

***ANALYSIS DIALECT VARIATION ON SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE
INDEPENDENT STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM***

**Muhammad Saddam¹, Arya Nara Sukma^{2*}, Wiutami Danesha Afrianto³, Khilda Umi Rahmah⁴,
Nargis⁵**

^{1,2*,3,4,5} Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Kota Tangerang, Indonesia

¹muh.sddm07@gmail.com, ²aryanara123@gmail.com, ³wiutamidnshafnt@gmail.com,

⁴khildaumirahmah@gmail.com, ⁵nargis@umt.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis variasi dialek pada interaksi sosial di antara mahasiswa yang berpartisipasi dalam Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Mandiri (PMM) di bawah inisiatif Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif, data diperoleh melalui wawancara dan kuesioner skala Likert. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variasi dialek secara signifikan memengaruhi interaksi sosial, dengan 80% mahasiswa merasakan perbedaan dalam gaya bicara dan 60% mengakui adanya dampak sedang pada interaksi mereka. Meskipun ada sedikit tantangan dalam memahami dialek, mahasiswa menyadari pentingnya kesadaran dialek, sebagaimana tercermin dalam skor rata-rata 4,2 dari 5 pada skala Likert. Temuan tersebut menyoroti peran ganda variasi dialek sebagai tantangan dan peluang untuk pertukaran budaya dan kohesi sosial. Rekomendasi meliputi penggabungan sesi kesadaran dialek ke dalam orientasi program untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi antarbudaya.

Kata Kunci: Variasi dialek, interaksi sosial, pertukaran mahasiswa, Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka, komunikasi antarbudaya.

Abstract

This study analyzes dialect variation on social interactions among students participating in the Independent Student Exchange Program (PMM) under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were obtained through interviews and Likert-scale questionnaires. The results showed that dialect variation significantly affected social interactions, with 80% of students perceiving differences in speaking style and 60% acknowledging a moderate impact on their interactions. Despite minor challenges in understanding dialects, students recognized the importance of dialect awareness, as reflected in an average score of 4.2 out of 5 on the Likert scale. The findings highlight the dual role of dialect variation as both a challenge and an opportunity for cultural exchange and social cohesion. Recommendations include incorporating dialect awareness sessions into program orientations to enhance intercultural communication skills.

Keywords: *Dialect variation, social interactions, student exchange, Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka, intercultural communication*

INTRODUCTION

Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is a Kemdikbudristek program aimed at students from state and private universities registered with PDDikti. As stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 3 of 2020 Article 15 paragraph 1, there are 8 running programs, one of which is the Merdeka Student Exchange Program (PMM). This program is designed to increase student mobility in learning about the culture in Indonesia. Because this program brings together students from different cultural and regional backgrounds, so that there is a cultural exchange and social interaction between students from various regions. However, in the scope of this student exchange there are challenges, namely variations in dialects and regional languages that can affect social interactions between students.

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Research on dialect variation in social interactions in student exchange programs is very important, because it provides deep insight into the differences in language and dialect that can affect social interactions between students. In the study of Mohammed and Alfayez (2016) the ability of students to be able to master a second language is the extent to which students use a second language in their social and cultural environment.

Theoretical Framework

1. Dialect Variation

Dialect variation is a difference in the use of a language between speakers of the same language, which occurs due to geographical, social, or situational factors. What makes this dialect difference includes aspects of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, which reflect a certain characteristic of a region or culture. Then, dialect variation becomes a marker of identity, which is intended to be a marker for individuals regarding their cultural or regional ties.

Research on dialect variation is important to understand how language can develop and adapt to the needs of its speakers. This is in line with the dynamic nature of language as a social phenomenon that occurs due to migration, exchange, and technological advances. As stated by Mardikantoro, et al. (2023) that social interactions that occur on social media can give rise to unique variations of the Indonesian language, which reflects the adaptation of language in a digital context.

However, this is also a challenge for every individual or group of people in a multilingual society, where dialect differences can cause misunderstandings. Variations and changes in a language reflect social dynamics and interactions between groups of people (Abtahian, et al., 2024).

2. Dialect Variation on Social Interaction

Dialect variation has a significant influence on social interaction, which is by shaping the way each individual communicates. Language is not just a tool for communication, but as an identity and building a relationship between individuals. Where dialect is a component of language, and plays an important role in signifying a group.

According to Basuki (2019), social interactions can arise in various languages because speakers can create new languages and have more choices in using the language. This can refer to language variation in social interactions. Language variation cannot be separated from the speech community where the language is used. The speakers are not homogeneous, they come from different backgrounds, such as gender, occupation, education, beliefs, abilities, and social status. In this context, they play an important role in displaying variations in their speech, which can show their origins through regional language variations (Purba et al., 2020). Therefore, they can freely change and establish language in various words and sounds, which in turn form language variations.

In addition, speakers often engage in code-switching, which is so that they can adjust their language use to their interlocutors. This is not only to strengthen

communication, but also to show respect and openness to linguistic diversity. As stated by Mardikantoro, et al. (2023) that using different language variations in social interactions on social media aims to be able to adjust to the context and audience.

3. Dialect Variation on Social Interaction in The Independent Student Exchange Program

As part of the Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM), the Independent Student Exchange (PMM) brings together students from different cultural, regional, and linguistic backgrounds, which creates opportunities for communication between dialects in Indonesia.

In this case, dialect variation is not only a challenge for students, but also an opportunity for students to learn different dialects between students. In which, students must be able to direct a difference in language use, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and expression in order to establish effective communication. This social interaction requires active listeners, and is willing to adapt to different dialect differences.

Then, this program requires attention in dialect to form social interaction. Which, the challenges arising from dialect differences also require more awareness and support to be able to communicate effectively. As stated by Nugroho, et al. (2024) that students in student exchange programs who are active in language adaptation, provide results in high levels of social cohesion and cultural competence.

Previous Study

The first study by Widiasmara (2023) from Ganesha University, entitled "An Analysis of Language Variation in Banjar Puaya: A Sociolinguistic Study," examined language variation within the Banjar Puaya community. The findings identified several types of language variations, including dialects, registers, mixed varieties, and secret languages. These variations were influenced by environmental, situational, and conditional factors. Widiasmara emphasizes the theoretical and practical significance of the study for understanding and teaching dialect variations.

The second study by Sumarsih (2019) from Universitas Negeri Medan, titled "The Language and Dialect Variations of Angkola, Batak Toba, and Mandailing," analyzed the dialect variations among these ethnic groups in North Sumatra. The research highlighted how these groups use distinct dialects in daily interactions, such as in markets. Despite differences, the study found significant vocabulary similarities, particularly between Angkola and Mandailing, which share 56% of their words.

The third study by Prihandini and Isnendes (2020) from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, titled "Language Variation on a Child's Speech in a Multilingual Society," explored the language variations of a 12-year-old child in a multilingual family in Bandung. The child exhibited five types of language variations: dialect, speech levels, language registers, casual versus formal usage, and idiolect. The study demonstrated how a multilingual family environment shaped the child's linguistic repertoire.

These studies illustrate the diverse contexts of dialect variation. Widiasmara (2023) highlighted situational and contextual influences on language variation in Banjar Puaya. Sumarsih (2019) revealed both distinct dialects and vocabulary overlaps among Batak ethnic groups. Lastly, Prihandini and Isnendes (2020) showcased how familial and multilingual settings shape language use in children. Collectively, these findings underscore the interplay of social, ethnic, and environmental factors in shaping linguistic diversity.

Previous research has been described, where previous research explored dialect variation, but this is a research gap conducted by researchers. Unlike previous research, this study focuses on how dialect variation shapes social dynamics, influences mutual understanding, and promotes or challenges social cohesion in a structured intercultural

environment. By exploring this unique context, this study aims to provide new insights into the role of dialect variation as both a bridge and a barrier in promoting intercultural communication and integration.

METHOD

This study uses a Qualitative approach with a Phenomenological design, which aims to explore the phenomenon of dialect variation in social interactions in the Independent Student Exchange Program (PMM). Phenomenology is very suitable for the purpose of this study, because it focuses on the lived experiences and perceptions of participants on certain phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection was carried out by interview, where the interview was conducted to determine the variation in dialects affecting students' perceptions of students from other regions. Where the interview questions were conducted with Closed Questions, aiming to ensure clarity in the participants' responses. Because by using this method, data will be obtained that is concise and can be compared with other participants (Naz, et al., 2022).

Then to complete the clear data, the researcher used a questionnaire to measure the extent to which students felt they understood dialect variations to build good social relationships. The questionnaire was conducted with a Likert scale of 1-5 points, as stated by Sugiono (2016) using a Likert scale is very effective for measuring perceptions, attitudes, and the influence of a variable on respondents. This scale allows for a clear and detailed assessment of other scales.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Perception of Dialect Differences

After collecting data by interview (close question) and also by questionnaire (Likert scale), it was found that the majority of students (80%) felt that there were differences in speaking style between students from different regions with their origin. Evidence from one of the students from Yogyakarta who participated in the Merdeka student exchange program to Medan, the student said that there were differences in the way of speaking, where the student felt that there was a difference in the soft Javanese dialect and the high and loud Medan dialect. This shows that dialect variation is a prominent aspect in interactions in the Merdeka student exchange program.

2. Impact on Interaction

Then, the students felt that this difference affected their interactions, the data obtained 60% of students said that this dialect variation slightly affected their interactions. While 30% felt that this greatly affected them in social interactions during this program. And the remaining 10% stated that it had no effect, this is evidence that dialect variation plays a role in shaping the dynamics of social interactions.

3. Challenges in Understanding

The data obtained from this study on the difficulty of understanding dialects, 40% of students felt a little difficulty, while 30% did not feel any difficulty at all. These results indicate that despite the challenges in dialect variation, many students are able to adapt well.

4. Influence on Perception

There are 50% of students who feel that dialect differences affect their perceptions of other fellow students, and 20% of students say that it has no effect at all. It can be concluded that dialect variation does not significantly form a prejudice, even though there is an influence at the beginning.

5. The Importance of Understanding Dialects

This result was obtained through a questionnaire, in which 4.2 out of 5 stated that understanding dialect variations is important for building better social relationships. This is a strong agreement among students that understanding dialects can strengthen social relationships.

6. Ease of Interaction with Dialect Understanding

The students gave a score of 4.0 for their ease in interacting when they understand the dialect of other students. This shows that understanding dialects can bridge the gap in interaction and strengthen their social relationships.

7. Dialect as a Social Barrier

2.0 results of dialect differences can create barriers in social interaction, this shows that even though there are barriers, students are not considered as significant obstacles.

8. Dialect as Social Enrichment

Students consistently agreed (result 4.8) that dialect variation enriched their social experiences. This is a positive highlight for the language diversity in the Merdeka student exchange program.

Discussion

Dialect variation is important to form social interaction between students. Although some students consider this variation to be a small obstacle, many students also make it an opportunity to increase their social experience.

1. Dialect as a challenge and opportunity

As an obstacle, dialect variation can cause miscommunication or awkwardness, especially at the beginning of a meeting or interaction. However, students who are able to adapt to these differences show increased intercultural communication skills.

2. Cultural exchange and social cohesion

The results of this study support previous findings that state that language adaptation can increase social cohesion. Students who participated in the PMM program said that their level of cultural awareness was higher after they learned dialect variation from other participants.

3. Recommendations for future programs

To make this program optimal in utilizing dialect variation in social interaction, the student exchange program can hold an introductory session on dialect variation awareness. This will help students understand potential challenges and utilize cultural diversity.

We can sum up, dialect variation has a complex influence on social interactions in college students. Although there are some students who feel a small obstacle, most consider it a great opportunity to learn and increase their social experience. Understanding dialect variation is evidence that it is important to build better social interactions and relationships.

However, in this Merdeka student exchange program, they can improve their experience in integrating dialect awareness during the program. Which can be their strategy in overcoming communication barriers and utilizing the diversity of languages in Indonesia. Overall, dialect variation not only enhances students' social interactions, but also strengthens cultural exchange between students.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that dialect variation can play an important role in students' social interactions during the Merdeka Student Exchange Program (PMM). Although it can be a small challenge for some students, dialect variation is often seen as an opportunity for students to strengthen interactions and social relationships among students. To enhance these benefits, the Merdeka Student Exchange Program can

integrate pre-departure preparation so that students are better prepared to face linguistic and social diversity.

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