



## Indonesian Language Use Among the Multilingual Community in Kampung Arab, Surabaya, East Java: A Sociolinguistic Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the use of the Indonesian language among the multilingual community in Kampung Arab, Surabaya, East Java, covering the forms of usage, its application across various language domains, and the influencing factors. A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was employed to examine the community's daily speech practices. Data consisted of verbal utterances from the multilingual community, gathered through the *Simak Libat Cakap* (SLC)—an observational participatory conversation technique—as well as interviews, recordings, and note-taking. Data analysis was conducted using a sociolinguistic framework, specifically applying Joshua Fishman's theory of language choice. The results indicate that Indonesian language usage manifests in the forms of single-code usage, code-switching, and code-mixing. This lingua franca is predominantly used in occupational and public domains as a medium for cross-cultural communication. Key factors influencing the use of Indonesian include participant backgrounds, the subject matter of the conversation, and the communication setting. The findings demonstrate that the multilingual ecosystem reinforces the role of Indonesian as a unifying force for a community living alongside regional languages.

*Keywords: Indonesian language use, multilingual community, sociolinguistics*

### INTRODUCTION

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is no longer narrowly understood as a closed system of structural codes, but rather as a living social phenomenon that constantly interacts with the context of its use (Sugiarti, 2022). Sociolinguistics examines the reciprocal relationship between language and society (Chaer & Agustina, 2010); consequently, questions regarding who speaks to whom, in which language, and within what context become scientifically relevant subjects of study.

Indonesia's ethnic diversity—characterized by over 700 regional languages serving as the mother tongues of various ethnic groups (Effendy, 2011)—creates a situation of intense language contact, leading the population to be predominantly bilingual or multilingual. Bilingualism and multilingualism are no longer exceptional conditions but rather the sociolinguistic norm within Indonesia's pluralistic society. In this context, Indonesian serves a strategic function as a lingua franca, bridging communication between

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ethnic groups that possess distinct regional languages.

These linguistic dynamics are clearly evident in the Arab Quarter (Kampung Arab) of Surabaya, East Java—a hub for religious tourism and commerce that acts as a melting pot for diverse ethnic groups, including Arabs, Javanese, and Madurese. When merchants of Arab descent interact with Madurese or Javanese buyers in traditional markets, their language use is not a random or meaningless act; rather, it is a social action imbued with communication strategies and identity negotiation. To understand the regularity of these patterns, this study employs the concept of "domains of language use" introduced by Joshua Fishman (1965), which explains why the same speaker may use different languages in different social contexts. Previous research has examined the use of Indonesian as a *lingua franca* (Maulani & Devianty, 2024), the interference of local dialects in Indonesian (Dewi, 2022), and the integrative function of Indonesian in daily life (Maghfiroh, 2022). While these studies position Indonesian as a cross-cultural bridge, the majority focus on formal education, adolescent demographic trends, or macro-level literature reviews. This study complements existing research by focusing on an area that blends commercial trade with religious interaction, requiring speakers to continuously negotiate interethnic identities across various language domains.

Based on this context, the research questions address the forms of Indonesian language use, its application across language domains, and the factors influencing its use among the multilingual community in Kampung Arab, Surabaya. Accordingly, this study aims to describe the forms of Indonesian language use and its application across language domains, as well as to analyze the factors influencing it within this multilingual community. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich sociolinguistic scholarship regarding language forms, language domains, and the

determinants of language choice in multilingual communities; practically, it aims to help educators understand the linguistic backgrounds of students in multiethnic environments and serve as a reference for future research.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive approach, aiming to describe, analyze, and interpret linguistic phenomena in depth within their natural setting. Through this approach, instances of language use are not merely recorded as linguistic data but are interpreted as socio-cultural actions performed by the community of Kampung Arab. The researcher acts as the key instrument, directly observing phenomena in the field, noting events, recording conversations, and interviewing speakers.

The research was conducted in Kampung Arab (Ampel Urban Village, Semampir District, North Surabaya, East Java), focusing on the use of Indonesian in the occupational domain (buying and selling interactions between traders and customers) and the public domain (interactions among residents on streets, in alleys, and at gathering spots). The data sources comprise the multilingual community in the area—individuals who use more than one language in their daily lives, specifically Indonesian, Javanese, Madurese, and Arabic. Data sources were selected using accidental and opportunistic sampling techniques until data saturation was reached. The research data consist of utterances reflecting forms of Indonesian language use (single code, code-switching, and code-mixing), their usage across language domains, and the influencing factors.

Data collection involved four techniques: *simak libat cakap* (participatory observation of conversation), interviewing, recording, and note-taking. The participatory observation technique was used to observe language use by directly engaging in the community's natural conversations; structured interviews were used to explore the



factors influencing speakers' language choices; recording ensured the authenticity of the speech data; and note-taking captured the speech context, participants, and communication situations. Speech data were systematically coded (e.g., R1/T6/BI/RBP1, indicating the recording number, utterance number, language form, and language domain) to facilitate classification and analysis. The data analysis employs Joshua Fishman's sociolinguistic theory as the primary analytical framework. Each utterance is classified according to the language domain in which it occurs; subsequently, the nature of language use is analyzed based on Fishman's three determinants of language choice: participants (the social backgrounds and ethnic identities of the speaker and interlocutor), setting (spatial and temporal dimensions), and topic (shifts in subject matter from formal to casual). Data validity is verified through source triangulation—comparing observational data with interview data as well as relevant theories and prior research—and through enhanced persistence by re-examining utterance data and cross-referencing it with the recordings.

## RESULTS

### 1. Forms of Indonesian Language Usage

Market traders deftly select their language varieties to ensure the success of commercial exchanges with visiting pilgrims. This linguistic alignment is a fundamental sociolinguistic response, manifesting through the use of standard grammar, the switching of entire linguistic systems, and the integration of lexical elements. Such linguistic skill plays a pivotal role for souvenir vendors, enabling them to maximize profits while simultaneously nurturing relationships within a culturally diverse environment.

Data-5

Vendor: "Come on in, what are you looking for? Sarongs..." (R1/T6/BI/RBP1)

The independent application of Indonesian language norms is driven by the high likelihood of

interacting with buyers from various regions along the Ampel tourist corridor. Clothing shop owners actively pitch their merchandise without incorporating a shred of regional dialect, aiming to broaden their audience appeal. This strategy of omitting local vocabulary functionally ensures that promotional messages are instantly understood by out-of-town travelers, free from interpretive barriers. The vendors' adeptness at neutralizing their native linguistic identity demonstrates a capacity for adapting to public spaces with a firm focus on economic fluidity.

Data-13

Vendor: "Five thousand each, Sir... mostly five thousand across the board... Sunan Ampel ones are five thousand too. Do you need a lot?" (R3/T4/BI/RBP1)

The need for precision when stating prices compels vendors to restrict their language strictly to the norms of the national lingua franca. Mr. Rusdi consistently describes the price range of various souvenir keychains using formal language to ensure a complete, shared understanding of the monetary value. Carelessly introducing regional dialects when quoting prices risks transaction cancellation, as out-of-town buyers may fail to grasp the intended meaning. The steadfast use of Indonesian in price negotiations highlights the vital role of the lingua franca in aligning the understanding of multilingual parties.

Data-15

Seller: "Which one? That one is fifteen, *Bang*. But this small one is ten..." (T23/BI/RBP1)

The seller consistently employs standard Indonesian vocabulary when categorizing the item's dimensions according to market price criteria. The stall owner mirrors the inquirer's formal speech style to maintain a professional conversational rhythm devoid of personal sentiment. This tendency to match the buyer's level of formality demonstrates the merchant's cognitive flexibility in structuring interactions within this

religious district. The focus on product categorization underscores the need for straightforward language, fully supported by the denotative clarity of the *lingua franca*.

#### Data-18

Vendor: "Here you go, \*Neng\* Arab: leeks and celery." (R5/T3/BI/RBP1)

The vendor's use of standard Indonesian is dictated by the ethnic makeup of the "Kampung Arab" (Arab Village) settlement where she sells her goods daily. Mrs. Sofiatun sets aside her **native** Javanese after realizing that consumers of Middle Eastern descent have limited familiarity with the local dialect. Her keen ability to describe her vegetable stock using standard Indonesian aims to break down communication barriers in this diverse neighborhood. This code-switching flexibility ensures efficient economic transactions between residents with different linguistic backgrounds.

#### Data-17

Student: "Yes, Ma'am; you see, I'm heading to Kampung Arab."

Resident: "Have you found it? . . ."

Student: "Not yet; I'm still looking around."

Resident: "Oh . . . Where are you going now?" (R4/T6/AK/RBP2)

The resident completely shifts from Javanese to the national language in response to the visiting student's limited language proficiency. Initially offering a locally-flavored reply, the resident soon notices the student struggling to formulate polite Javanese phrases. This shift in speech code demonstrates the local resident's linguistic empathy in guiding a stranger through the labyrinth of narrow alleys. The willingness to voluntarily set aside one's native linguistic framework is a crucial asset in upholding the area's reputation for hospitality.

#### Data-19

Seller: "Oh, thank you, Umi."

Seller: "Oh my... Mother Je'nah."

Seller: "Do you need anything?" (R5/T5/AK/RBP2)

The abrupt shift in linguistic direction—moving from the realm of Indonesian pleasantries to the familiar territory of Madurese—demonstrates the sophisticated function of mapping communal boundaries. The vegetable vendor deftly steers back to her mother tongue to embrace the warmth of a customer who shares a strong bond with the same homeland. The ability to employ her native language counters the pessimism regarding the eroding prestige of local diversity amidst the fierce commercial competition of modern life. This instance of switching to a regional code underscores the enduring vitality of ethnic identity preservation within the shared space of the marketplace.

#### Data-20

Seller: "Yeah, that's it... Look, I'm selling this at cost price now; my head is pounding... just so I can go home early." (R5/T27/AK/RBP1)

The collapse of formal commercial language barriers is triggered by intense physical exhaustion, giving rise to a Javanese-language outpouring of feelings. The vendor suddenly abandons the etiquette of the national language because she needs an outlet for her grievances—one rich in emotional resonance. Local vocabulary is believed to possess a superior capacity to carry the heavy emotional burdens that are difficult to articulate through the precise, formal lexicon. The easing of public-space pressures at the alley entrance fosters an atmosphere of spontaneous conversation rooted in neighborly bonds.

#### Data-6

Seller: "Yes, this is Arabian oil... It doesn't leave stains on white clothes... this *Raudo* one." (R1/T10/CK/RBP1)



Perfume vendors deliberately infuse Javanese counter-arguments into their Indonesian sales pitches to break down the rigidity of the bargaining process. Mr. Prastiono employs this tactic of linguistic blending not out of a lack of standard vocabulary, but as a calculated move to lower the psychological defenses of consumers. This blend of colloquial accents injects a persuasive charm that could never be achieved through the tedious language of a standard product catalog. Such hybrid code-mixing is frequently utilized by market traders to overcome the reluctance of casual shoppers to make a purchase.

#### Data-8

Vendor: “Three for ten thousand—go ahead, sir—carrot and egg *martabak* for five thousand each.” (R2/T1/CK/RBP1)

Grafting expressions of high Javanese cultural deference onto the opening of an Indonesian-language sales pitch creates a social-ethical hybrid that feels approachable to the listener. Ibu Dila demonstrates a knack for harmoniously balancing the pricing details of her \*martabak\* with a touch of regional politeness, thereby tempering the aggressiveness of the sales pitch. By employing this dual-register phrasing, she aims to soften the barrage of commercial messaging, making tourists feel flattered enough to approach her cart. This phenomenon of blending linguistic varieties documents a peaceful symbiosis between the preservation of polite Javanese traditions and rational commercial literacy.

## 2. Indonesian Language Use within Linguistic Domains

Residents' communication patterns adhere to boundaries strictly controlled by the limits of interaction zones. The commercial sphere demands a standardized spoken medium, whereas residential alleyways allow for the free mixing of words. It is these two linguistic ecological spheres that forge the residents' adaptability and resilience.

#### Data-4

Resident: “Riding a *sepeda motor* [motorcycle].” (R1/T5/CK/RBP2)

Pedestrian areas free locals from the constraints of standard language rules, allowing conversations to blend the term *sepeda motor* (motorcycle) with a Javanese accent. These two individuals—sharing the same cultural background—feel no compulsion to translate modern technological terms into fading ancestral equivalents. The lag in regional vocabulary regarding new-age inventions has given rise to a phenomenon of hybrid loanwords that have become deeply ingrained in the speech community's street-level interactions. The seamless absorption of external vocabulary reflects the priority placed on the speed of information transmission within the crowd.

#### Data-16

Resident: “Oh, it’s not far, Miss.” (R4/T2/CK/RBP2)

A brief interaction at the neighborhood alley entrance facilitated a blending of directional phrases—a mix of the local dialect and the outsider student's speech. A Javanese distance-indicating adjective—rooted in the polite register—inadvertently slipped into the response given in the national language, driven by the habitual informal communication style of local women. The inclusion of this local particle did not compromise the accuracy of the directions; instead, it infused the guidance with the warmth of a host welcoming a guest. This organic linguistic insertion underscored the autonomy of the open social space, loosening the rigid formalities often found in urban-fringe communities.

#### Data-9

Vendor: “Maryam—three for ten thousand.” (R2/T4/BI/RBP1)

The realm of snack vending compels the seller to rely firmly on the Indonesian language

to avert transactional confusion with university students. Reaching a mathematical agreement on price necessitates stripping away all traces of regional dialect from the sales pitch to prevent misunderstandings regarding quantities. Employing a universally understood language facilitates smooth service, keeping pace with the rapid turnover of customers at the cart. The constraints of the commercial setting illustrate how human sociolinguistic instincts adapt to the goal of earning an income.

#### Data-14

Seller: “Oh, please take your pick—whichever one you like... they’re all the same price, five thousand.” (R3/T6/BI/RBP1)

The decision to grant customers the autonomy to select their own souvenirs—as articulated by the kiosk manager—relies strictly on standard language to ensure an atmosphere of equitable service for all buyers. The seller consciously avoids using local dialects to project an air of universal friendliness, thereby alleviating any anxiety regarding ethnic discrimination. This commercially oriented yet nationally inclusive approach fosters a sense of psychological security, encouraging travelers to browse the merchandise more closely. The nature of the work environment compels stall owners to maintain a neutral tone in their interactions, accommodating the diverse influx of tourists.

#### Data-21

Seller: “Here are the bracelets—ten thousand for two, or fifteen for three.” (R6/T1/CK/RBP1)

Infusing Arab-style kinship terms into rupiah-based pricing creates a cross-cultural advertising technique that cuts through the clamor of the souvenir stalls. By combining strategies that foster intimacy—using the forms of address common among migrant communities—with the practicality of the national language, the seller successfully engages groups of women on pilgrimage. This linguistic interplay softens the intimidating

atmosphere of the commercial zone while breaking down the social barriers that usually prevent strangers from interacting in the crowded market aisles. The clever blend of persuasive appeals and politeness demonstrates the adaptability of these workers in their negotiations.

#### Data-26

Seller: “Just give it a try, it’s fine... See? It’s soft.” (R6/T10/CK/RBP1)

A date seller dispels doubts about product quality by weaving expressions of kinship typical of the Javanese heartland into a sales pitch delivered in Indonesian. The speaker deliberately uses informal, reassuring phrases to dissolve the formal hierarchy of commerce, shifting the tone to that of a visit among close relatives. Sales workers are able to negotiate the rigid boundaries of the workplace environment when they need to elicit personal sympathy to encourage customers to sample the goods. This display of code-mixing reveals the flexibility of traditional persuasive tactics in winning over a buyer's trust.

### 3. Factors Influencing the Use of Indonesian

The activation of linguistic code-switching within a pluralistic society is driven by sociocultural variables that shape the surrounding social landscape. The listener's characteristics, thematic content, and spatial setting act as the forces governing the speaker's tongue. These three guiding compasses serve as the scholarly basis for examining the factors behind the resilience of the national language.

#### Data-7

Seller: “Sure. You don’t get a bonus for three grams... but you do for six.” (R1/T12/CK/RBP1)

The perfume seller’s decision to infuse regional elements into the national language was driven entirely by the buyer’s initiation of a formal conversation. A rapid assessment of the interlocutor’s identity prompted the seller to prioritize clarity regarding the aromatherapy order



while simultaneously adding a local accent to make the shopping atmosphere more relaxed. The seller insisted on maintaining their mother tongue intact, as they had not yet confirmed the regional background of the young man—a university student from another region. Ultimate control over daily vocabulary choice depends on how clearly the speaker perceives the linguistic persona of their listener.

Data-10

Seller: "You ask too many questions..." (R2/T6/CK/RBP1)

A snack vendor's sharp rebuke erupted entirely in Javanese, triggered by the repetitive questioning of a buyer who shared the same dialect. The speaker felt that expressing their annoyance would lose its emotional depth if rigidly translated into the Indonesian language register. Recognizing a shared cultural heritage allowed the relationship between the two parties to transcend the boundaries of a mere transaction, forging a bond between fellow common people. The interlocutor held a magical power to guide the speaker's tongue toward selecting vocabulary rooted in their shared origins.

Data-27

Seller: "One kilo, then" (R6/T12/CK/RBP1)

The use of polite Javanese honorifics is triggered by the date seller's certainty regarding the customer's lineage as a fellow native of the "Land of Heroes." The construct of the national language has yet to fully encompass the depth of coastal etiquette regarding the reception of end-of-day sales. This linguistic wisdom manifests the vendor's keen sensitivity in discerning the customer's cultural pride. The strategic use of linguistic nuances always relies on a sharp assessment of the ancestry of whoever stands listening.

Data-24

Seller: "Haha, just joking, Sir, just joking. What are you looking for? Please, go ahead" (R6/T4/BI/RBP1)

A drastic shift in the vendor's linguistic style occurs as the conversation pivots from banter among colleagues to welcoming a potential tourist customer. The need to project a professional image for the stall halts the flow of regional joking, replacing it with the formal, standard national language of greeting. The nature of commodity bargaining necessitates concise speech to quickly clarify the visitor's intentions. The information conveyed demonstrates a remarkable determination to completely overhaul the usual casual stall-side chatter.

Data-1

Seller: "What are you looking for? Come on in!" (R1/T1/BI/RBP1)

The bustling atmosphere of the souvenir aisle compresses the duration of face-to-face encounters, compelling the merchant to shout the briefest possible enticement in Indonesian. The construction of open-plan spaces engineers exchanges that are too rapid, making it difficult for speakers to weave in the decorative vocabulary of local culture. The physical layout of the pilgrimage market compels the use of a standardized, pluralistic language to embrace the swirling crowds of multiracial travelers without exception. The demands of the commercial architecture suppress the linguistic flourishes of roadside workers.

Data-22

Vendor: "What are you looking for? The robes are around a hundred—come take a look." (R6/T2/BI/RBP1)

The fierce competition among Middle Eastern clothing stalls curtails the time vendors have to craft pleasantries, forcing them to blurt out the price in rupiah the moment the interaction begins.

The commercial environment dictates the abandonment of neighborly conversational phrases in favor of marketing efficiency and price clarity. The use of precise numerical language captivates the ears of weary tourists, allowing them to select goods without the hindrance of confusion. This economic arena restructures workers' speech patterns toward rapid delivery, silencing the richness of social conversation.

## DISCUSSION

The linguistic dynamics of the Arab Village population demonstrate an orderly application of Indonesian grammar, characterized by institutionalized norms and a neatly systematic structure. Empirical evidence from the field confirms Fishman's (1965) framework, showing that the speech choices of this multilingual community are consistently grounded in calculated assessments of the interlocutor and the setting. This web of cross-cultural interaction transforms the pilgrimage area into a captivating crucible of bilingual exchange. The use of a single code serves as a safeguard for meaning, protecting it against the risks of communicative distortion inherent in commercial transactions.

Local residents employ code-switching maneuvers to bridge communication gaps when travelers struggle to navigate the settlement's layout. The theories of Chaer and Agustina (2010) reinforce the idea that linguistic shifts are inevitably driven by changing social conditions—such as the influx of newcomers unfamiliar with local culture. This dynamic reveals the depth of the residents' sociolinguistic tolerance, as they willingly allow their regional languages to recede into the background. The strategic management of majority-group identity positions code-switching as the vital force behind the harmonious rapport of this diverse community.

Code-mixing dominates the interactions at street-vendor stalls, acting as a lubricant to ease the tension often associated with financial transactions. The bold infusion of Javanese and

Madurese elements into the lingua franca showcases the residents' linguistic versatility and helps win the hearts of visiting buyers. This aligns with the insights of Maulani and Devianty (2024: 173), who identify such mixed language use as a catalyst for accelerating economic compromise during bargaining. The boundaries of workplace formality are shattered by the breadwinner's instinct to cultivate an atmosphere of emotional closeness.

The adoption of national vocabulary into street-level discourse illustrates how the language of Surabaya's residents continues to evolve, keeping pace with the modernization of vehicles. This local assimilation reinforces Spolsky's (2009) assertion that the vitality of street-level linguistic fragments serves as a tangible manifestation of cultural resilience. A lack of data regarding conversations within the domestic sphere hinders scholars from accurately gauging the drastic decline in intergenerational language transmission. Continued research is essential to examine the dynamics within the household and determine the future of language preservation among the descendants of merchants.

## CONCLUSION

The use of Indonesian within the multilingual community of Kampung Arab manifests through single-code usage, code-switching, and code-mixing. Single-code usage is prioritized when speakers require informational precision—such as during price negotiation and quoting—whereas code-switching and code-mixing dominate as strategies to accommodate the interlocutor's regional background without compromising the flow of communication.

Indonesian is utilized across both occupational and public domains in a complementary manner: it serves as the primary medium for inter-ethnic trade, yet its boundaries remain permeable to the inclusion of regional languages due to the high frequency of contact among residents. The choice of linguistic form is determined by the participants,



the topic of conversation, and the communicative setting; these factors collectively guide speakers in negotiating their identities and linguistic politeness.

Overall, daily interactions in Kampung Arab reinforce the status of Indonesian as a *lingua franca* within this diverse speech community, without displacing the role of regional languages as markers of identity and social solidarity. For educators, these findings offer valuable insights into the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students in multi-ethnic environments. Future research could expand upon this study by examining other domains—such as family, education, or religion—and by further exploring the interplay between Indonesian language use, social identity, and regional language maintenance in other multilingual communities.

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