language is always influenced by the context of use, including the place, the purpose of communication, and the characteristics of the interlocutor. Speakers may use different languages when interacting with peers compared to when dealing with individuals of higher social status. The ability to adapt language to this context shows the communicative competence possessed by the speaker. These competencies allow individuals to understand when a form of language is considered appropriate or unsuitable for use in certain situations.

The findings of this study are in line with the opinion of Nurvilla and Erni (2023) who affirm that the principle of language politeness remains an important element in social communication. Although adolescents tend to use a variety of non-formal language in a social environment, they still have an awareness of the applicable social norms. This awareness can be seen from the ability to adjust language choices when interacting with individuals who have social authority or when in situations that demand the use of more polite language. This shows that the use of language is not only influenced by group habits, but also by the understanding of social values that live in society.

A broader perspective can be explained through the theory of Penelope Eckert (2000) which states that linguistic variation is a social practice inherent in the social class structure of the speaker. Language is a means for individuals to display their identity, build their self-image, and show their social position in society. Each social group has different linguistic characteristics as part of their collective identity. Therefore, the language variations that emerge among adolescents are not just differences in the way they speak, but rather a representation of the social dynamics that develop in the environment in which they live.

Thus, the use of adolescent language can be understood as the result of the interaction between educational factors, social class, social environment, and communication situations. These four factors are interrelated in shaping the language choices used by adolescents in their daily lives. These findings reinforce the view that language and society are two inseparable elements because any change in social conditions will affect the form and function of the language used by its speakers.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of linguistic taboos among adolescents in Muara Basung Village is influenced by social factors which include education level, social class, social environment, and communication situation. Of these various factors, the level of education is the most influential aspect in shaping the language usage patterns of adolescents. Adolescents with higher levels of education tend to have better ability to adjust language choices according to social contexts, while adolescents with lower levels of education show more spontaneous language use and are influenced by their

daily social environment.

This study also found a shift in the function of linguistic taboos from what was originally seen as a form of violation of norms of politeness to a symbol of solidarity and group identity in certain contexts. The findings reinforce the sociolinguistic view that language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a representation of the social identity of its speakers. In addition, the ability of adolescents to adjust the use of language when interacting with those with social authority shows that norms of politeness and social hierarchy still play a role in directing language behavior in society.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the sociolinguistic study of the relationship between language variation and social stratification, particularly in the context of the use of linguistic taboos in adolescents in rural settings. Practically, the results of the study confirm the importance of the role of family, social environment, and educational institutions in forming polite language awareness in adolescents. Therefore, character development and language literacy need to be carried out on an ongoing basis so that adolescents are able to use language appropriately in accordance with the prevailing situation and social norms.

This research is still limited to the number of informants and the relatively narrow scope of the research area. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of the research area, compare the use of linguistic taboos in rural and urban communities, and examine the influence of other factors such as gender, digital media, and changes in the social environment on adolescents' language behavior.

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