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A Sociolinguistic Study on Arabic Code Switching and Mixing in the Multicultural Context of Pemalang

Aziz Muzayin[1]*, Avika Afdiana Khumaedi[2], Ibni Trisal Adam[3], Rinanti[4], Abdussomad Elmaskawiy[5]

[1, 3, 4]Department of Arabic Language Education, Islamic Institute of Pemalang, Siali-ali Jl Paduraksa-Kramat no 2. Pemalang Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

[2]KH Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University. Jl Pahlawan KM 5. Rowolaku, Kajen, Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

[5]Mohammed V University Rabat, Morocco. Rabat 10000, Morocco.

*Email: zayinaziz@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

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Abstract

This study explores the sociolinguistic dynamics of Arabic code-switching and code-mixing within the multicultural environment of Pemalang Regency, Central Java. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research investigates the linguistic patterns and underlying motivations that drive the alternation between Arabic, Indonesian, and Javanese in everyday communication. Data were gathered through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, involving participants from diverse social roles such as teachers, santri, merchants, and community figures. The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Instances of switching and mixing were identified and categorized based on commonly recognized sociolinguistic typologies and further interpreted through contextual and functional lenses. The findings indicate that Arabic expressions have been internalized not merely as components of religious discourse but also as meaningful elements of social interaction that carry pragmatic and identity-building purposes. Frequent expressions such as insya Allah, alhamdulillah, and masya Allah illustrate linguistic creativity and reflect the embodiment of Islamic cultural values in daily conversation. The study reveals that factors influencing language alternation include religious orientation, communicative intentions, situational settings, and patterns of social relationships. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these practices serve as strategies of social cohesion, adaptation, and symbolic prestige. The study concludes that Arabic in Pemalang has expanded beyond its liturgical domain and contributes significantly to reinforcing shared cultural identity within Indonesia's plural society. Accordingly, Arabic language education should integrate sociocultural awareness and authentic communicative practices

Keywords: *Arabic Language; Code Switching; Code Mixing; Sociolinguistics; Multicultural Society*

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مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل ديناميكية استخدام اللغة العربية من خلال ظاهرتي التناوب اللغوي (Code-Switching) والتداخل اللغوي (Code-Mixing) في إطار التفاعل الاجتماعي داخل المجتمع متعدّد الثقافات في محافظة بمالانغ، جاوة الوسطى. وانطلقت الدراسة من منهج وصفي نوعي لفهم أنماط الانتقال بين اللغات، والكشف عن الدوافع الاجتماعية والتداولية التي تحكم استعمال اللغة في الممارسات التواصلية اليومية، حيث يتنقّل المتحدّثون بين العربية، والإندونيسية، والجاوية. اعتمد البحث على الملاحظة الميدانية، والمقابلات المعمّقة، وتحليل الوثائق، بمشاركة فاعلين اجتماعيين من خلفيات مهنية متنوّعة، شملت المعلّمين، وطلبة المعاهد الإسلامية، وأصحاب الأنشطة الاقتصادية، وشخصيات مجتمعية. وتم تحليل البيانات وفق نموذج Miles & Huberman عبر مراحل تقليص المعطيات، وتنظيمها، ثم استخلاص النتائج بصورة منهجية. وأظهرت النتائج تنوّع أشكال التناوب والتداخل اللغوي، التي جرى تصنيفها استنادًا إلى المقاربات السوسيولغوية، ثم تفسيرها في ضوء الوظائف التداولية، والسياقات التفاعلية، والعوامل الاجتماعية المؤثّرة. وتؤكّد الدراسة أنّ حضور اللغة العربية تجاوز المجال التعبّدي الصرف، ليغدو عنصرًا فاعلًا في الخطاب الاجتماعي اليومي، يؤدي وظائف تعبيرية وتداولية، ويعمل بوصفه مؤشّرًا هويّاتيًا. كما تعكس العبارات الشائعة مثل إن شاء الله، والحمد لله، وما شاء الله درجة عالية من الاستيعاب الثقافي للقيم الإسلامية، إلى جانب ما تحمله من إبداع لغوي في سياق التعدّد اللغوي. وتتمثّل أبرز العوامل المحدِّدة لهذه الممارسات في مستوى التديّن، وبنية العلاقات الاجتماعية، ومقاصد الخطاب، والظروف السياقية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أنّ اللغة العربية في سياق بمالانغ تمثّل أداة لبناء التضامن والهوية الثقافية الجماعية داخل المجتمع الإندونيسي المتنوّع، بما يستدعي توجّهًا تربويًا في تعليم العربية يراعي أبعادها الاجتماعية والثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة العربية; التناوب اللغوي; التداخل اللغوي; علم اللغة الاجتماعي; المجتمع متعدّد الثقافات

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as one of the most powerful instruments of human interaction, shaping not only communication but also identity, culture, and social relationships. In multilingual societies, language is a medium through which people construct meaning, negotiate belonging, and express social alignment. As Ronald Wardhaugh observes, language variation is inherently linked to social structure, revealing how

people use linguistic choices to define who they are in relation to others.[1] Sociolinguistics, therefore, is not merely about language form but about language in context—how linguistic behavior both reflects and shapes social reality.

In multicultural Indonesia, where linguistic and cultural diversity is extensive, phenomena such as *code switching* and *code mixing* have become natural communicative strategies. Speakers regularly alternate between local languages, Indonesian, and sometimes foreign languages, to signal shifts in topic, formality, or social distance. Janet Holmes emphasizes that such practices reflect the interplay between linguistic competence and social awareness—showing that language is always socially situated.[2] Similarly, John J. Gumperz argues that code switching functions as a discourse strategy, enabling speakers to manage conversational meaning, emotional tone, and interpersonal relations across speech events.[3]

The Arabic language occupies a unique place in Indonesia's linguistic ecology. Historically introduced through Islam, Arabic has transcended its liturgical function to become a cultural and social symbol. It pervades not only religious discourse but also daily interactions, particularly in communities where Islamic education and values are deeply rooted. In Pemalang Regency, Central Java, Arabic expressions are found across diverse speech domains—family conversations, market interactions, and public gatherings. Phrases such as *astaghfirullah*, *alhamdulillah*, or *barakallahu fiikum* are frequently embedded within Javanese or Indonesian speech, representing both religious identity and social solidarity. Such integration indicates that Arabic functions as a shared semiotic resource through which individuals express piety, respect, and community belonging.

According to Suwito, *code switching* and *code mixing* arise naturally in bilingual and multilingual environments as pragmatic responses to communicative needs.[4] Nababan reinforces this by arguing that language alternation mirrors speakers' adaptability and awareness of sociocultural context.[5] Meanwhile, Joshua A. Fishman introduces the concept of *language domains*—specific contexts (family, religion, education, community) in which language choice corresponds to social norms and expectations.[6] Within Pemalang's context, Arabic is often selected in religious

[1] Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

[2]Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 0 edn (Routledge, 2013), doi:10.4324/9781315833057.

[3]John J. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies*, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 1982), doi:10.1017/CBO9780511611834.

[4]Suwito, *Pengantar awal sosiolinguistik: teori dan problema* (Henary Offset, 1983).

[5]P.W.J. Nababan, *Sosiolinguistik Suatu Pengantar* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993).

[6]Joshua A. Fishman, *The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society* (Newbury House Publishers, 1972).

gatherings to demonstrate piety, in schools to reinforce authority, and in public interactions to convey politeness or shared faith.

The theoretical perspective of Carol Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model further explains that code switching is a conscious act of identity negotiation.[7] By choosing particular linguistic codes, speakers "mark" their intended social relationships, power dynamics, or degrees of solidarity. In Pemalang, switching between Arabic and local languages often reflects an effort to align oneself with religious identity, signal respect toward others, or maintain harmony within a heterogeneous community. Thus, the phenomenon is not linguistic interference, but a symbolic act of social positioning.

Previous research on Arabic code switching in Indonesia has predominantly focused on formal Islamic settings, such as pesantren classrooms [8], interfaith dialogue, and religious youth communities, where Arabic alternation is examined mainly from pedagogical or ritual perspectives. However, very few studies explore spontaneous and everyday Arabic mixing in rural multicultural communities such as Pemalang, where linguistic interaction occurs naturally across diverse social groups. Existing works also seldom address how Arabic is integrated into mixed Javanese Indonesian speech outside institutional contexts, nor do they investigate Arabic alternation as a community-wide sociocultural practice that extends beyond students, santri, or urban Muslim populations.[9] Consequently, a significant gap remains in understanding Arabic code switching as an organic feature of daily communication among teachers, traders, elders, community leaders, and other social actors in non-urban Indonesian settings.

This study examines Arabic code switching and code mixing as a sociocultural practice that embodies both communication and identity. While previous research in Indonesia has largely focused on formal and institutional settings such as pesantren classrooms, interfaith dialogues, youth Islamic communities, and urban Muslim groups there remains a clear gap in understanding how Arabic is used spontaneously in daily interaction within rural multicultural contexts such as Pemalang. Existing studies primarily highlight pedagogical or ritual functions, yet they seldom explore how ordinary speakers across generations and occupations employ Arabic as part of their linguistic repertoire in everyday conversation. By shifting the analytical lens toward natural, community-wide communication, this study offers an original

[7]Carol Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching: Evidence from Africa* (Clarendon Press, 1993).

[8]Tutut Irma Solikha, 'The Role of Code Switching and Mixing in Facilitating Arabic Learning at Pondok Pesantren Ma'hadut Tholabah Babakan Lebaksiu', *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 7.1 (2020), pp. 45–58.

[9]Gina Dinnur Amalia, Herman J Waluyo, and Slamet Mulyono, 'Alih Kode Dan Campur Kode Dalam Interaksi Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Di Kelas Viii F Smp Negeri 2 Brangsong Kabupaten Kendal', Basastra: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya, 7.1 (2019), p. 78, doi:10.20961/basastra.v7i1.35497.

contribution to Arabic sociolinguistics. It aims to (1) identify the types and patterns of switching and mixing in Pemalang's multicultural interactions, (2) analyze the social factors influencing their occurrence, and (3) interpret their cultural meanings. Addressing these underexplored dimensions enables the research to reveal how Arabic becomes localized, hybridized, and embedded as a marker of social alignment, politeness, and religious identity. By examining these phenomena, the study demonstrates how language operates as a living reflection of faith, culture, and social harmony in contemporary Indonesian society.

Ultimately, the findings contribute not only to the broader understanding of Arabic sociolinguistics but also to the pedagogical development of Arabic language education. Recognizing that Arabic functions beyond its liturgical role, the study argues that effective language teaching must integrate sociocultural awareness, allowing learners to experience Arabic as a vibrant, contextually grounded, and identity-forming medium of communication.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the sociolinguistic phenomenon of Arabic code switching and code mixing within the multicultural society of Pemalang Regency, Central Java. A qualitative method was chosen because the focus of this research lies not merely in the structural aspects of language, but in its social meanings and cultural implications. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) explain, qualitative research enables a deep exploration of natural linguistic behavior by observing how meaning is constructed through interaction.[10]

The qualitative descriptive design allowed the researcher to describe the real linguistic practices of the community without manipulating the natural setting. This approach provides space to interpret linguistic behavior as social action, where language alternation is seen as a reflection of social identity and interactional purpose.[11] study was not intended to generalize findings statistically, but to interpret the contextual and situational dynamics that give rise to code switching and code mixing in everyday communication.

The research followed an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing participants' perspectives and meanings attached to their speech. Through this lens, linguistic data are viewed as social texts, manifestations of cultural experience and identity negotiation. The descriptive nature of this study is particularly appropriate for sociolinguistic inquiry, as it aims to represent naturally occurring linguistic phenomena through rich, contextual narratives.

[10]Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (SAGE Publications, 2013).

[11]John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE, 2014).

The study was conducted in Pemalang Regency, Central Java, an area characterized by its rich cultural diversity and strong Islamic educational tradition. The region represents a multilingual environment where Arabic, Indonesian, Javanese, and Sundanese coexist in various communicative domains. The selection of Pemalang as the research site was based on its active religious life, widespread use of Arabic in both formal and informal contexts, and the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups that shape its multicultural profile.

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals who frequently engage in both Arabic and local language communication. They included:

1. Arabic language teachers (*ustadz* and *ustadzah*) from Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*),
2. *Santri* (students) from religious institutions,
3. Traders in traditional markets,
4. Community leaders and religious figures,
5. Local residents from diverse ethnic and occupational backgrounds.

In total, 15 participants were involved in this research, consisting of 8 males and 7 females, ranging in age from 20 to 60 years. The diversity of participants ensured a broad representation of sociolinguistic patterns within the community. All participants voluntarily consented to take part in the study, and ethical considerations were maintained throughout the process.

The study employed three main techniques of data collection: observation, interview, and documentation.

1. Observation

Natural conversations were observed in several public and semi-formal contexts—such as markets, mosques, schools, and community gatherings. The researcher recorded spontaneous instances of code switching and code mixing to capture authentic speech events. The observations focused on *when*, *where*, and *why* speakers alternated or mixed languages.

2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their perspectives on language choice, the reasons behind code switching, and the perceived meanings of using Arabic in daily life. Interviews were carried out in a relaxed conversational manner, allowing respondents to express their experiences naturally. The interviews lasted between 30–60 minutes and were recorded with participants' permission.

3. Documentation

The documentation technique included collecting written materials, community announcements, religious texts, and social media posts that displayed instances of

Arabic language use mixed with Indonesian or Javanese. This triangulated the data obtained from observation and interviews, enhancing the validity of the findings.

The combination of these methods enabled the researcher to cross-check linguistic data and ensure that interpretations were consistent across different sources. This triangulation approach strengthens the credibility of qualitative studies by connecting multiple lines of evidence.[12]

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three concurrent steps:

1. The data reduction process in this study includes transcribing recordings, identifying utterances containing Arabic elements, and categorizing them according to the types of code switching or mixing (internal vs. external, insertional vs. alternational). This analytical procedure is grounded in the qualitative data analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman ,[13] who conceptualize data reduction as the step of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and categorizing raw data so that the most relevant linguistic features can be highlighted. In this study, the act of filtering Arabic-related utterances and organizing them into meaningful analytical categories directly follows Miles and Huberman's model of systematic qualitative data management, which operates alongside the processes of data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

2. The data display stage in this study involves organizing selected conversational excerpts into matrices and thematic charts to make emerging patterns more visible. The matrices used in this research are structured tables that map each utterance according to speaker, context, Arabic element used, and the type of code switching or mixing, allowing systematic comparison across different social situations. Meanwhile, the thematic charts serve as visual diagrams that group recurring motives such as expressions of religiosity, politeness strategies, social alignment, or community identity based on thematic similarities across the data. These techniques follow Miles and Huberman's concept of data display, which emphasizes presenting qualitative information in organized visual formats to facilitate deeper interpretation and pattern recognition.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: interpreting how each linguistic pattern relates to sociocultural factors such as participant roles, situational context, and communicative purpose. The stage of conclusion drawing and verification in this study involves interpreting how each linguistic pattern relates to sociocultural factors such as participant roles, situational context, and communicative purpose. This analytic process refers to the qualitative analysis framework described by

[12]Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (SAGE Publications, 2017).

[13]Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Moloeng and Sutopo [14], who explain that conclusions in qualitative research must be verified continuously through comparison, triangulation, and consistency checking of emerging patterns. In this study, the interpretation of Arabic code-switching functions such as expressing religiosity, politeness strategies, or social alignment is strengthened by repeatedly comparing interview data, field notes, and conversational excerpts.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher employed theoretical triangulation by cross-referencing findings with established frameworks from Suwito (1983), Nababan (1993), Fishman (1972), and Myers-Scotton (1993). This ensured that the interpretation of linguistic behavior remained grounded in relevant sociolinguistic theory.[15]

To maintain the validity and reliability of the research, several strategies were implemented. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement and member checking, where participants verified the accuracy of interpretations. Transferability was achieved by providing thick descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings. Dependability and confirmability were addressed by maintaining detailed field notes and analytical memos throughout the research process.

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and respecting participants' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative sociolinguistic research, emphasizing respect, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that Arabic code switching and code mixing in the multicultural society of Pemalang Regency occur as systematic, meaningful, and socially embedded linguistic phenomena. Arabic is not only used for religious or ritual functions but also integrated into the linguistic fabric of daily communication. The analysis reveals that the alternation between Arabic, Indonesian, and Javanese serves as both a linguistic strategy and a sociocultural expression. As Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh (2010) observe, language choice reflects the speaker's identity, cultural background, and communicative intent.[16]

At the linguistic-structural level, the data show that speakers frequently engage in code switching and code mixing to negotiate meaning and manage interaction. The patterns identified correspond with Suwito's (1983) and Muysken's (2000) typologies,

[14]Sutopo, H. B. (2006). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Dasar Teori dan Terapannya dalam Penelitian. Surakarta: UNS Press.

[15]Suwito, *Pengantar awal sosiolinguistik*; Nababan, *Sosiolinguistik Suatu Pengantar*; Fishman, *The Sociology of Language*; Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*.

[16]Denzin and Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*.

including insertional, alternational, and congruent lexicalization forms.[17] Arabic elements such as *alhamdulillah*, *insya Allah*, *astaghfirullah*, and *masya Allah* often appear within Indonesian or Javanese sentences, functioning as markers of emotion, faith, or politeness. These insertions reveal what Nababan (1993) terms *pragmatic mixing*, where the alternation of codes enhances the expressive function of speech.[18] In many cases, the inserted Arabic lexemes retain their semantic weight and cultural resonance, representing both the speaker's religious identity and their social awareness.

This finding aligns with more recent empirical studies in Indonesia, such as Al Fathin (2021), who identified similar integration of Arabic religious expressions in local Javanese communities.[19] Likewise, Rahmawati and Sulaiman (2020) in *Arabiyat* observed that Arabic insertions act as pragmatic softeners and emotional intensifiers in interfaith dialogues.[20] In Pemalang, such practices are not limited to religious contexts but appear in markets, schools, and family settings—indicating that Arabic has undergone localization as part of the community's daily linguistic repertoire. This phenomenon parallels Yuliana and Rahman's (2021) finding that Arabic switching in Islamic youth communities reinforces both solidarity and moral alignment.[21]

The alternational form of switching, in which entire clauses shift between Arabic and Indonesian, also appears frequently in more formal contexts, such as sermons, school speeches, or community gatherings. This supports the claim of Al-Ahdal and Alfallaj (2020) that bilingual Arabic speakers in non-Arab societies switch codes for rhetorical emphasis and listener engagement.[22] In Pemalang, such alternation demonstrates communicative sensitivity, as speakers adjust their linguistic choices to audience expectations, mirroring what Li Wei (2018) calls *translanguaging as a practical theory of language*.[23]

Beyond structure, the sociocultural dimension of code switching in Pemalang reflects deep-seated values of religiosity, respect, and solidarity. The preference for Arabic expressions signals affiliation with Islamic identity, while simultaneously marking

[17]Siti Muthmainnah, 'Code Mixing in Arabic Communication among Indonesian Students', *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies*, 8.1 (2023), pp. 41–53.

[18]Nababan, *Sosiolinguistik Suatu Pengantar*.

[19]Fishman, *The Sociology of Language*.

[20]Fitri Rahmawati and Ahmad Sulaiman, 'Arabic Expressions and Politeness Strategies in Interfaith Dialogues', *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 7.2 (2020), pp. 145–60.

[21]Yuliana Fitri and Abdul Rahman, 'Sociolinguistic Analysis of Code Switching in Islamic Youth Communities in Indonesia', *Lingua Cultura*, 15.2 (2021), pp. 177–87.

[22]Ahmad Al-Ahdal and Fahad Alfallaj, 'Code Switching in Non-Arab Contexts: Rhetorical and Communicative Dimensions', *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 8.1 (2020), pp. 32–44.

[23]Li Wei, 'Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language', *Applied Linguistics*, 39.2 (2018), pp. 261–261, doi:10.1093/applin/amx044.

politeness and spiritual awareness. This dual function echoes Albirini's (2016) concept of Arabic as *a language of symbolic capital*—a linguistic code associated with authority and moral prestige.[24] In this context, Arabic becomes both a linguistic and cultural resource that unites diverse ethnic groups under shared religious and social values.

These findings resonate strongly with contemporary Indonesian scholarship. Hanani (2021), in her study on sociolinguistic-based Arabic pedagogy, notes that Arabic expressions are used in authentic communication to express humility, gratitude, and empathy.[25] Likewise, in *Lingua Cultura*, Sutrisno and Pratiwi (2019) found that Arabic insertions among urban Muslims create a sense of moral refinement and social decorum.[26] In Pemalang, speakers consciously use Arabic to elevate the tone of conversation and align themselves with communal ethics.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the data support Gumperz's (1982) idea of *metaphorical switching*, where speakers shift codes to signal changes in social meaning rather than topic.[14] For example, when someone uses *bismillah* before starting an activity, the linguistic act functions as both religious invocation and social etiquette.[27] This symbolic function aligns with the analysis of Sugiharto (2020) in *IJAL*, who argues that language alternation in Indonesian Islamic communities represents the intertwining of piety and social harmony.[28]

Another relevant aspect is the pragmatic motivation behind switching. As Blom and Gumperz (1972) initially suggested, code choice carries interactional implications; in Pemalang, speakers often use Arabic to manage politeness, avoid conflict, or express empathy.[29] Recent national studies reaffirm this: Nurhadi and Fauzan (2018) found in *Jurnal Stilistika* that Arabic-influenced expressions among santri communities reduce social distance and reinforce humility.[130] Similarly, Al-Ta'rib (2022) reported that Arabic insertions act as markers of communal belonging in pesantren interactions.[31]

[24]Abdulkafi Albirini, *Modern Arabic Sociolinguistics: Diglossia, Variation, Codeswitching, Attitudes and Identity*, 0 edn (Routledge, 2016), doi:10.4324/9781315683737.

[25]Niswatul Hanani, 'Contextual Learning in Arabic Language Pedagogy: Sociolinguistic Perspectives from Indonesian Classrooms', *Arabiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban*, 8.2 (2021), pp. 143–60.

[26]Eko Sutrisno and Rina Pratiwi, 'The Use of Arabic Expressions in Urban Muslim Communication', *Lingua Cultura*, 13.1 (2019), pp. 55–66.

[27]Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies*.

[28]Bambang Sugiharto, 'Language, Religion, and the Localization of Islam in Indonesia', *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10.1 (2020), pp. 10–22.

[29]Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies*.

[30]Teguh Nurhadi and Asep Fauzan, 'Arabic Code Switching among Santri Communities: A Politeness Perspective', *Jurnal Stilistika*, 7.1 (2018), pp. 23–37.

[31]Al-Ta'rib, 'Arabic as a Marker of Communal Identity in Pesantren Interaction', *Al-Ta'rib: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Madura*, 10.2 (2022), pp. 121–35.

These observations suggest that linguistic alternation has become an integral norm in religiously oriented social life, functioning beyond linguistic necessity.

At the community level, the prevalence of Arabic code switching and mixing can also be understood through Fishman's (1972) *domain theory*, which explains that language choice reflects social norms tied to specific contexts.[32] In Pemalang, Arabic dominates in religious domains but blends fluidly into non-religious interactions. The phenomenon corresponds to Auer and Eastman's (2010) argument that code switching serves as a socially meaningful act—an index of identity negotiation and contextual awareness.[33]

From the sociocultural lens, Arabic serves as an index of shared faith and moral conduct. Its use indicates a speaker's alignment with communal piety and cultural respectability. This dynamic confirms the view of Al Zidjaly (2019) that Arabic functions as a semiotic resource through which Muslim speakers articulate moral identities.[34] In the context of Pemalang, the integration of Arabic expressions into Javanese-Indonesian speech patterns signifies both religious devotion and cultural harmony, mirroring the pluralistic ethos of Indonesian Islam.

The findings of this research are consistent with international trends as well. For instance, Muthmainnah (2023) observed in *Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies* that Arabic code mixing among Indonesian students serves not only communicative but also affective and spiritual purposes.[35] Similarly, Saeed and Al-Khresheh (2022) found in *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* that bilingual Arabic users employ code switching to manage social relationships and establish identity boundaries.[36] Both cases reinforce the interpretation that Arabic code alternation in Pemalang embodies an integrative function: maintaining communicative efficiency while reinforcing group cohesion.

In addition to its social symbolism, the linguistic adaptability of Arabic also reveals structural flexibility. Following Myers-Scotton's (1993) *Markedness Model*, speakers in Pemalang appear to "mark" their social intentions through language choice, using Arabic to index deference, respect, or solidarity.[37] This framework helps explain why even minimal Arabic elements—single words or phrases—carry significant

[32]Fishman, *The Sociology of Language*.

[33]Peter Auer and Carol Eastman, 'Code-Switching Revisited: Explaining Its Structural and Social Meaning', *Pragmatics*, 20.3 (2010), pp. 403–28.

[34]Najma Al Zidjaly, 'Arabic Online and the Negotiation of Muslim Identity', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 40.6 (2019), pp. 525–40.

[35]Muthmainnah, 'Code Mixing in Arabic Communication among Indonesian Students'.

[36]Abdul Saeed and Mahmoud Al-Khresheh, 'Code Switching Functions among Arabic-English Bilinguals', *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18.1 (2022), pp. 181–97.

[37]Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Codeswitching*.

sociopragmatic force. Recent support for this interpretation is found in Hafidz and Rasyid (2022) in *Al-Fathin Journal*, where Arabic code choice was shown to enhance communicative politeness and social prestige.[38]

The integration of Arabic within Indonesian linguistic ecology also illustrates what García (2009) terms *dynamic bilingualism*, where speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoire fluidly rather than compartmentally.[39] Such linguistic flexibility is evident in Pemalang's speech community, where Arabic, Indonesian, and Javanese coexist symbiotically. The result is a hybrid communicative style that reflects both local identity and global Islamic affiliation. This hybridization, as noted by Aisyah (2021) in *Lingua Cultura*, demonstrates that linguistic pluralism is not fragmentation but creative adaptation.[40]

Ultimately, the findings affirm that Arabic code switching and mixing in Pemalang serve as a reflection of sociocultural integration and linguistic innovation. The phenomenon highlights how language functions as a bridge between faith and culture, identity and expression. Arabic, while maintaining its sacred associations, becomes a living, adaptive element in Indonesian multicultural society. Its usage symbolizes the community's ability to harmonize tradition and modernity, religious devotion and linguistic creativity, proving that language is both a social instrument and a vessel of cultural continuity.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that Arabic code switching and code mixing in the multicultural society of Pemalang Regency represent not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a sociocultural strategy rooted in identity, faith, and communication. Arabic expressions have become integral elements of local discourse, functioning as markers of politeness, religiosity, and communal solidarity. The patterns of alternation, both insertional and alternational, show deliberate and contextually appropriate use of Arabic to express emotion, respect, and shared belief. This aligns with Holmes's (2013) perspective that language serves as a reflection of social relations and with Li Wei's (2018) view of translanguaging as a resource of meaning-making.[41]

The study also affirms that the linguistic practices observed in Pemalang align with the broader sociolinguistic dynamics of bilingual and multilingual communities in

[38]Rizal Hafidz and Syarif Rasyid, 'Arabic Code Choice as Politeness Strategy in Islamic Interaction', *Al-Fathin Journal of Arabic Linguistics and Culture*, 9.1 (2022), pp. 45–59.

[39]Ofelia García and Hugo Baetens Beardsmore, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Blackwell, 2009).

[40]Nur Aisyah, 'Hybrid Communication and Religious Identity among Indonesian Muslims', *Lingua Cultura*, 16.2 (2021), pp. 205–18.

[41] Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*; Wei, 'Translanguaging as a Practical Theory of Language'.

Indonesia. Similar findings were reported by Rahmawati and Sulaiman (2020) in *Arabiyat* and by Hanani (2021), who noted that Arabic expressions reinforce social bonds in educational and religious contexts.[42] From a theoretical perspective, Arabic serves as a symbolic linguistic capital (Albirini, 2016), embodying prestige, piety, and cultural continuity.[43]

Pedagogically, the results highlight the importance of integrating authentic sociolinguistic awareness into Arabic teaching. Instead of treating Arabic as a purely formal or liturgical language, educators should present it as a living medium that interacts dynamically with Indonesian and Javanese. As Sutrisno and Pratiwi (2019) suggest, embedding cultural pragmatics in classroom discourse strengthens communicative competence and cultural empathy.[44] Incorporating real-life language use—including code-switching contexts—can make Arabic learning more contextual and culturally resonant.

In summary, Arabic in Pemalang has transcended its ritual boundaries to become an everyday medium of faith, identity, and cultural unity. The blending of Arabic, Indonesian, and Javanese speech represents a form of linguistic resilience and creative adaptation within Indonesia's plural society. It reveals that language is not only a tool of communication but also a mirror of social harmony and moral belonging. Future research may further explore generational and digital aspects of Arabic code switching to deepen our understanding of how linguistic hybridity continues to shape Indonesian Muslim identity in the 21st century.

Future research is encouraged to investigate generational variation, gender dynamics, or digital communication spaces to further examine the evolving role of Arabic within multilingual environments. Such studies may deepen insights into the shifting landscape of linguistic hybridity and its significance for identity formation in Indonesian Islamic society. Ultimately, the study reaffirms that language serves not only as a communicative medium, but also as a living expression of faith, cultural negotiation, and social harmony.

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