Portrait of Indonesian language communication in the marginalized communities of the north coast of Central Java

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian, as the national language, plays an important role in communication throughout Indonesia, but its use in marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java has rarely been studied. These communities consist of fishermen, small traders and low-income people who face social, cultural and economic challenges. This study aims to examine how they use Indonesian in their daily lives, the factors that influence them, such as local dialect, education level, and socio-economic conditions, as well as the impact of modernization on their language practices. The method used is descriptive qualitative with observation, interview, and documentation. A total of 193 respondents were involved, showing variations in language use based on education, gender, and social status. It was found that language practices reflect people's identity and survival strategies. The main focus of this research is the form and function of Indonesian language communication in reflecting the identity, adaptation, and resilience of marginalized communities in the midst of limitations.

Keywords: Central Java, communication, Indonesian, marginalized community

INTRODUCTION

Communication and language build connections between identity and the depiction of social status in a community group. The boundaries of the area where a particular community group lives can be the object of portraying the communication and language styles of the community, including those in marginalized communities (Chotim & Latifah, 2018). Language is not only a communication tool for delivering messages but also a reflection of identity, values, and social norms in society. Bulan (Bulan, 2019) stated that language can identify a person. This identity is reflected in the characteristics that exist in social life. A distinctive feature of Indonesian society is the use of the Indonesian language. Indonesian is the official language of the country (Rahayu, 2023). However, the Indonesian language is used in various variations depending on the context. The context of using Indonesian varies, namely the use of Indonesian in radio commercial advertisements, politics, newspapers, and to teach folklore (Muktadir et al., 2024; Namira et al., 2024; Sianturi et al., 2024; Sirait & Maulana, 2021). Indonesian is often used in formal contexts such as speeches. Conversely, in informal situations, bilingual people often use regional languages, such as Javanese. The understanding of language in each region affects the communication that is carried out.

Communication occurs in various contexts, such as social, cultural, economic, and political (Ammaria, 2017). According to research by Mailani et al (2022), the most effective communication tool society uses is language. Language can unite a dynamic society. This dynamic society is included in a society that develops according to the developments that are happening (Purnamasari & Hartono, 2023). The language used by the Indonesian population is influenced by several factors, one of which is cultural factors (Husin & Hatmiati, 2018). Culture can be defined as the work, taste, and creation of humans in the form of thoughts, ideas, norms, and human activities to meet their needs (Rosana, 2017). The culture in Indonesia is formed from small groups of people to large groups, and it forms a diverse culture (Suparlan, 2002). These diverse cultures shape society, one of which is based on the environment. The environment shapes society profoundly (Amelia, 2023).

One of the environments that form this society is nature. Nature in Indonesia has various types such as urban, rural, mountainous, and coastal (Alamsyah et al., 2022). Coastal communities are characterized by human groups with certain patterns, behaviors, and characteristics (Fajrie, 2018). Coastal communities have a different life from people who live in villages and cities, their lives depend on marine resources as the main livelihood. The life of coastal communities has uniqueness such as sailing fishing, fish farming, processing salted fish, and various other seafood cultivation. Coastal communities have traditions and cultures that are closely related to the marine environment. As in Mukramin's research (2018), the pattern of life of coastal communities is directly related to the utilization of marine resources to meet their needs.

Indonesia is a vast archipelago, and its vast size significantly affects the length of the coastline (Sunaryo, 2019). This long coastline is a place for people to live and group together, thus forming communities on the coast. Among the existing coastal communities, people living on the North Coast of Java are one of them. The North Coast of Java stretches from Banten province in the far west, then connects with West Java, Jakarta Special Region, continues with Central Java, and ends in Tuban Regency, East Java. This vast area has different language usage in each district. The diverse linguistic landscape of this vast region reflects different language practices in its various districts (Baker, 2011). Language use in these areas varies significantly due to historical, cultural, and social factors influencing communication patterns. For example, some districts may use more regional dialects or minority languages, while other districts may favor national or global languages. These variations highlight the complex interplay between language, identity, and regional characteristics. Understanding these differences is crucial for effective communication and policymaking.

Communities in the North Coast of Java are known to use a variety of dialects, especially the North Coast of Central Java, each of which has different characteristics. These dialects reflect the unique richness of local culture. For example, in a study by Fathiyyah (Fathiyyah et al., 2024) the North Coast region in Brebes and Tegal regencies have *ngapak* or *panginyongan* dialects, in contrast to Semarang City and Kendal Regency, which use Semarangan dialect Javanese which uses the suffix *"-og"* or *"-ik"*. Communities on the North Coast of Java are more dominant in using dialect daily. This dominant use of language causes a shift in the language used, namely Indonesian. The use of Indonesian can be known by researching the portrait of communication in community interaction.

Knowledge of the intricacies of communication is very important to understanding and studying the portrait of communication that occurs in society. Communication plays a central role in social life by serving as a bridge to establish harmonious relationships between individuals, exchange information and ideas, implement norms and values, and solve various problems that arise. Language and communication skills significantly impact decision-making and cooperation in marginalized communities on the North Coast of Java. The language used in these communities is not only a tool for communication but also an integral part of local identity and culture (Lutfianti et al., 2024). In-depth knowledge of these aspects of communication enables a better understanding of social dynamics and helps design more effective interventions to support community development. By understanding communication in this context, we can better appreciate social diversity and facilitate more effective relationships between different community groups.

In a modern era, full of technology that facilitates global communication, understanding the portrait of communication is important. Rapidly developing technology can also affect language use (Daud, 2021). This can be seen from the portrait of communication that occurs. Communication portraits are comprehensively covered by various aspects such as verbal, non-verbal, and digital language. Understanding the portrait of communication is not only relevant to personal life but also to the professional, social, and political spheres. Verbal language involves the use of sentence structure in conveying messages. However, there are often hidden messages combined with non-verbal language, such as expressions, body language, and voice intonation. In addition, understanding the portrait of communication is also important in the context of language use in society.

The main focus of the discussion is the portrait of Indonesian language communication in marginalized communities. The main focus of this discussion is the portrait of communication in Indonesian in marginalized communities. Marginalized communities are geographically located in marginalized areas and have limited public services, and this condition potentially discriminates against them in various aspects of life (Ilham & Farid, 2019). This marginalized community is also understood

as a group on the lower economic line (Adawiyah & Hasanah, 2020). People with this lower economic line often experience backwardness. One form of underdevelopment is in terms of access to government services. The use of Indonesian in the context of their communication still shows dynamics, creativity, and its own characteristics that reflect their social, economic, and cultural conditions. This study aims to reveal how their forms of communication, especially when using Indonesian, can reflect resistance, adaptation, and survival strategies amid limitations. Thus, this study can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of Indonesian language use in various walks of life.

The description and analysis in this research focus on the continuity of communication using Indonesian in the communities of Tegal, Brebes, Pemalang, Pekalongan, and Demak. The selection of the area as a research site is based on its location on the North Coast of Java in the Central Java province, which has a variety of cultures that affect the communication of its people because culture affects a person's communication (Sihabudin, 2022). This portrait of Indonesian language communication was found based on gender, profession, age, and place of origin.

This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the portrait of Indonesian language communication in marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java. Furthermore, it is expected to provide a renewable contribution to research that has not existed before. The portrait of communication in the context of Indonesian language use in marginalized communities is an important aspect of understanding the dynamics of social and cultural interactions in Indonesia.

Research on marginalized communities in Java has led to several notable studies, such as the study titled "Mengenal Sistem Pengetahuan, Teknologi, dan Ekonomi Nelayan Pantai Utara Jawa" by Sulistiyono (2014). Another study, titled "Dinamika Masyarakat Islam Pesisir Pantai Utara Jawa," was conducted by Yahya et al (2023). Additionally, there is research on culture and anthropology titled "Masyarakat dan Budaya Jawa Pesisir Utara" by Thohir (Thohir, 2022). What sets this research on marginalized communities along the North Coast of Java apart is its focus on the Indonesian language and its specific location in Central Java.

The main problem in this study is how the portrait of communication in Indonesian is reflected in the daily life of marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java, especially in Tegal, Brebes, Pemalang, Pekalongan, and Demak. Despite limited socio-economic conditions and predominantly using local dialects, these communities still form their own communication patterns in Indonesian. This focus covers the following questions: (1) What are the forms and characteristics of Indonesian language use in marginalized communities in the region? (2) How is Indonesian used as a means of adaptation, resistance, and survival strategy in the face of limited access, education, and public services? (3) What socio-cultural factors influence variations in Indonesian language use in each of the north coastal regions of Central Java? and (4) What is the role of Indonesian in shaping identity and social relations amidst the dominance of regional languages? The main problem in this study is how the portrait of communication in Indonesian is reflected in the daily life of marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java, especially in Tegal, Brebes, Pemalang, Pekalongan, and Demak. Despite limited socio-economic conditions and predominantly using local dialects, these communities still form their own communication patterns in Indonesian.

METHOD

This research uses a mixed qualitative descriptive method with a simple quantitative method to provide an in-depth and comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. This qualitative descriptive method allows researchers to collect data directly in the field through observation techniques combined with interviews and collecting research documentation. The quantitative method used in this observation was to observe the surrounding environmental conditions and behavior in the place of the research object. Interviews help obtain direct information related to Indonesian use by the informant. Supporting documents such as this questionnaire are used to strengthen the research findings.

This technique aims to identify the research findings, providing a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of Indonesian language use by marginalized communities on the North Coast of Java. Qualitative methods are also important in extracting complex and contextual information, which is often not obtained in quantitative methods.

The data sources in this study are marginalized communities on the North Coast of Central Java, namely speakers in the Tegal, Brebes, Pemalang, Pekalongan, and Demak areas. Data collection

techniques in this study used observation techniques combined with interviews with questionnaires. The observation is done to strengthen the results of the data obtained. This observation was combined with interviews and questionnaires filled out by several speakers. This study was conducted to find out the portrait of communication the community uses in the Indonesian language. Interviews were conducted openly, with respondents answering verbally and in detail, and some respondents filled out the questionnaire by answering questions as necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Like many in Java, the marginalized communities along the northern coast of Central Java come from various backgrounds. These communities comprise two major ethnic groups in Indonesia: the Sundanese, who live near Cirebon, and the Javanese, who are spread throughout most of the island. The research shows that many people in these communities earn a living through traditional coastal occupations like fishing, while others work as teachers or in corporate jobs. The diversity of economic situations within these communities makes communication a challenge. However, these challenges are managed through local languages and regional dialects of Indonesian.

Within this region, people interact in different speech situations, individually or in groups. The way these marginalized communities communicate is reflected in their daily use of language. The choice of language and the way it is spoken is shaped by the social context. According to the data, in Demak, people tend to speak Indonesian with local dialects in more formal settings. They use these dialects as a way to express their regional identity. This information was gathered through interviews and questionnaires.

Interviews and questionnaires were conducted, and 193 respondents from marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java, representing various groups, participated in the study. Interviews were conducted in-depth regarding language use in various life contexts, and questionnaires were used to strengthen broader findings regarding certain aspects. This process enabled the researcher to obtain complete data on the portrait of language use by the object of the study.

The marginalized communities who are respondents in this study have activities with different gender backgrounds, namely men and women. These two gender groups reflect the roles and responsibilities of each activity in daily life. This gender difference affects the language used (Nursalam et al., 2022). Gender differences affect language acquisition as in research conducted by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013) shows women tend to use more words that express emotions and show social concern to maintain social relationships and show empathy in conversation. This difference is seen in academic and professional contexts. Women have strategies for conflict avoidance, while men tend to be more assertive and authoritative. The results showed that the ratio of male and female respondents was 37.8% female and 62.2% male. This percentage difference shows that more women than men participated in the correspondence.

The next result is on the level of education. As many as 25.4% of respondents have a high school education, 23.3% have junior high school, 45.6% have elementary school, and the remaining 5.7% have bachelor's and master's degrees. Based on the data, respondents with a higher education level at the Bachelor's degree level appear to be the lowest rank. This low number of highly educated people can affect everyday language use, especially Indonesian. This is in line with the results of research by by Guerra-Carrillo et al. (2017) that shows education has a significant impact on language use. Higher education levels have better Indonesian language skills because the educational process enriches education by enriching vocabulary, improving grammatical understanding, and expanding communication ability. The role of education level significantly develops an individual's cognitive and linguistic skills.

Education also correlates with improved cognitive abilities, namely verbal comprehension and reasoning. Other research shows that education level affects learning outcomes, including language skills (Yu, 2021). It is stated that higher education usually leads to more complex and varied language use due to more exposure to more abstract and technical material. Individuals who get higher education tend to think critically and have in-depth analytical abilities which have an impact on the use of Indonesian.

Discussion

Daily language used

This states that individuals who have a higher level of education tend to have better language skills, such as in the use of Indonesian. The use of Indonesian is also better in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. Higher education also contributes to more complex communication skills using Indonesian. Based on this theory, the findings show the following graph.
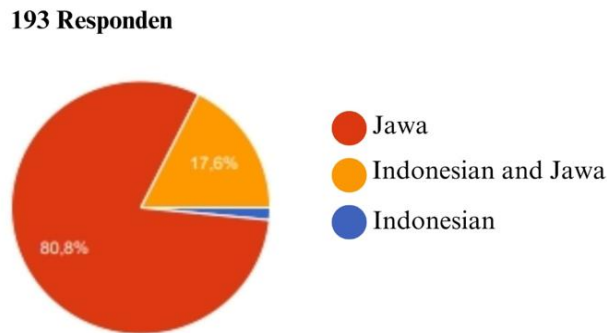
193 Responden

Figure 1. Daily language usage graph

Based on the graph above, 80.8% of the respondents used their daily language, Javanese. There is uniqueness in the results, namely 17.6% of respondents use a combination of regional languages, Javanese and Indonesian. The minimal use of Indonesian can be attributed to the respondents' background data, namely having a low level of education, such as elementary and junior high school graduates. Based on the data obtained, low-educated marginalized communities use Javanese more as their daily language. Javanese as a regional language has a stronger role than Indonesian as a national language as a unifier for marginalized communities with low educational backgrounds. The data obtained can strengthen the research on the portrait of language use by this marginalized community.

Li (2022) stated that professional differences affect the style of language use. These differences include language formality, language structure, detail, and style. This theory supports the data obtained. According to the data, housewives and traders use language that tends to be more relaxed and informal than teachers. According to the data, teachers tend to use more Indonesian due to professional demands. Teachers not only use Indonesian in the classroom but also use it when dealing with other people in other situations. This happens because there is a stigma associated with a teacher who is reflected as someone who is educated. The spread and use of language have various challenges; according to Anindya & Lokita (2023), language has challenges in several areas, namely the language used in daily activities is different from the official language used. Language is often filled with slang, idioms, and informal expressions that are not in accordance with the official language, Indonesian. It was found that the language used by respondents with a background of elementary and junior high school students using daily conversation is more informal, in contrast to respondents who work as teachers who use more formal language.

The other finding in the data is that marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java use Javanese as the main language but still use Indonesian. Although Javanese dominates language use, Indonesian is still used in formal contexts, such as when dealing with official documents. This combination of language use reflects the community's adaptation to varied communication needs. Respondents did not use Indonesian every day. Indonesian is used only at certain times. The use of Indonesian occurs in situations where children talk to their parents. Respondents stated that the use of Indonesian is considered to uphold the norms of courtesy in the family. The Javanese language used by respondents within their families is the main language used daily.

The other condition obtained was the use of the Indonesian language during the learning atmosphere in the classroom. Respondents provided information, namely in the learning atmosphere in the classroom, teachers use Javanese because the students' understanding of Javanese is better than Indonesian. Students understand the learning presented using Javanese. Indonesian is considered a formal language that is too heavy for students. Using Indonesian allows marginalized communities to

integrate with the wider society and participate in the larger economic system. At the same time, the Javanese language still plays an important role in maintaining local cultural identity.

Some respondents are proud when their children use Indonesian because it facilitates communication in the community, helps learning, familiarizes communication at school, uses the national language, and facilitates communication with parents. Some parents disagree with their children using Indonesian because they are considered impolite and incomprehensible due to the use of Javanese as the main language; more agree if their children use Indonesian in public situations, and there are even respondents who are uncomfortable with the use of Indonesian.
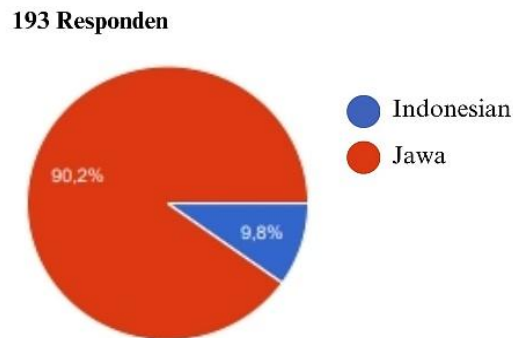
Language the children understand

Figure 2. Language that children understand

Based on the data obtained, more children understand Javanese than Indonesian. This can be the background of the discovery of pros and cons in the use of the Indonesian language in children in marginalized communities on the north coast of Central Java. It was found from the respondents that children who are pro-Indonesian are children with a family background who have a higher level of education than children who are against it. The contra children prioritize the Javanese language based on the norm of politeness. When children communicate with their elders, they use the subtle Javanese language which is considered more polite.
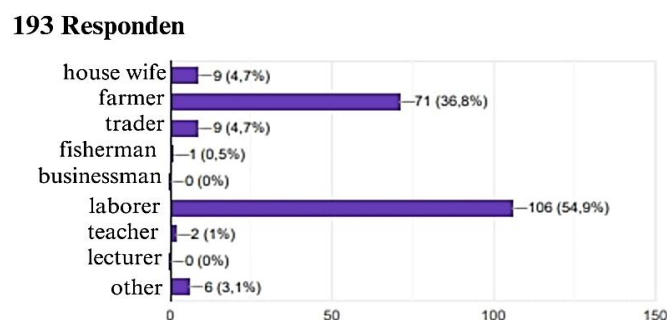
Language used by workers

Figure 3. Respondents' jobs

In addition, 193 respondents worked as laborers/employees, 71 as farmers, nine as housewives, nine as traders, two as teachers, one as fishermen, and 6 in other occupations. This data illustrates the diversity of professional backgrounds of people with various activities. Activities in this professional background have a big role in language use. Each profession is unique in language; for example, farmers do fewer language or communication activities because their energy is used for work, while housewives do more language activities. The difference between farmers and housewives happens because housewives do more activities at home, such as shopping at mobile vegetable sellers. At this time, housewives perform language activities such as asking about the availability of groceries, bargaining, and gossiping about something viral.
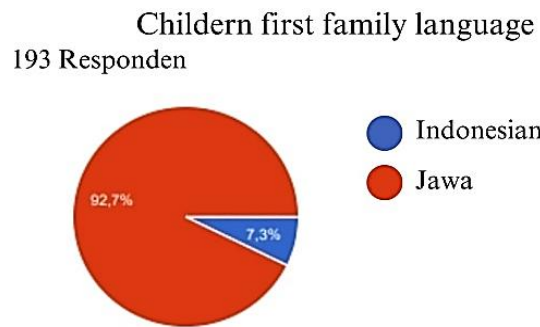
Language used by family

Childern first family language

193 Responden

- Indonesian
- Jawa

92,7%

7,3%

Figure 4. Family language

The professions of the informants in the data are mostly laborers/employees, then farmers, and housewives. These findings show that marginalized communities in the data areas have professionals who deal with heterogeneous people. Many of them work in sectors requiring communication with individuals from different backgrounds, such as in markets, ports, or public services. Professions such as fishermen and laborers often require language skills with a mix of Indonesian and Javanese dialects. These interactions must be flexible and easily understood by other community groups. The use of language owned by professions that meet with heterogeneous communities uses more Indonesian. Professionals use the Indonesian language because the national language can facilitate better communication between people with mixed backgrounds.

Data on language teaching to children were obtained. 92.7% of respondents taught their children in their first language, Javanese. This shows that Javanese plays a dominant role in early language education in the family. Although Indonesian is also taught, its role tends to be smaller than that of Javanese. This provides a snapshot of the preservation of local language and culture and the need to prepare for communication at the national level. The data results reflect the preservation of culture, namely the teaching of the Javanese language and efforts to fulfill the demands of modern communication.
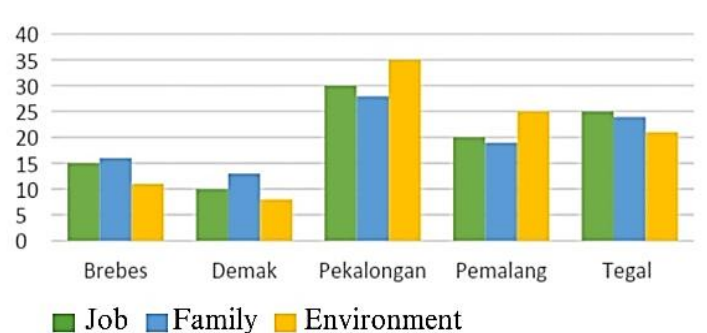
Language use by situation

Figure 5. The use of Indonesian is based on the situation

The marginal community consistently uses Indonesian in their social context. Data indicates that the use of the Indonesian Language varies in various contexts, including at work, among friends, and in the environment around special occasions. In particular, the most prevalent use of Indonesian, which is influenced by situational factors, is seen in Pekalongan. In this region, the use of Indonesian is more common, mostly due to the work-related requirements that require communication in Indonesian. As a result, Pekalongan recorded the highest score, with 30% of respondents saying that they use Indonesian more frequently in their professional environment.

Even though it is not only in the work environment, compared to other regions, the use of Indonesian in the family and the environment around the residence or community in the Pekalongan area obtained a superior value than other regions. Of course, with the results of research showing that the Pekalongan area excels in the use of Indonesian in every situation, it can show that Pekalongan is an increasingly advanced and modern area, namely by obtaining a value of 30% of work situations, 28% of families, and 35% of the community environment. The use of Indonesian, which began to be evenly distributed, was more or less influenced by the habits of speakers in the Pekalongan Regency who were accustomed to using Indonesian at work. Even so, they still use Indonesian by looking at the situation, conditions, and interlocutors. When communicating with elderly interlocutors, they still use their local language to maintain courtesy or use language that is easy to understand so that the communication process continues smoothly.

Indonesian language in the Tegal community is mostly used in formal and working environments. It was proven, based on the results of observations, that the daily language used by the people of the Tegal region used more local languages. Based on these results, the Tegal community obtained a percentage of 25% in the use of Indonesian in their work situation, 24% in their family situation, and 21% in their community environment. Not much different from the Tegal area, the Pemalang area uses more Indonesian when interacting with the surrounding environment outside the family environment based on evidence obtained in the study, namely 25% in the environment using Indonesian when communicating, 20% when working, and 18% when communicating with family.

Demak and Brebes have slightly different results regarding the use of the Indonesian language in Tegal and Pemalang. People of Demak tend to use more local languages, namely Javanese. As a Javanese community that upholds *unggah-ungguh*, Demak people are more accustomed to and proficient in Javanese, ranging from *ngoko* to manners. However, Indonesian is only used as a second language for communication in the family and work environment. Based on these results, the Demak community obtained a percentage of 10% in the use of Indonesian in their work situation, 13% in situations with family, and 8% in their community environment. Likewise, the Brebes area, similar to the Demak area in the use of the Indonesian language, obtained the second smallest value, while the first smallest was the Demak area. However, the use of Indonesian in Brebes still has people who can understand and use Indonesian in work, family, and neighborhood situations.

Although not too many people use the Indonesian language, they still try to use it little by little. Based on this, people in Brebes scored 15% of the use of Indonesian in their work situations. Not only that, the use of Indonesian in the Brebes area also obtained 16% in the family and 11% in the community. We can conclude that the use of Indonesian is still a little less in use because the understanding of the Indonesian language by people in North Coast Java is minimal, and thats makes people reluctant and uncomfortable using it because they are used to using local languages or Javanese.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the use of Indonesian by marginalized communities in the north coastal region of Central Java, particularly in Brebes, Demak, and Pekalongan. Although Javanese dominates daily life, Indonesian is still used, especially in formal contexts. Based on data from 193 respondents with diverse gender, education, and professional backgrounds, it was found that social roles and work environment influence language choice. Women, who are mostly less educated and work in the domestic sphere, use Javanese more often. At the same time, men who are involved in professions with a wider scope of communication tend to use Indonesian. This phenomenon shows that Indonesian is not just a means of communication but also part of a social and professional adaptation strategy. On the other hand, the use of Javanese still reflects local cultural identity. Language switching, especially in the younger generation, reflects the ability to adapt to national norms without abandoning local cultural roots, making bilingualism a form of identity resilience and the need for national connectedness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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