

Original Article

Meck Dialect and it's Function in Contributing Language Variation on the Students of Yahukimo Communities at Merauke

Nasrawati¹✉, Manson Uuk²

^{1,2}English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Musamus University

Correspondence Author: nasrawati@unmus.ac.id✉

Abstract:

This research discussed about Meck dialect and its function in contributing language variation on the students of Yahukimo community at Merauke. This research applied descriptive qualitative method in revealing the data by using interviews and recordings to the 22 students of Yahukimo community at Merauke. This research found out that the Meck dialect contributing the language variation through its functions in the society. There were three functions of Meck dialect found namely cultural identity, group communication, and social marker. There were about 27 words of Meck dialect which was analyzed as the function of the language and it contributes the language variation of the Yahukimo community at Merauke. This research confirms the importance of documenting and revitalizing the Meck dialect in increasing knowledge of sociolinguistic and to maintain cultural heritage sustainability amid globalization's challenges.

Keywords: Meck Dialect, Language Function, Language Variation

Introduction

Dialect as the part of language has a big role in a society. Dialect can be a sign and symbol of a community. It is also become the characteristic of a community. A dialect is a far more than just a way of speaking. It is a powerful symbol and a sign of a community's identity. Dialect become one of the important aspects in language and communication. It refers to the structural content speaker's language.

A dialect spoken by particular group of people. Dialect is also a kind of variety of a language spoken by a particular group of people. As a tool of communication dialect has its function in the society such as the cultural identity, group communication, and as the social marker.

[Wanggai \(2020\)](#) in his article "The Yali Dialects of Yahukimo: A Linguistic Study" defines that as the cultural identity, dialect acts as a powerful marker and carrier of cultural identity for a group, reflecting shared history, social context, and unique experiences through its distinct vocabulary, grammar, and speech patterns. Dialect as the reflection of the culture. It is a unique experiences and values. Dialects develop within specific cultural and social contexts, incorporating the unique values, history, and experiences of their speakers. Dialect is also become the cultural heritage. The vocabulary, grammar, and expressions used in a dialect carry cultural heritage, serving as a living connection to a group's past and traditions.

Dialect in the society is also as the group of communication, dialect relate to groups communication such as shared identity, symbolic system, cultural reflection, social differentiation and rule governed system. As a shared identity dialect create a sense of community as they are spoken by people from particular geographic region, social class, or ethnic group. As the symbolic system dialect is a complete linguistic system, much like a language itself, that allows for effective communication within a group. As the cultural reflection, the dialect reflect the history, culture and people's experiences on it. As the social differentiation, a dialect distinguish one group's of communication from another, even if they speak the same border language. As the rules of governed, despite of being seen as "non standard" the dialect possess their own complex and regular patterns, making them sophisticated and functional communication tool.

[Yule \(2010\)](#) in his book "Study of Language" argued that providing cues about a speaker's social group such as their age, gender, ethnicity, social class, or geographic origin, and is expressed through variations in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. As the social markers the dialect function in the linguistic variation, social identity, distinguishing groups, and reflecting social hierarchies. In linguistic variation. The dialect showcase systematic differences in phonology (sound), syntax (grammar), and lexicology (vocabulary) that are used by specific groups. In the social identity, these linguistic features serve as a cue to the listener, providing information about the speaker's social identity and background.

By recognizing social markers, people can identify and differentiate between individuals belonging to the same or different social group. The use of certain dialects can be associated with particular social statutes, with prestigious dialects often tied to higher social standing, while non-standard dialects can carry a sense of covert prestige within certain communities. Regional dialects, social dialects, and ethnic and gender are the examples of dialects as the social markers.

[Chambers \(2019\)](#) in his book "Sociolinguistic Theory" stated that regional dialects, a speaker's accent or dialect can instantly reveal their geographic origin, such as distinguishing between an American from New York and one from California. Social dialects, a word like "serviette" versus "table napkin" can indicate a speaker's social class, with the former often associated with the working class and the latter with the middle class. Ethnic and Gender specific dialects, some communities feature distinct language varieties used by men and women or by different ethnic groups, serving to mark their social roles.

Implications of dialects as social markers can be seen in the social mobilities and social bonding and division. [Cher and Agustina \(2010\)](#) in their book of "Sociolinguistic Introduction" writes that in the social mobility it is not standard dialect features can sometimes act as a barrier to upward social mobility or access to certain opportunities, as the standard language variety is often associated with the higher status. In the social bonding and division, it can strengthen social bonds by creating a sense of shared identity within a group, but they can also create barriers between different groups, highlighting social divisions.

Seeing the function of the dialect above, it can be generally understood that dialect is to be a speech pattern distinct from that of the mainstream language variation. [Nordquist. R. \(2013\)](#) in his article "Definition and Example of Dialect In Linguistic" argued that dialect is a variety of language which is associated with a particular region and or social class. Dialect are restricted variations in language use based on social and geographical factors. A dialect is a sublanguage inside a language (which is also a variety of languages). It is acknowledged as a national language that inspires literature and, for some purposes, confers advantages to its speakers. Dialect, then, is a linguistic variety spoken by a group of people who share a lot of the same traits and the local location. In terms of phonology and morphology, the community's everyday speech exhibits the traits of the dialect. That dialect contribute on the dialectal (regional), temporal (time), and social aspects, dialects are divided.

Methods

This research follows a descriptive research design, focusing on analyzing and summarizing the contribution of Meck Language by the student of Meck at Merauke from the language function. The analyzing and summarizing describes qualitatively. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject by reviewing previous research, theories, and findings. The data were gathered from academic books, peer review journal articles, conference proceedings, and credible online sources.

As an interdisciplinary science, sociolinguistics combines the fields of sociology and linguistics. This scientific explanation clarifies how humans may appropriately apply language rules in unique contexts. The scientific study of the interaction between language and society is known as sociolinguistics. The field studies how language use is influenced by social characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, social rank, and situational context. Understanding how language is used in social interactions, how language changes within communities, and how linguistic variations are mirrored in social structures and personal identities are the core objectives of sociolinguistics.

A. Social Dialect

Zulaeha in her article Social dialects and community language Variations (2010:10) argued that social dialects are language variations used by way of certain community organizations that distinguish them from different community agencies. The dialect contributes the community group in question consists of work, education, age, activities, for instance, the resolution of vocabulary used by using a dealer in the market is certainly different from the determination of vocabulary used by means of a trainer or lecturer.

Dialects can indicate a certain social class or caste and the background of the speakers (Holmes 2013: 142). Social dialects are language variations used by community organizations, indicating social class or caste, and can differ based on factors like work, education, age, and activities, highlighting the uniqueness of each group. One of the uniques dialect is Meck Tribe of Papua.

Meck dialect is one of the many dialects spoken by people in Yahukimo regency. [Yoman \(2017\)](#) conducting an initial research into dialectal variation in Yahukimo by emphasized the importance of documenting the Meck language, it's contributing to reserve cucltural heritage. Meck language remains vital in the Meck community due to its role in local rituals and traditions.

B. Meck Dialect in It's Function In Contributing The Language Variation On The Society

1. Cultural Identity

Dialects as the integral to cultural identity by connect people through shared regional, social, or ethnic affiliations and embody a community's history, values, and unique worldview. By using a specific dialect, individuals can assert their belonging to a particular group, while the variations in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation reflect and reinforce centuries of cultural heritage and shared experiences. The role of dialects in shaping culture can be seen at the shaping worldview. Language, including its dialectal variations, can influence how people think and perceive the world. The specific vocabulary and structures of a dialect can shape a person's concepts and patterns of thinking. It also seen in the reinforcing cultural values. It is by reflecting specific words and expressions, dialects can embody and communicate the cultural values of a community. Last, by building community ties. That is shared dialects foster a sense of community and belonging, strengthening connections among people who use the same variations of a language.

[Kartika \(2021\)](#) in her article "Language and Cultural Identity in Papua." assumed that people can maintaining dialect and cultural

identity. First, by preserving heritage. That is valuing and preserving local dialects is seen as crucial for maintaining cultural diversity and strengthening cultural heritage. Second, by language policies. These policies that recognize and support linguistic diversity are important for ensuring that regional dialects are protected and valued, allowing all members of a society to feel connected to their national identity.

2. Group Communication

A dialect is a specific, systematic variety of a language used by a particular group of people, serving as a primary means of communication and a strong marker of social and regional identity. [Eriksen, \(2019\)](#) in his article "Dialects and Cultural Identity in Papua" stated that as the group communication a dialect is one of the variety of a language. Dialects are subdivisions of a larger language. Everyone speaks a dialect; "standard" language is simply a socially or politically dominant dialect. Dialects is also a group membership. These dialects are shared by a specific community, usually defined by geography (regional dialect) or social factors such as age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or occupation (social dialect or sociolect). Dialect is also systematic differences. The variations within a dialect are not random errors. They are rule-governed systems with consistent differences from other dialects of the same language. These differences can occur in the pronunciation or accent. The most recognizable difference about how words sound. The differences also occur in the vocabulary. What specific words used by a group, such as "soda" vs "pop" vs "coke". Other differences occur in the Grammar or syntax. It is in the variation in the sentence structure or rules. Such as use of double negatives. The last differences occur on the discourse conventions. It is the social rules for how language is used in conversation. There is some role in Communication, that is:

- a. Social Solidarity and Identity. People speaking the same dialect helps foster a sense of belonging and community among group members.
- b. Effective Interaction. Within the shared group, a dialect facilitates clear and efficient communication. People naturally "turn their dialect up or down" (code-switching) to send social messages and accommodate different listeners.
- c. Potential for Misunderstanding. Differences in dialects or strong accents can sometimes present barriers to communication, especially between unfamiliar groups.

Social Perceptions and Bias. Societal attitudes often lead to judgments about a speaker's intelligence or status based on their dialect, which is a social distinction rather than a linguistic one. In essence, a dialect is a powerful tool that both enables a specific group to communicate effectively and marks their unique place within society.

C. Social Marker

Dialects are powerful social markers that indicate a speaker's social identity, including their social class, ethnicity, age, and region. By using specific vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, dialects serve as cues that connect individuals to social groups and influence perceptions, opportunities, and social mobility. The use of dialects is a fundamental aspect of how we define our place in society and how others perceive us. [Hall and Stuart \(2019\)](#) in their book "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" argued that the dialect functions as a social marker as:

1. Indicators of social identity. A speaker's dialect can reveal where they are from, their social class, or their ethnic background. For example, in Britain, a person's accent can indicate if they are from London, Liverpool,

or another region.

2. Reflection of social hierarchies. Dialects can be tied to social hierarchies, and the use of a "prestige" dialect may be associated with higher social status. Conversely, non-standard dialects can sometimes be associated with "covert prestige," where a different kind of social value is placed on a linguistic variety.
3. Tools for social connection. Dialects can help define and maintain group identity by allowing members to recognize and bond with others who share their linguistic background. Sharing a dialect can create a sense of solidarity within a community.
4. Influences on perception and opportunity. The way a person speaks can influence how others perceive them and can affect their access to opportunities, such as in the job market or legal proceedings. For example, a person with a certain dialect might be perceived as more or less educated, trustworthy, or capable.

Social context influences dialect used in:

1. Conscious or unconscious choices. Speakers may consciously choose to use a dialect to emphasize their identity or affiliation, or they may do so unconsciously. People can even "turn their dialect up or down" to send social messages.
2. Talking proper. The phrase "talking proper" refers to the social phenomenon where certain dialects are considered more polished or prestigious and are often associated with "talking proper" in a way that is valued by society.
3. Accommodation theory. In some contexts, a person may adjust their dialect to better fit in with a new group or to facilitate communication, a concept known as accommodation.

Results and Discussion

Based on the recording and interview, it is found that there were three functions of Meck dialect in the society and it's contributed the language variation. The functions namely: Cultural Identity, Group Communication and Social Marker. It was found 27 words of Meck dialect of Yahukimo student communities at Merauke. The description of the function in contributing the language variation can be seen below:

1. As The Cultural Identity

Meck Dialect	Meaning	Function
You e	Male house/honai	Cultural Identity
Bell ward	Music pikon	
Wander past	Brother-in law	
Man see	Kus-kus fangs	
Seek sum	Seventh day	
Mal	Bow and arrow	
Book sum	Clothing	

Meck dialect of Yahukimo communities at Merauke used their dialect as the cultural identity, group communication, and social marker. In terms of cultural identity, researcher found 7 words and their meanings, Such as bell ward", "wander", "man see", "seek sum", "mal", and "book sum". All of the words contribute to Meck language of the Yahukimo community varieties in their communication. All of the words contain It can be seen that the cultural heritage can be sustain from the 7 word of Meck dialect which function as their cultural identity.

One example "*you e*," which means a male's house or commonly called a male's honai. *You e* (*male's house*) has a deep meaning in the Papuan cultural context, reflecting the social, spiritual, and educational functions of the local community.

Papuan have a lot of traditional music to express their identity, Yahukimo community also used music as their cultural identity namely “bell ward” means music bicon. It is a music that always used by them in some ceremonial tradition. This word is one of a language variation used by the Yahukimo communities in their daily conversation.

2. As The Group Communication

Meck Dialect	Meaning	Function
All do	Where	Group-communication
Oh no	There	
Key	Banana	
Sick	They	
Leg	lazy	
Sum	today	
Song	Smell	
Small	What problem	
Wining on	Bird shell	
Man on	shoot the rat	
Book	Skin	
Corn	White	
Shoup	Meat	
Pick up	Cat	
Or	Can	
Wanna	Dear	

It was found 16 words Meck dialect of the Yahukimo communities analyzed as the group communication. That is “all do”, “oh no”, “key”, “sick”, “leg”, “sum”, “small”, “wining on”, “man on”, “book”, “corn”, “shoup”, “pick up”, “or”, and “wanna”. It can be seen from the table that the 16 words of Meck language which is analyzed as the group communication. These words usually used by the Yahukimo communities at Merauke as their language variation in their daily communication.

In Yahukimo community daily communication also used some word that function in their communities. That words such as “all do” means where also used in their conversation.

Enis: “sa mopi dolo”

Gerias: “all do?”

Enis: “oh no”

The conversation above shows that the speaker used Meck dialect as his language variation in his conversation. “sa mopi dolo” means “I want to go”. That words is used in Papuan dialect general. It is a code switch between Bahasa Indonesia and Papuan language.

“all do?” means “where”, “oh no” means “there”. These two words used by the Yahukimo communities at Merauke as their language variation.

3. As The Social Marker

Meck Dialect	Meaning	Function
See	Hand	Social Markers
Gonna	Hill	
All dip	Absolutely correct	
Look	Fear	

The social marker function can be seen on the words “see”, “gonna”, “all dip”, and “look”. The 4 words functions as the social marker and contributes

to the language variations of Yahukimo communities. These words marker function to help Yahukimo community identity with a particular group or to signal their social position within their society. For example, using certain vocabulary, like "gona" vs "hill", can mark the speaker as belonging to a particular education level.

Conclusion

To conclude, by examining the three functions of Meck dialect, that is cultural identity, group communication, and social marker. The three functions contribute to the language variation. This research aims to shed light on how Meck dialect function in contributing Yahukimo community language variation in their daily communication. The finding of this research may have implications for fields such as education, cultural preservation, and language policy in diverse. Meck dialect not only acts as a means of communication, but also as a marker of cultural identity and a symbol of solidarity of the Yahukimo community in Merauke. The research depicts the main factors that effect on language variation. By studying these functions, linguist can support linguistic variation in an increasingly knowledge of sociolinguistics and maintain cultural heritage from the language variation.

References

Agustina. Et al. (2004). *Sociolinguistics*. Jakarta: PT Pineka Cipta.

Chaer & Agustina. 2010. *Sociolinguistic Introduction*. Revised Edition. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

Chambers, J. K. (2019). *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic Variation and Its Social Significance* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Chomsky, N. (2020). *The Changing Nature of Language in the Digital Age*. MIT Press.

Eriksen, T. H. (2019). Dialects and Cultural Identity in Papua. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 75(2), 155-172.

Hall, Stuart. (2019). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publication.

Kartika, L. (2021). "Language and Cultural Identity in Papua." *Journal of Cultural and Language Studies*, 15(4), 78-89.

Kurniawati, E. (2019). "The Role of Meck Language in Cultural Practices." *Journal of Cultural and Social Studies in Papua*, 8(2), 77-95.

Lanny, W. (2018). *Alat Musik Tradisional Papua: Studi Kasus Pikon pada Suku Dani*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Budaya

2003). Fadama II Project Implementation Manual Volume I and II.

Wanggai, A. (2020). "The Yali Dialects of Yahukimo: A Linguistic Study." *Journal of Papuan Languages*, 12(3), 78-95.

Yoman, S. (2017). "Linguistic Features of the Meck Dialect in Yahukimo." *Papuan Linguistic Journal*, 5(1), 34-52.

Yule, George. (2006). *The study of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Yule, G, (2010) *Study of Language*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge, Fourth Editions P: 239

Zulaeha. (2010). *Social dialects and community language variations*. [Publisher]