Indo-Slang and Identity Performance:

The Sociolinguistics of '*Bahasa Anak Jaksel*' as a Marker of Neoliberal Class Distinction

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Abstract

The linguistic phenomenon popularly known as *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* (South Jakarta slang)—characterized by frequent code-switching between Indonesian and English—has evolved into a significant cultural signifier in contemporary Indonesia. This paper examines the sociolinguistic functions of this hybrid language through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's "cultural capital." By analyzing social media content and conducting focus group discussions among urban youth, the study explores how linguistic hybridization serves as a tool for identity performance and class distinction. The research finds that while the slang is often ridiculed as a sign of superficiality, it functions as a strategic marker of neocolonial cosmopolitanism, signaling the speaker's access to international education and global neoliberal networks. Furthermore, the discourse surrounding this slang reveals deep-seated anxieties about

the "purity" of the national language versus the pragmatism of global fluency. This study contributes to the field of world Englishes by illustrating how language becomes a battlefield for class competition and social mobility in a rapidly globalizing Southeast Asian metropolis.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Code-switching, Class Identity, Neoliberalism, Indonesian Slang

Introduction

Language has long been understood as both a communicative system and a symbolic resource embedded within relations of power. In late modern societies, linguistic practices increasingly mediate access to education, employment, and social prestige, rendering language a crucial mechanism in the reproduction of inequality. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) conceptualizes language as a form of symbolic capital whose value depends on institutional recognition and market conditions. From this perspective, linguistic competence is never neutral; it is socially stratified and tied to broader structures of domination.

The intensification of globalization has further transformed linguistic hierarchies, particularly in urban centers of the Global South. English has acquired unprecedented symbolic and economic value as a global lingua franca associated with mobility, cosmopolitanism, and neoliberal competitiveness (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Park & Wee, 2012). Within this context, multilingual practices—especially code-switching—function not merely as communicative strategies but as performances of aspirational belonging in transnational networks (Heller, 2011).

Code-switching has been widely theorized as a socially meaningful practice that indexes identity, solidarity, and power (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Rather than signaling linguistic deficiency, alternating between languages can operate as a strategic display of competence across multiple linguistic markets. In stratified urban environments, such hybridization often reflects unequal access to education and global cultural flows.

Indonesia presents a particularly compelling case for examining these dynamics. As the national language, Bahasa Indonesia has historically functioned as a unifying symbol of postcolonial nationhood (Anderson, 1991). Yet English occupies an

increasingly prestigious position in elite schooling, corporate employment, and digital culture. This dual linguistic order creates tensions between nationalist language ideology and global pragmatism (Lauder, 2008).

Within this landscape, the phenomenon popularly known as *Bahasa Anak Jaksel*—a hybrid Indonesian-English register associated with affluent youth in South Jakarta—has emerged as a salient sociolinguistic style. Its visibility has been amplified through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter (now X), where linguistic performances circulate rapidly as memes, parodies, and lifestyle content.

Public discourse surrounding this register is deeply ambivalent. While some interpret it as evidence of global fluency and cosmopolitan capital, others ridicule it as pretentious, inauthentic, or symptomatic of neocolonial mentality. Such reactions reveal anxieties about linguistic purity and national authenticity, echoing broader debates about globalization and cultural sovereignty (Blommaert, 2010).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* may be understood as a strategy of distinction, whereby speakers accumulate and display cultural capital through linguistic style (Bourdieu, 1984). Access to English-medium education, international travel, and global media consumption enables certain urban youth to convert linguistic competence into symbolic advantage. In this sense, hybrid speech becomes a marker of neoliberal subjectivity—self-enterprising, mobile, and globally oriented (Brown, 2015).

At the same time, the commodification of linguistic hybridity in digital spaces complicates traditional models of class reproduction. Social media environments blur boundaries between elite and aspirational identities, enabling wider audiences to imitate or parody elite registers (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Consequently, language becomes a contested terrain where class hierarchies are reproduced, negotiated, and sometimes destabilized.

This study situates *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* within the intersecting frameworks of cultural capital, neoliberalism, and World Englishes. It asks how code-switching operates as a form of symbolic distinction, how cosmopolitan identity is performed through hybrid linguistic practice, and how public discourse both reproduces and challenges urban class hierarchies. By foregrounding Indonesia's rapidly globalizing metropolis, the paper contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship on language as a site of class competition and symbolic struggle in Southeast Asia.

Literature Review

A. Code-Switching and Identity Performance

Code-switching has been a central concern in sociolinguistics, particularly in multilingual societies where speakers routinely alternate between languages. Early interactional approaches conceptualized code-switching as a contextualization cue that structures meaning in conversation (Gumperz, 1982). Rather than random interference, language alternation signals shifts in footing, topic, or relational alignment.

Subsequent structural models demonstrated that code-switching follows systematic grammatical constraints (Myers-Scotton, 1993). These findings challenged deficit-based assumptions that bilingual speakers lack competence. Instead, alternating codes reflects a high degree of linguistic mastery across systems.

Contemporary scholarship moves beyond structural analysis to examine the social meanings indexed by code-switching. Linguistic choices become semiotic resources through which speakers signal solidarity, distance, authority, or prestige (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Code-switching thus operates within broader regimes of meaning-making and social positioning.

Identity-oriented perspectives emphasize that language is performative. Through stylization and register mixing, speakers construct recognizable personae aligned with particular lifestyles or class positions (Coupland, 2007). Hybrid speech can therefore function as a strategic display of cosmopolitan or elite affiliation. In digital environments, identity performance through code-switching becomes amplified. Social media platforms enable rapid circulation of stylized registers, transforming localized speech practices into widely recognized sociolects. Consequently, hybrid language practices are not only interactional phenomena but also mediated performances embedded in classed and aspirational imaginaries.

B. Cultural Capital and Linguistic Capital

The relationship between language and social inequality is most comprehensively theorized by Pierre Bourdieu. In his framework, cultural capital refers to embodied dispositions, educational credentials, and cultural competencies that enable social mobility (Bourdieu, 1984). Language constitutes a crucial dimension of this capital.

In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), Bourdieu conceptualizes linguistic competence as symbolic capital whose value depends on recognition within specific markets. Not all varieties carry equal weight; legitimacy is conferred through institutions such as schools, media, and the state.

The notion of the linguistic market explains how certain speech forms gain exchange value. Mastery of prestigious or global languages allows speakers to accumulate advantage, while stigmatized varieties limit mobility. Linguistic capital is therefore inseparable from economic and social capital.

Importantly, linguistic capital operates through symbolic power—the capacity to define what counts as legitimate language. This power naturalizes hierarchies, rendering them seemingly meritocratic. Speakers who command valued varieties appear inherently competent rather than structurally privileged. Applied to hybrid registers, Bourdieu's framework illuminates how code-switching may function as a strategy of distinction. Access to English-medium education or transnational exposure enables certain urban groups to convert bilingual fluency into markers of elite status, reinforcing class boundaries within neoliberal economies.

C. World Englishes and Postcolonial Linguistics

The global expansion of English has generated diverse localized varieties, prompting the development of World Englishes scholarship (Kachru, 1992). This paradigm challenges the hegemony of native-speaker norms and recognizes plural centers of linguistic authority.

In Southeast Asia, English occupies complex positions shaped by colonial histories and contemporary globalization (Bolton, 2008). It functions simultaneously as a legacy of imperialism and as a resource for transnational mobility. Hybrid forms often emerge in multilingual urban contexts where English intersects with local languages. Postcolonial linguistics further interrogates how English reproduces global hierarchies while enabling localized creativity (Pennycook, 2007). The appropriation of English into new sociolects complicates binaries of domination and resistance. Hybridization can signal both empowerment and inequality.

English also operates as a commodity in neoliberal markets (Heller, 2011). Its exchange value in education and employment intensifies competition over linguistic competence. As a result, proficiency becomes a measurable asset tied to individual aspiration.

Within this framework, Indonesian-English mixing can be understood not merely as borrowing but as participation in global linguistic economies. Hybrid speech reflects negotiations between local identity and global capital, situating speakers within layered linguistic hierarchies.

D. *Language Ideology and Nationalism*

Language ideology research examines beliefs about language that rationalize social hierarchies. Ideologies of linguistic purity often emerge in nation-building projects, framing the national language as a symbol of unity and moral authenticity (Blommaert, 2010).

In Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia was institutionalized as a unifying language during the nationalist movement, consolidating postcolonial identity (Anderson, 1991). State policy positioned it as a neutral lingua franca transcending ethnic diversity. However, globalization complicates this linguistic order. The rising prestige of English in elite education and corporate sectors introduces stratification within the national linguistic landscape (Lauder, 2008). English proficiency increasingly indexes class privilege.

Public criticism of mixed registers frequently invokes concerns about authenticity and Westernization. Such discourse reflects anxieties that hybridization threatens cultural sovereignty. The policing of linguistic boundaries thus becomes a moral and political act. Language ideology therefore mediates the reception of hybrid sociolects. Debates about mixing are rarely about grammar alone; they encode struggles over class mobility, generational change, and the future orientation of the nation.

E. *Research Gap*

Although scholarship on code-switching and World Englishes is extensive, limited attention has been paid to emergent urban sociolects in Indonesia. Research on English in Indonesia often focuses on pedagogy, curriculum policy, or language planning rather than youth identity practices.

Studies of bilingualism in Indonesia have seldom connected hybrid linguistic styles to class formation. The sociolinguistic implications of urban elite slang remain under-theorized within broader frameworks of neoliberalism and symbolic capital.

Moreover, digital mediation has transformed the visibility of sociolects, yet few empirical studies examine how social media amplifies classed language performance. The intersection between online stylization and offline inequality warrants systematic analysis. The phenomenon labeled *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* has attracted journalistic commentary but minimal sustained academic engagement. Existing discussions rarely situate it within theories of linguistic markets or neoliberal subjectivity.

Addressing this gap, the present study integrates cultural capital theory, World Englishes scholarship, and language ideology analysis to examine how Indonesian-English hybrid speech operates as a marker of emerging neoliberal class distinction in urban Indonesia.

Theoretical Framework

A. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

This study draws primarily on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to analyze the relationship between language and class distinction. Bourdieu conceptualizes social life as structured by the dynamic interaction of *habitus, field*, and *capital* (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990). Habitus refers to durable dispositions shaped by one's socialization, which guide perceptions, tastes, and practices. These dispositions operate largely beneath conscious awareness yet structure everyday action.

The concept of *field* denotes relatively autonomous social arenas—such as education, media, or cultural production—within which actors compete for valued resources. Each field is governed by its own rules and hierarchies, determining what forms of capital are recognized as legitimate. Linguistic practice, therefore, cannot be detached from the field in which it circulates.

Capital, in Bourdieu's formulation, extends beyond economic assets to include cultural, social, and symbolic forms. Cultural capital may be embodied (dispositions and competencies), institutionalized (educational credentials), or objectified (cultural goods). Linguistic competence constitutes a crucial dimension of embodied cultural capital.

In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), Bourdieu further elaborates the notion of linguistic capital, arguing that language acquires value within specific linguistic markets. Certain varieties—often standardized or globally prestigious—carry higher symbolic exchange value. Mastery of such varieties enables speakers to convert linguistic competence into social advantage.

Applied to hybrid urban registers, this framework illuminates how Indonesian-English code-switching may function as symbolic capital within elite urban fields. Access to international education and global media exposure shapes habitus, enabling speakers to deploy hybrid language strategically as a marker of distinction. Linguistic style thus becomes both structured by class position and productive of class reproduction.

B. *Neoliberal Subjectivity*

While Bourdieu's framework explains the structural dynamics of capital and distinction, contemporary conditions of globalization require engagement with theories of neoliberal subjectivity. Neoliberalism promotes the ideal of the self-enterprising individual who continuously invests in personal skills to enhance competitiveness (Brown, 2015). Under this logic, language proficiency becomes an individual asset rather than a collective resource.

In urban middle-class contexts, self-branding emerges as a key practice of neoliberal subject formation. Individuals curate identities across digital platforms, presenting themselves as globally fluent, culturally adaptable, and professionally competent. Linguistic style becomes central to this performative self-fashioning.

English proficiency, in particular, is framed as a form of investment promising upward mobility and cosmopolitan belonging (Park & Wee, 2012). The ability to code-switch fluidly between Indonesian and English signals not only educational privilege but also participation in transnational networks. Language thereby functions as a technology of the self.

Neoliberal subjectivity also encourages reflexivity: individuals monitor and optimize their linguistic performances to align with market demands. Hybrid registers can thus operate as strategic displays of cultural flexibility and modernity. Such performances resonate strongly within digital economies where visibility and symbolic capital are intertwined. Within this framework, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* may be understood as an index of neoliberal class formation. It embodies a disposition oriented toward global competitiveness and lifestyle branding, transforming everyday speech into a resource for aspirational distinction.

C. *Language Ideology and Moral Panic*

The valorization of hybrid linguistic capital often provokes counter-discourses grounded in language ideology. Language ideologies are socially embedded beliefs about what constitutes "proper" or "pure" language (Blommaert, 2010). These beliefs frequently align with nationalist projects that equate linguistic unity with cultural integrity.

In postcolonial contexts, anxieties about linguistic mixture may be articulated as concerns over "language damage" or degradation. Discourses that label hybrid speech as "bahasa rusak" (broken language) frame code-switching as evidence of moral decline or Westernization. Such reactions exceed grammatical critique and instead signal symbolic boundary maintenance.

Moral panic emerges when linguistic practices are perceived as threatening collective identity. Media narratives and public commentary may exaggerate the prevalence or impact of hybrid speech, constructing it as symptomatic of generational irresponsibility or elite arrogance. Language becomes a proxy for broader class resentment.

These anxieties are closely tied to class politics. Hybrid registers associated with affluent youth can be interpreted as exclusionary markers of privilege, intensifying perceptions of inequality. Critiques of linguistic mixing may therefore encode resistance to emerging class hierarchies. By integrating language ideology and moral panic into the theoretical framework, this study accounts for both the accumulation of linguistic capital and the social contestation it generates. Hybrid language practices are not merely stylistic choices but sites where neoliberal aspiration, class distinction, and nationalist sentiment converge and collide.

Methodology

A. *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative sociolinguistic research design to investigate how *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* functions as a marker of class distinction and neoliberal identity performance. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's focus on meaning-making, symbolic capital, and discourse practices rather than frequency-based linguistic measurement. The objective is to interpret how speakers and audiences construct social value around hybrid linguistic forms.

The research integrates two complementary methods: digital discourse analysis and focus group discussions (FGDs). Digital discourse analysis enables examination of how hybrid language practices circulate, are stylized, and are contested in online spaces. Because *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* gained prominence through digital platforms, mediated discourse constitutes a primary site of sociolinguistic performance. Focus group discussions provide insight into participants' reflexive interpretations of hybrid language use. This method facilitates interaction among participants, revealing shared norms, tensions, and classed perceptions that may not surface in individual interviews. Together, these methods allow triangulation between publicly circulated discourse and lived linguistic experience.

B. *Data Collection*

Data were collected from three major social media platforms: TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). These platforms were selected due to their central role in popularizing and parodying *Bahasa Anak Jaksel*. Public posts containing relevant hashtags and keywords were systematically archived over a defined period. The dataset includes viral video transcripts, meme captions, comment threads, and short-form dialogues exemplifying Indonesian-English code-switching. Particular attention was paid to content that explicitly framed the register as elite, pretentious, cosmopolitan, or *"bahasa rusak."* This enabled analysis of both performance and metacommentary. In addition, three focus group discussions were conducted with urban youth in Jakarta. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed. Participants were prompted to discuss their perceptions of hybrid language, its social meanings, and its association with education and class.

C. *Sampling Strategy*

The study employed purposive sampling to recruit participants aged 18–30 who reside in urban Jakarta. This demographic was selected because youth are primary producers and consumers of digitally mediated slang and are deeply embedded in globalized cultural flows. Participants were drawn from middle-class backgrounds to reflect the social positioning commonly associated with *Bahasa Anak Jaksel*. To capture variation within this category, the sample included individuals educated in international schools or overseas institutions as well as those educated in national public or private schools. This variation allows comparative analysis of how

educational trajectories shape linguistic habitus and perceptions of English prestige. By incorporating diverse educational experiences, the study examines whether hybrid language practices are normalized, aspirational, or contested across segments of the urban middle class.

D. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic discourse analysis. This approach identifies recurring patterns, narratives, and evaluative stances within both digital texts and focus group transcripts. Themes such as cosmopolitan identity, elitism, authenticity, and linguistic purity were systematically coded. A focused analysis of code-switching practices was conducted to examine lexical choice, discourse markers, syntactic mixing, and pragmatic functions. Rather than quantifying frequency alone, the analysis interprets how switching indexes social meaning within specific communicative contexts. Particular attention was given to identifying linguistic markers associated with class distinction and cosmopolitanism. These include references to international education, global lifestyle vocabulary, and stylistic markers of fluency. The analysis also traces how such markers are affirmed, mocked, or resisted in public discourse.

E. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. All focus group participants provided informed consent and were assured anonymity. Pseudonyms are used in all transcripts, and identifying details have been removed to protect privacy. Regarding digital data, only publicly accessible content was analyzed. Usernames were anonymized, and no private or restricted materials were accessed. The study adheres to ethical guidelines for internet research, recognizing the blurred boundaries between public visibility and personal identity in digital spaces. By prioritizing confidentiality and responsible data use, the research ensures that analysis of linguistic practice does not reproduce harm or expose participants to unwanted scrutiny.

Findings

A. *Linguistic Hybridization as Cultural Capital*

The findings indicate that Indonesian–English code-switching functions as a socially recognized form of cultural capital within Jakarta's urban middle-class environment. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) conceptualization of linguistic capital, participants consistently framed hybrid fluency as evidence of structured educational privilege rather than spontaneous stylistic creativity. The capacity to alternate seamlessly between Indonesian and English was frequently associated with enrollment in international schools, overseas study trajectories, and sustained exposure to Anglophone media ecosystems. Such associations demonstrate how linguistic competence becomes embodied within classed habitus, appearing natural and effortless while in fact rooted in unequal distributions of economic and cultural resources.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that hybrid speech "sounds natural" only for those raised in bilingual academic environments. This perception reflects Bourdieu's (1984) insight that habitus transforms historically accumulated advantages into durable dispositions that seem self-evident. English lexical insertions—particularly in academic or professional contexts—were interpreted as markers of global literacy and cosmopolitan upbringing. Consequently, linguistic mixing was rarely evaluated in purely grammatical terms; instead, it was decoded as a signifier of educational trajectory and institutional affiliation.

Digital discourse reinforced this symbolic linkage by repeatedly situating hybrid speakers within elite institutional pathways. Viral content frequently referenced international universities, multinational corporations, and professional internships, thereby embedding English terminology within narratives of upward mobility. The recurrence of professionalized English vocabulary—such as terms associated with strategy, productivity, or networking—illustrates how linguistic forms circulate within neoliberal labor markets (Brown, 2015). Hybrid speech thus indexes insertion into global economic circuits.

Lifestyle vocabulary further intensified this process of symbolic accumulation. English words related to wellness routines, fashion branding, financial planning, and entrepreneurial aspiration appeared prominently in online performances. Even when Indonesian equivalents existed, English lexical choices conveyed alignment with global consumer culture and aspirational middle-class identity. This selective

borrowing was not random but patterned, revealing how linguistic choice operates within a stratified symbolic economy.

Taken together, these patterns illustrate that linguistic hybridization condenses educational privilege, transnational exposure, and aspirational consumption into a portable marker of distinction. Code-switching becomes simultaneously embodied capital and publicly legible symbolic resource, enabling speakers to position themselves advantageously within Jakarta's competitive urban linguistic market.

B. Performing Cosmopolitan Identity

Hybrid language also functioned as a reflexive tool for performing cosmopolitan identity within digitally mediated public spaces. Participants acknowledged that their degree of code-switching varied according to audience composition, communicative purpose, and perceived reputational stakes. This reflexivity illustrates that hybrid speech is not merely habitual but strategically calibrated to produce specific impressions, aligning with performative theories of identity (Coupland, 2007). In highly visible digital contexts, intensified mixing frequently operated as stylized self-presentation rather than unconscious bilingual drift.

English insertions were commonly embedded within narratives of ambition, professional development, and self-optimization. Participants described using hybrid speech when discussing internships, startup ventures, networking events, or global career aspirations. Such linguistic choices resonate with neoliberal discourses that frame individuals as entrepreneurial subjects responsible for continuously enhancing their market value (Brown, 2015). Language, in this sense, becomes a technology of the self.

Hybrid speech also indexed imagined mobility. Participants frequently linked their linguistic practices to aspirations for overseas education, multinational employment, or transnational collaboration. Code-switching therefore signaled not only present competence but projected trajectories of global circulation. As Park and Wee (2012) argue, English in globalized contexts functions as commodified capital, and hybridization intensifies this commodification by embedding English within local linguistic structures.

Audience recognition played a crucial role in stabilizing these performances. Comment sections often interpreted hybrid speakers as "international," "global," or "elite," confirming the relational nature of identity construction described by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Linguistic performance gained meaning through

collective uptake, reinforcing the symbolic value of hybrid speech within specific interpretive communities. Through iterative digital circulation, cosmopolitan identity became sedimented as both expressive style and credential. Hybrid language thus operated simultaneously as performance and proof, enabling speakers to enact and authenticate neoliberal middle-class subjectivities within Jakarta's evolving urban field.

C. Ridicule, Mockery, and Class Anxiety

Despite its symbolic capital, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* was frequently subjected to satire and parody that revealed underlying class anxieties. Digital memes exaggerated English insertions and intonation patterns, portraying speakers as hyper-Westernized or performatively elitist. Such metalinguistic commentary reflects what Blommaert (2010) describes as ideological policing, wherein linguistic forms become targets of moral evaluation rather than neutral communicative tools.

Focus group participants interpreted satire ambivalently. Some perceived parody as lighthearted humor, while others recognized it as indirect critique of educational and economic privilege. Mockery often targeted the perceived exclusivity of hybrid speakers, suggesting that English insertion functions as a boundary-making device. In Bourdieusian terms, parody constitutes a symbolic challenge to the monopolization of valued linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

Discourses labeling hybrid speech as "bahasa rusak" invoked nationalist anxieties about linguistic purity. Critics framed mixing as evidence of declining cultural loyalty, positioning Bahasa Indonesia as a sacred emblem of postcolonial unity (Anderson, 1991). These narratives reveal how language becomes entangled with moralized visions of national authenticity.

Satire also temporarily inverted symbolic hierarchies by rendering elite speech absurd. Through exaggeration, critics destabilized the automatic association between English proficiency and intellectual superiority. This inversion demonstrates that linguistic capital remains contingent upon collective recognition and can be delegitimized through humor. Ultimately, ridicule exposes the ambivalence surrounding hybrid speech. While code-switching accrues prestige within certain fields, it simultaneously provokes resentment and moral critique, highlighting the fragile and contested nature of cosmopolitan distinction.

D. Language as a Battlefield of Social Mobility

The findings position language as a central arena in struggles over mobility and distinction within Jakarta's neoliberal order. Hybrid speech functions as a strategic resource for differentiation, allowing speakers to signal alignment with global circuits of knowledge and employment. In Bourdieusian terms, linguistic capital facilitates advantageous positioning within competitive social fields structured by unequal access to education (Bourdieu, 1984).

However, access to this capital remains unevenly distributed. Participants educated in national institutions described pressure to adapt to English-dominant professional environments, revealing how linguistic competence mediates opportunity structures. Neoliberal discourse frames such adaptation as individual responsibility, obscuring structural disparities (Brown, 2015).

Digital platform economies further intensify these dynamics by converting linguistic performance into measurable visibility. Hybrid speech, when stylized effectively, accumulates likes, shares, and followers, transforming symbolic capital into quantifiable social currency. Yet this visibility simultaneously invites critique and parody, complicating accumulation processes.

Importantly, hybrid language both reproduces and negotiates hierarchy. While it reinforces class distinctions rooted in educational privilege, its imitable surface features allow aspirational actors to approximate elite registers. This partial fluidity illustrates the dynamism of linguistic markets, where distinction is continuously contested (Bourdieu, 1991). In sum, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* exemplifies how language becomes a battlefield in which aspiration, resistance, and hierarchy intersect. Code-switching mediates both the reproduction and renegotiation of class relations, rendering everyday speech a pivotal site of neoliberal social struggle.

Discussion

A. Linguistic Capital in the Neoliberal City

The study's findings highlight how Jakarta operates as a highly competitive linguistic market, in which mastery of hybrid Indonesian–English speech functions as a form of symbolic capital that conveys both educational and social privilege (Bourdieu, 1991). Within this urban field, English is not merely a communicative tool but a socially valued asset that can be leveraged for career advancement, professional

networking, and cosmopolitan positioning. Participants' narratives reveal that English lexical insertion, particularly in professional and lifestyle contexts, indexes global exposure and aligns speakers with transnational neoliberal networks (Brown, 2015). Hybrid speech thereby becomes a mechanism of differentiation, signaling cultural competence, sophistication, and aspirational belonging within the stratified urban milieu.

Importantly, this linguistic capital is both embodied and publicly visible. Individuals acquire fluency through habitus shaped by international schooling, bilingual upbringing, or extended engagement with global media, converting these structural advantages into performative competence. Public dissemination through social media amplifies its value, as likes, shares, and online recognition translate symbolic competence into measurable social currency. This interplay between private habitus and public visibility illustrates the dynamic functioning of linguistic capital in a neoliberal urban context, demonstrating how language mediates the reproduction and negotiation of social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1984).

English thus emerges as a high-value commodity in Jakarta's linguistic economy, where access is unequally distributed and strategically deployed. The performance of hybrid speech allows middle-class youth to enact aspirational identities, accumulate social advantage, and negotiate inclusion within cosmopolitan urban networks. The strategic deployment of linguistic capital reflects the neoliberal imperative to self-optimize through culturally valued skills, situating language as both a marker of distinction and a tool of social mobility.

Hybridization also demonstrates the intersection of local and global logics. While Indonesian functions as the baseline medium of daily communication, English elements confer status and global legitimacy. This duality underscores how linguistic markets are relational and context-dependent, with symbolic power contingent upon audience recognition, field-specific norms, and transnational reference points (Heller, 2011). The phenomenon illustrates the complexity of urban sociolinguistic stratification in Southeast Asia's megacities, where language serves simultaneously as currency, identity, and site of competition. Finally, linguistic capital in Jakarta is inseparable from broader socioeconomic structures. Privilege, educational access, and international mobility shape the ability to acquire and perform hybrid speech, rendering the linguistic market both a site of opportunity and exclusion. In this sense, language reflects structural inequalities even as it enables individual aspirational strategies, highlighting the intertwined dynamics of agency, habitus, and field in shaping urban linguistic practices.

B. Between Nationalism and Global Fluency

The study further reveals persistent tensions between nationalist ideology and pragmatic global fluency. Bahasa Indonesia, as the nation's standardized language, carries symbolic weight as a marker of cultural cohesion and postcolonial sovereignty (Anderson, 1991). Discourses surrounding linguistic purity—manifested in critiques of "bahasa rusak"—articulate concerns that hybrid speech threatens the integrity of national identity. Simultaneously, the practical demands of global connectivity, transnational education, and professional mobility incentivize code-switching and English incorporation. This creates a tension in which pragmatic utility conflicts with ideological prescriptions.

Participants articulated this ambivalence explicitly, acknowledging that English insertion enhances social and professional opportunities while risking social censure for perceived inauthenticity. This tension echoes the dual imperatives described in language ideology scholarship: a commitment to symbolic nationalism versus the instrumental value of globally oriented linguistic skills (Blommaert, 2010). Hybrid speech therefore becomes a negotiated practice in which youth navigate competing pressures of identity, mobility, and social legitimacy.

The ideological friction also produces affective responses, including moral panic and humor. Ridicule of *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* functions as both entertainment and symbolic policing, reflecting anxieties about class, authenticity, and generational change. These responses underscore the contested nature of language as social capital: prestige in one domain may simultaneously provoke resistance or marginalization in another.

Crucially, the tension between nationalism and global fluency is not merely rhetorical but embedded in practical life choices. The ability to code-switch effectively enables access to international education, career advancement, and cosmopolitan networks, reinforcing the value of English within the urban linguistic market. At the same time, these practices challenge normative conceptions of national linguistic authority, suggesting a complex negotiation of postcolonial identity under globalization pressures (Heller, 2011). Ultimately, the interplay between nationalist ideology and global pragmatism illustrates the duality of language as both symbolic and instrumental capital. Hybrid speech operates at the intersection of moral, cultural, and economic logics, revealing how urban youth

strategically deploy linguistic practices to balance competing demands of belonging, mobility, and distinction.

C. Reframing Bahasa Anak Jaksel

The study reframes *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* from a superficially trivial urban slang into a deliberate strategy for middle-class distinction and social positioning. While public discourse often frames the register as "pretentious" or "superficial," the findings show that it operates as a consciously managed set of practices indexing education, global exposure, and aspirational cosmopolitanism (Park & Wee, 2012). Participants employed hybrid speech to navigate professional, educational, and social domains, demonstrating that its performative value is contextually dependent and socially negotiated.

Hybrid speech functions as a strategic resource for identity performance. By selecting English lexical items in professional and lifestyle contexts, speakers signal alignment with globally recognized forms of cultural capital. Far from being frivolous, these choices are embedded within broader neoliberal practices of self-optimization and self-branding, positioning youth as cosmopolitan actors capable of transnational mobility (Brown, 2015). The register therefore operates as a marker of aspirational middle-class habitus, calibrated to audiences capable of interpreting its symbolic cues.

Moreover, reframing *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* highlights its contribution to Global South urban linguistics. The phenomenon exemplifies how localized hybrid registers emerge under conditions of globalization, digital media proliferation, and urban stratification. It challenges assumptions that English incorporation is uniform or purely functional, illustrating instead how language circulates as a socially encoded tool for distinction, negotiation, and aspiration.

Public ridicule and moral critique do not negate its strategic function; rather, they reveal the contested terrain in which urban youth negotiate social hierarchies. Parody, satire, and moral panic underscore both the visibility of hybrid speech and its capacity to provoke reflection on class, privilege, and generational difference. These dynamics reinforce the idea that linguistic practice is simultaneously performative, relational, and evaluative, shaping and reflecting social stratification. By situating *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* as deliberate strategy rather than superficiality, this study contributes to scholarship on urban youth linguistic practices, demonstrating

that hybrid registers are central to processes of class formation, cosmopolitan self-fashioning, and neoliberal subjectivity in Southeast Asian cities.

D. *Implications for World Englishes*

From the perspective of World Englishes, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* exemplifies a localized hybrid form of English shaped by sociocultural, economic, and digital dynamics in Jakarta. It reflects what Kachru (1992) describes as the fluidity of English in postcolonial contexts, where global linguistic norms intersect with local practices to produce new varieties. The register is neither simply "English" nor purely Indonesian, but a hybrid resource negotiating multiple linguistic markets simultaneously.

The phenomenon demonstrates how urban youth adapt English for symbolic, instrumental, and identity-related purposes. Lexical and syntactic mixing allows speakers to navigate both local sociocultural expectations and global professional demands, producing what can be termed "postcolonial cosmopolitanism." This dynamic highlights the tension between localized linguistic authority and the transnational prestige of English, offering insight into the negotiation of power, capital, and identity in Southeast Asia.

Bahasa Anak Jaksel also contributes to understanding English's role as a medium of class distinction and social mobility in the Global South. As participants' narratives reveal, English proficiency and hybridization are leveraged strategically to signal education, global networks, and lifestyle aspiration. This underscores that World Englishes are not neutral communicative tools but embedded within local hierarchies, reproducing and contesting socioeconomic inequality.

Digital media intensify these dynamics by enabling rapid dissemination, imitation, and critique of hybrid forms. Social visibility allows symbolic capital to accumulate and circulate, while simultaneously exposing linguistic practices to scrutiny, satire, and moralization. Such visibility exemplifies the ways in which English varieties in postcolonial urban centers are co-constructed, contested, and performed in real time. Overall, the study of *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* expands the scope of World Englishes research by situating hybrid urban registers within the intersection of neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism, and postcolonial sociolinguistic contexts. It demonstrates that English in the Global South is deeply localized, performative, and instrumental, offering insight into the socio-political processes that shape contemporary urban language ecologies.

Conclusion

A. Summary of Key Findings

This study demonstrates that *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* functions as a form of symbolic capital within Jakarta's urban linguistic market, allowing speakers to signal educational privilege, global exposure, and cosmopolitan identity. Code-switching between Indonesian and English operates not merely as a communicative tool but as a socially legible performance of neoliberal middle-class aspiration, aligning with transnational networks, professional trajectories, and lifestyle practices. The research shows that linguistic hybridity is deeply intertwined with social stratification: mastery of hybrid registers is contingent upon access to internationalized education and economic resources, which are unequally distributed. Digital media further amplify these dynamics by transforming language into a visible asset that circulates as measurable social currency, while simultaneously exposing speakers to parody, moral critique, and public scrutiny. Thus, *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* is both a resource for differentiation and a contested site in which social mobility, class distinction, and identity negotiation intersect within Jakarta's rapidly globalizing urban landscape.

The study also reveals the relational dimension of linguistic practice. Speakers modulate hybrid speech according to audience, context, and aspirational goals, highlighting the reflexive performance of identity in digital and offline spaces. Hybrid language indexes cosmopolitan competence, reinforces hierarchical social distinctions, and provides pathways for aspirational actors to navigate a competitive neoliberal city. Simultaneously, public critique and moralization demonstrate that symbolic capital is never uncontested, reflecting broader anxieties about class, authenticity, and the integrity of the national language.

B. Theoretical Contributions

The research contributes theoretically by integrating Bourdieu's frameworks of habitus, field, and symbolic capital with the concept of neoliberal subjectivity to explain language practices in urban Indonesia. By situating hybrid speech as both a performative strategy and a resource for social differentiation, the study demonstrates how linguistic practice embodies structural inequalities while facilitating aspirational agency. This synthesis extends sociolinguistic theory beyond descriptive accounts of

code-switching, showing that language in Jakarta functions simultaneously as capital, identity, and site of neoliberal self-fashioning.

Additionally, the study enriches the literature on World Englishes by documenting a localized hybrid variety in a Southeast Asian context. *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* illustrates how global English circulates in postcolonial cities, producing forms that are simultaneously localized, performative, and ideologically charged. This challenges universalist assumptions about English usage and highlights the role of urban youth in shaping contemporary English varieties. The findings underscore the importance of considering sociopolitical, economic, and digital factors in theorizing hybrid linguistic forms within the Global South.

C. *Practical Implications*

The study has several practical implications for language policy, education, and public discourse. First, policymakers and educators should recognize the value of hybrid linguistic practices as markers of sociocultural competence, rather than dismissing them as "superficial" or "corrupt" forms of language. Integrating awareness of code-switching and hybrid registers into curricula may validate students' lived linguistic experiences while providing pathways to develop symbolic capital strategically.

Second, public discourse surrounding language purity should be approached with sensitivity to class dynamics and social inequalities. Critiques of *Bahasa Anak Jaksel* often reveal underlying tensions about socioeconomic privilege, urban mobility, and generational difference. Raising awareness of these dynamics may reduce moral panic and encourage more inclusive evaluations of linguistic diversity. Recognizing language as a tool for identity negotiation and social mobility may foster more equitable approaches to communication, pedagogy, and urban planning in Indonesia's multilingual context.

D. *Limitations and Future Research*

This study focuses specifically on Jakarta's urban middle-class youth, which limits the generalizability of findings to other regions, socioeconomic groups, or rural contexts. While the research provides rich insight into the negotiation of symbolic capital and neoliberal subjectivity, experiences of lower-middle-class or working-class speakers

remain underexplored. Future studies could examine these populations to investigate whether hybrid registers function differently across class strata and social networks.

Comparative research across other Indonesian cities, such as Bandung, Surabaya, or Medan, could further illuminate how localized urban contexts shape linguistic hybridity, cosmopolitan identity, and symbolic capital. Additionally, longitudinal studies may capture shifts in hybrid language practices over time, particularly in response to evolving educational systems, digital media trends, and global labor market pressures. Expanding the geographical and temporal scope would strengthen theoretical generalizations and provide a more nuanced understanding of hybrid linguistic forms in Southeast Asia.

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