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### **Survey of the Use of Indonesian and Regional Languages in the Department of Geography Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan, Class of 2024**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to determine the use of Indonesian and regional languages among students of the Geography Education Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan (UNIMED), Class of 2024. The study was conducted to determine the language most frequently used by students in formal and informal situations, as well as the factors influencing language choice when communicating on campus. The research method used was descriptive research with a quantitative approach. Data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires using Google Forms to 10 Geography Education students, Class of 2024. The results showed that Indonesian was the most dominant language used, especially in academic activities such as class discussions, presentations, and formal communication because it was easier for all students to understand. Meanwhile, regional languages were still used in informal situations, especially when speaking with friends from the same region because they were considered more familiar and comfortable. Factors influencing language choice included the interlocutor, the communication situation, comfort, cultural identity, and communication effectiveness. This study shows that students are able to adapt their language use to the communication context without abandoning the function of regional languages as cultural identity.*

*Keywords: Indonesian, regional languages, sociolinguistics, students, language use*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a means of communication that plays a vital role in human life. Through language, individuals can convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, and information to others. Besides being a means of communication, language also serves as a social and cultural identity for a group of people. In Indonesia, society lives in a multilingual environment, with Indonesian as the national language and various regional languages used in daily life. This linguistic diversity has led Indonesians to become accustomed to using more than one language in interactions. In higher education, language use is crucial because students come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Medan State University (UNIMED), particularly the Geography

Education Department of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Class of 2024, has students from various regions in North Sumatra and beyond. This situation creates linguistic diversity in campus life. Students not only use Indonesian as the official language but also continue to use regional languages in certain communication situations.

In formal situations such as lectures, class discussions, presentations, and communication with lecturers, students generally use Indonesian because it is easier for everyone to understand. However, in informal situations, such as chatting with peers outside of class, students often use regional languages, especially with friends from the same region or ethnicity. The use of regional languages is often considered more relaxed, comfortable, and can strengthen social relationships between students. The diversity of language use in the campus environment is interesting to study because it can show how students choose languages based on communication situations. Furthermore, the use of regional languages among students is also related to efforts to maintain cultural identity amidst the dominance of Indonesian as the national language. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the patterns of use of Indonesian and regional languages among Geography Education students of UNIMED, Class of 2024.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a descriptive method with a quantitative approach. The descriptive method was used because the study aimed to describe the phenomenon of student language use based on actual conditions in the field. The quantitative approach was employed because the research data was obtained through a questionnaire and processed into numbers, scores, and percentages to facilitate data analysis. The study was conducted in the Department of Geography Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan (UNIMED) in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research location was chosen because it aligned with the research focus on the use of Indonesian and regional languages among Geography Education students from the Class of 2024, who come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The population in this study was all Geography Education students from the Class of 2024. The research sample used a saturated sampling technique, where all respondents who completed the questionnaire were used as the research sample. A total of 10 students participated. This technique was used because the number of respondents was relatively small, so all data were considered representative of the students' language use. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions using a Likert scale with the response options Strongly Agree (S), Agree (S), Disagree (DS), and Strongly Disagree (STS), as well as several open-ended essay questions. The collected data were then analyzed using quantitative descriptive techniques by calculating scores, averages, and percentages of respondents' responses.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of a questionnaire distributed to 10 Geography Education students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan (UNIMED) Class of 2024, data was obtained regarding the use of Indonesian and regional languages on campus. The data were analyzed using a Likert scale with response categories of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S),

Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS). The results of the data processing can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: Results of the Questionnaire on the Use of Indonesian and Regional Languages

No	Statement	SS	S	TS	STS	%
1	Uses Indonesian more often on campus	6	4	0	0	90%
2	Uses regional languages with friends from the same region	1	5	4	0	68%
3	Comfortable using Indonesian during class discussions	5	5	0	0	88%
4	Indonesian facilitates interethnic communication	8	2	0	0	95%
5	Regional languages make communication more intimate	3	4	3	0	75%
6	Often mixes Indonesian and regional languages	0	4	4	2	55%
7	Regional languages are still frequently used on campus	2	7	1	0	78%
8	Regional languages are important to preserve	3	7	0	0	83%
9	Ever experienced difficulty understanding certain regional languages	4	5	1	0	83%
10	Regional languages do not interfere with communication	1	4	5	0	65%

Table 1 shows that Indonesian is the most dominant language used by UNIMED Geography Education students from the Class of 2024 on campus. This is evident in the statement "I use Indonesian more often on campus," which achieved a percentage of 90%. This percentage indicates that the majority of students prefer using Indonesian in their daily activities on campus because it is considered easier to understand for students from various regions.

Furthermore, Indonesian is also very dominant in academic activities. This is evident in the 88% statement that students feel comfortable using Indonesian during class discussions. Indonesian is the primary language in formal activities such as presentations, group discussions, and communication with lecturers. The high level of Indonesian use is further supported by the 95% statement that Indonesian facilitates interethnic communication. This demonstrates that Indonesian plays an important role as a unifying language in a campus environment with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

On the other hand, regional languages are still quite frequently used in informal communication. According to the table, 68% of respondents admitted to using regional languages when speaking with friends from the same region. The use of regional languages is typically seen in casual situations outside of class, when gathering with friends, or when discussing everyday matters. Students feel more comfortable using regional languages because they perceive them as closer to their childhood communication habits.

This is supported by the 75% statement that regional languages facilitate closer communication. Regional languages are often used to demonstrate social closeness and a sense of togetherness with friends who share a similar cultural background. Therefore, although Indonesian is more dominant on campus, regional languages are still maintained in certain social interactions.

The study also shows that students maintain a high level of awareness of regional language preservation. This is evident in the 83% statement that regional languages are important to preserve. Students consider regional languages to be part of their cultural identity and must be maintained despite the increasing dominance of Indonesian in higher education.

However, a mixture of Indonesian and regional languages is still found in student communication. This is evident in the 55% statement regarding language mixing in everyday communication. This situation indicates that some students sometimes engage in code-mixing or code-switching in conversation, especially when speaking with close friends. Furthermore, 83% of respondents admitted to having difficulty understanding certain regional languages on campus. Therefore, students tend to prefer Indonesian when in diverse groups to maintain effective communication and avoid misunderstandings.

Overall, the research results show that UNIMED Geography Education students, Class of 2024, are able to adapt their language use to suit the communication situation. Indonesian is predominantly used in formal and academic situations due to its effectiveness as a means of cross-regional communication, while regional languages are more frequently used in informal situations to create a sense of comfort and strengthen social relationships among students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Indonesian is the most dominant language used by Geography Education students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan, Class of 2024, especially in academic and formal situations. Indonesian was chosen because it is easily understood by all students from various regions and facilitates communication within the campus environment.

On the other hand, regional languages are still used in informal communication, especially when students speak with friends from the same region. Regional languages are considered to create a more comfortable, familiar atmosphere and strengthen social relationships among students. This indicates that regional languages still play an important role in students' social lives.

Students' language choice is influenced by several factors, including the interlocutor, the communication situation, comfort, cultural identity, and communication effectiveness. Students are able to adapt their language use based on the communication context without abandoning their regional languages as part of their cultural identity. Therefore, the use of Indonesian and regional languages needs to be maintained in balance to maintain effective communication while preserving local culture.

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