

EXPLORING OF SOCIAL DIALECTS AND PEER INTERACTION AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how social dialects influence peer interaction among English Education students at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang. It aims to identify the types of dialects used, their communicative functions, and their influence on group dynamics. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questionnaires from ten purposively selected participants. The findings reveal that students naturally mix English, Indonesian, Sundanese, and slang depending on the context, topic, and interlocutor. English was primarily used to explain academic material, while Indonesian and regional dialects were used to build comfort, express identity, and create humor. Such dialectal flexibility fosters inclusivity, confidence, and social connection among peers. Rather than causing misunderstanding, the use of multiple dialects strengthens communication and enhances classroom relationships. These findings highlight that social dialects act as a bridge that promotes understanding and solidarity in academic and social settings. Therefore, encouraging dialectal diversity in English Education can help learners develop communicative competence, cultural awareness, and empathy important qualities for future English teachers.

Keywords: social dialects, peer interaction, code-switching, language variation, English Education students

A. Pendahuluan

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a marker of social identity. The way people speak often reflects their background, community, and even their relationships with others. This variation, known as social dialects, emerges from differences in region, education, and social group. Within academic settings, students naturally adjust their language use depending on context and

interaction partners. For example, when addressing lecturers, they may use formal language, while with peers, they often switch to slang, mix Indonesian and English, or adopt more relaxed speech. Such patterns are not trivial because language choice directly shapes how students connect with others and engage in learning. In universities, peer interaction plays a crucial role in the learning process. Students

frequently collaborate on tasks, discuss topics, and build friendships through everyday conversations. The language they choose in these peer interactions influences not only their social bonds but also their opportunities to practice language skills, especially in programs like English Education. Since these students are future teachers, understanding how they navigate different social dialects in peer settings is highly relevant. Exploring their use of language can reveal how dialect variation contributes to both social cohesion and learning practices in higher education.

Scholars have long noted the importance of dialects in education. Tegegne (2015) observed that dialects influence student achievement and learning outcomes, showing that students' linguistic backgrounds affect their academic performance depending on how schools value or marginalize their speech. This highlights dialects as not only linguistic features but also educational resources or challenges.

At the same time, peer interaction has been identified as central to language learning. Kotkavuori (2024) emphasized that in higher education, peers often act as mediators and experts who support one another's learning, making classrooms spaces of mutual knowledge-building. Similarly, Han and Li (2025) found that the way students perceive social interactions directly affects their willingness to communicate in a second language. These findings suggest that peer dynamics are inseparable from language engagement.

Research on younger learners further strengthens this claim. Washington-Nortey et al. (2020), through a systematic review, concluded that peer interaction significantly contributes to the language development of preschool English learners. While the participants in this study are much younger than university students, the finding demonstrates a universal role of peer talk across ages. Complementing this, Pedraza Borbon (2024) reported that structured peer activities not only improved students' speaking

and listening skills but also boosted their confidence in communication. Taken together, these studies establish that both dialect use and peer interaction are powerful forces in education. However, most prior research addresses these elements separately: some focus on the impact of dialects (Tegegne, 2015), while others investigate peer interaction in language classrooms (Kotkavuori, 2024; Han & Li, 2025; Washington-Nortey et al., 2020; Pedraza Borbon, 2024). What remains underexplored is how these two aspects intersect specifically, how students' choice of social dialects influences the way they interact with peers in higher education settings.

Although existing studies highlight the value of dialects (Tegegne, 2015) and the importance of peer interaction in fostering language development (Han & Li, 2025; Washington-Nortey et al., 2020), there is limited research connecting the two. Few studies examine how social dialects function within peer interactions among university students, especially those in English Education programs. These students often shift between

Indonesian, English, and colloquial forms, but how these shifts shape peer communication, rapport, and group participation remains unclear. Addressing this gap can deepen our understanding of the relationship between language variation and peer dynamics in multilingual higher education contexts.

This study aims to explore the use of social dialects in peer interaction among English Education students.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the common types of social dialects used in peer conversations.
2. Investigate students' reasons for choosing particular speaking styles.
3. Analyze how dialect choices influence peer interaction, including rapport, participation, and group dynamics.

Because the focus is on exploring patterns and meanings rather than measurement, the study will use a qualitative approach through observation, short interviews, and simple questionnaires.

The study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it adds to sociolinguistic

discussions by examining how social dialects operate in peer communication within higher education. It also extends existing literature by linking two important but often separately studied phenomena: dialect variation and peer interaction. Practically, the findings will benefit lecturers and teacher educators in designing activities that acknowledge and use students' natural linguistic practices. For English Education students, reflecting on their own language use can raise awareness of how dialects shape communication, which is valuable for their future role as English teachers.

B. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

1. Instruments/Tools

This research employed three instruments for data collection: observation, interview guide, and open-ended questionnaire (Google Form). These instruments were selected to gather both authentic and reflective information that enables the researcher to explore how social dialects shape peer interaction among English Education students.

The first instrument, observation, was carried out to identify how students use various dialects in real communication settings. The researcher served as a non-participant observer, taking detailed field notes and recording students' natural conversations during group discussions and informal classroom activities. The observation emphasized the following aspects:

1. The types of dialects or language varieties used (such as formal English, Indonesian- English code-mixing, or slang).
2. The communicative purposes of dialect use (for instance, showing closeness, expressing identity, or maintaining group comfort).
3. The effects of dialect choice on peer interaction, including participation, rapport, and mutual understanding.

All recorded conversations were transcribed and reviewed to find recurring linguistic patterns, variations, and social meanings behind the students' language use. The second instrument, a semi-structured interview guide, was used to complement the

observation by exploring students' experiences and perspectives more deeply. Interviews were conducted with participants who had been involved in the observation process. The semi-structured format provided guiding questions while still allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their thoughts.

The interview focused on students' awareness of their dialect usage, their reasons for selecting specific language styles, and their reflections on how these choices influence communication and relationships with peers. It also investigated how students, as prospective English teachers, view the role of language variation in teaching and learning contexts.

The third instrument was an open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Form. This tool aimed to support and enrich the data obtained from observations and interviews by collecting written responses. The questionnaire contained ten open-ended questions that invited participants to describe their experiences and opinions freely.

The questions explored topics such as the language varieties they commonly use, the situations that encourage code-mixing or slang, and their views on how dialects affect interaction and comfort among peers.

As stated by Creswell (2018) and Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), using multiple qualitative instruments improves data credibility through triangulation, since it allows the researcher to observe a phenomenon from different angles. Hence, the combination of observation, interviews, and questionnaires was considered the most effective method to obtain comprehensive and reliable insights regarding social dialects and peer interaction.

B. Population/Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this research consisted English Education students, 7th semester from Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang. From this group, the researcher selected 10 students as participants. These individuals were chosen because they are active in group discussions and

represent diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, allowing for a wider view of dialectal patterns and peer communication styles.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants. This method enables the researcher to deliberately choose individuals who can provide rich and relevant information related to the study's objectives. According to Creswell (2018), purposive sampling is commonly adopted in qualitative research when the goal is to gain in-depth understanding rather than to generalize findings. Likewise, Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Walker (2018) note that purposive sampling helps focus the research on participants who possess key characteristics essential to the topic.

The selection of ten students was based on several reasons. First, a smaller sample size allows the researcher to carry out detailed observation, transcription, and analysis. Second, the participants represent a range of regional and social backgrounds, contributing to the diversity of dialects examined. Third, all participants willingly engaged in observation, interviews,

and the questionnaire process, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the collected data.

This number of participants (10 students) was considered sufficient for a descriptive qualitative study, as the aim is to gain depth of understanding rather than statistical generalization. In qualitative inquiry, validity lies in the quality and depth of insights, not the quantity of respondents. Therefore, 10 participants were regarded as adequate to provide meaningful, comprehensive, and credible data about the use of social dialects and their influence on peer interaction among English Education students. Based on the instruments described above, the collected data were then analyzed to identify patterns of dialect use, communicative functions, and their influence on peer interactions. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

Result

The findings were drawn from three data sources: observation, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires. The results reveal that English Education students at

Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang naturally use multiple dialects English, Indonesian, Sundanese, and slang depending on the communicative context. These dialects served both **academic and interpersonal functions** in their peer interactions. During classroom observation, all ten participants frequently engaged in **code-switching** between languages. English was typically used to clarify academic points, while Indonesian and regional dialects were employed to create humor or show familiarity.

Table 1. Observation Summary of Social Dialects in Peer Interaction

Aspects	Indicators / Examples	Notes / Evidence
Type of Dialect	Mixed Indonesian-English, Sundanese, slang	"So, this part tuh yang paling penting ya." / "Enya atuh, kamana wae ti tadi."
Function of Dialect Use	To clarify academic material, create humor, and express	English for clarity; Indonesian/Sundanese/slang for comfort

	ss closeness	
Interaction Pattern	Active participation, spontaneous responses	Students mix formal and informal language naturally
Code-Switching	English ↔ Indonesian ↔ Sundanese ↔ Slang	Occurs depending on topic and situation
Group Dynamics	Laughter, relaxed posture, mutual understanding	Jokes and local words increase group harmony

The classroom atmosphere appeared collaborative and inclusive. Non-verbal behaviors such as laughter, smiling, and relaxed body language reflected a strong sense of belonging. Dialect diversity therefore functioned as a bridge rather than a barrier in communication.

From the interviews, three main themes emerged: **contextual flexibility, identity expression, and affective connection.** Students explained that they chose

dialects according to situation and comfort level. Many emphasized that dialect use strengthened friendships and created a relaxed learning atmosphere.

Table 2. Summary of Interview Responses

Question	Summary of Responses	Common Themes
How do you communicate with classmates?	Most mix Indonesian and English; some add Sundanese or slang.	Contextual language choice
What influences your choice of dialect?	Topic, interlocutor, atmosphere, and comfort level.	Context sensitivity
How does dialect use affect relationships?	Increases closeness, confidence, and comfort.	Building rapport
Does mixing dialects help communication?	Yes, it clarifies meaning and reduces tension.	Communicative ease
How do you feel about others' dialects?	It's enjoyable; they adapt easily and learn new words.	Acceptance of diversity

Participant S4 mentioned, *"The atmosphere formal or informal affects how I speak,"* while S1 added, *"It helps me get closer to my friends."* These responses suggest that language choice is shaped by social context and emotional connection.

The questionnaire results supported the observations and interviews. All ten participants reported using mixed Indonesian-English daily, with Sundanese and slang appearing in informal contexts. The primary motivations included ease of communication, comfort, and identity expression.

Table 3. Questionnaire Summary

Question	Common Responses	Key Insights
What dialects do you use?	Indonesian-English, Sundanese, slang.	Multilingual repertoire
When do you switch languages?	During discussions, jokes, and explanations.	Situational adaptation
How does dialect influence	Makes it easier, natural, and close.	Positive influence

ect aff communic ation?		
Does your dialect reflect identity?	Yes, as English learners and local speakers.	Identity expres sion
Any challenges ?	Rare misund erstandings, easily resolved.	Negligi ble conflict

Overall, the results indicate that students' communicative behavior was characterized by linguistic flexibility, cultural awareness, and emotional connection. They used language not only to convey information but also to foster rapport and group cohesion.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that social dialects among English Education students serve as tools of communication, identity, and social bonding, aligning with Tegegne's (2015) argument that dialects signify belonging and solidarity. Students' ability to shift between English, Indonesian, and regional languages illustrates their capacity to negotiate academic and interpersonal goals

simultaneously.

These findings also support Halliday's (1994) notion of interpersonal meaning, where language functions to maintain relationships and manage roles. The students' code-switching between formal and informal speech styles shows their social awareness and emotional intelligence knowing when to speak academically and when to connect personally.

Similarly, Kotkavuori (2024) emphasized that peer interaction in higher education acts as a space for collaboration and negotiation. In this study, the use of diverse dialects facilitated inclusion and mutual understanding. Humor, slang, and local expressions acted as social lubricants that strengthened classroom relationships and encouraged participation.

Han and Li (2025) further observed that familiarity among peers increases learners' willingness to communicate in a second language. The students in this research mirrored that pattern: they were more confident and expressive when allowed to use multiple dialects freely. Thus, code-switching functions as a strategic

communicative resource rather than a limitation.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, the results illustrate Fairclough's (1992) idea of language as social practice. Students' linguistic behavior was not random but reflected how they constructed equality and belonging. The playful use of Sundanese within serious academic conversations symbolized solidarity and reduced hierarchical boundaries among peers.

Moreover, their blending of English, Indonesian, and local dialects demonstrates the concept of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), where speakers use their full linguistic repertoire to create meaning. This practice enhances both cognitive and cultural expression, enabling learners to connect intellectual understanding with social empathy.

Pedraza Borbon (2024) and Washington-Nortey et al. (2020) similarly found that peer collaboration fosters both linguistic development and social confidence. The present study reinforces this view: dialect diversity encourages mutual learning, empathy, and inclusivity, helping students become

adaptable communicators and culturally aware future teachers.

Table 4. Summary of Discussion Points

Analytical Focus	Interpretation	Supporting Theory
Social Function of Dialects	Language serves as a relational bridge.	Tegegne (2015); Fairclough (1992)
Interpersonal Meaning	Code-switching expresses emotion and solidarity.	Halliday (1994)
Peer Collaboration	Dialect diversity promotes inclusivity.	Kotkavuri (2024)
Communication Comfort	Familiar dialects increase willingness to speak.	Han & Li (2025)
Translanguaging Practice	Integrating multiple languages builds identity.	García & Wei (2014)

Overall, the findings reaffirm that English Education students' **dialectal flexibility represents a sociolinguistic strength** that fosters inclusivity, confidence, and engagement. Allowing the natural use of multiple dialects in academic

settings promotes deeper understanding and collaboration key qualities for effective communication and language learning.

E. Conclusion

This study concludes that English Education students at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang demonstrate dynamic and purposeful use of multiple dialects English, Indonesian, Sundanese, and slang depending on the context and social situation. Their use of language serves not only to exchange information but also to express identity, maintain solidarity, and create comfort within peer interactions. Code-switching and translanguaging practices were found to be natural strategies that promote understanding and strengthen classroom relationships. Rather than hindering communication, dialectal diversity enhances participation, inclusivity, and emotional connection among learners. These findings support sociolinguistic theories that describe language as both a communicative and social tool. Students' ability to shift between dialects shows their linguistic awareness and adaptability as future

educators. Recognizing and valuing this linguistic diversity is essential for developing empathy and intercultural competence in English language teaching. Therefore, promoting an open and inclusive approach to dialect use in educational settings can help students become confident, culturally responsive, and effective communicators..

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