

## Sasak language speech codes in various communication context: An ethnographic study by Dell Hymes

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### ABSTRACT

This study reveals the use and negotiation of *base alus* (BA) and *base jamaq* (BJ) speech codes in the family, social, economic, and institutional spheres, and describes their sociopragmatic functions and the factors that influence their shifts. The method used was qualitative with an ethnographic approach to communication based on Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model. Data was collected through observation and interviews, analysed through reduction, presentation and conclusion drawing, and validated through triangulation and member checking. The results of the study found that BA persisted as a polite form of speech among the aristocracy in family and social circles. In the economic sphere, BJ-BA is chosen based on social status and closeness, while also regulating the "address of speech". In institutional settings, formal positions can transcend customary norms; the head of a *jajar karang* school is often addressed as BA, and interactions between teachers and the headmaster tend to use the BA form of address as a sign of respect. Among the younger generation, the use of BA has declined due to the influence of Indonesian and popular language, but it remains prevalent among aristocratic families and institutions that uphold politeness. This study reinforces communication ethnography by positioning code selection as a negotiation of relational power. The uniqueness of this study lies in its cross-domain mapping that links traditional hierarchy and professional hierarchy in the practice of speaking the Sasak language.

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## Introduction

The Sasak language is one of the major regional languages in Indonesia that has developed within a complex social context. This language is multilevel and multilevel, with phonological and lexical differences between dialects, as mapped. Socially, the Sasak language system is strongly bound to traditional social structures, particularly the distinction between the aristocracy (*menak*) and the common people (*jajar karang*). Husnan (2018) explains that this social structure is reflected in the distinction between *base alus* (BA) as a high variety identical to the menak group and *base jamaq* (BJ) as a common variety. Sasak speakers do not simply use "Sasak language", but always adjust their speech code: choosing BA or BJ, forms of address, and style of speech according to the interlocutor, place, and purpose of communication. This pattern is in line with Brown and Levinson's (Goldsmith, 2018) politeness theory and speech levels, which emphasise that the choice of language form is related to efforts to maintain one's own honour and that of the interlocutor, and reflects social distance and power relations.

This complexity becomes even more apparent when the Sasak language is confronted with the reality of contact and language shift in the present era. Indonesian, as the national language and language of education, plays a strong role in schools, the media and official spheres, while other varieties of language such as slang also influence the way young people speak. A number of studies show signs of a decline in the use of BA among young Sasak people, who tend to use BJ more often or switch directly to Indonesian in situations that traditionally require BA (Archangeli et al., 2020; Burhanuddin et al., 2025). This phenomenon can be explained through the concepts of diglossia and language shift as proposed by Karlander (2025), Towler (2025), and Wexler (2023) that when a variety is used less frequently in important contexts, its function narrows and gradually weakens. It is in this context that the main question of this study arises: how are Sasak speech codes (BA, BJ, and their variations) used and negotiated in the domains of family, social interaction, economy, and institutions today, and to what extent are the traditional social structures of menak and jajar karang still reflected in everyday language practices? This question requires an analysis that views language as a social practice, as emphasised Hymes (2020) through communication ethnography, which involves analysing who is speaking, to whom, when, where, and for what purpose.

The main issue in this study lies in the complexity of the relationship between language, the realm of communication, and social stratification in Sasak society. The Sasak language has a variety of dialects that have been mapped by Mahsun & Hanum (2006) such as a-ə, a-a, ə-ə, and a-é, with phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences, while at the social level Husnan (2018) dividing the language style into *base alus*, which is closely associated with the aristocratic class (*menak*), and *base jamaq*, which is used by non-menak. In modern practice, speakers consider not only lineage but also profession, education, religion, and institutional position; teachers, head teachers, and village officials often combine customary and institutional norms in choosing codes. Therefore, mapping speech codes cannot be done solely through descriptions of language structure, but requires an ethnographic approach to communication Hymes (2020) who see language as a communicative act that is always related to who is speaking, to whom, where, when, and for what purpose.

Previous studies have provided an important foundation for this study. Arrozi et al. (2024) providing a foundation for the classification of *base alus* and *base jamaq* and their relationship with menak and non-menak, while this study goes further by exploring the activation, reduction, or elevation of speech levels in cross-domain communication events, including when traditional hierarchies are confronted with situational demands. Wilian (2006) linking the choice of address to social relations, whereas this study refines it by mapping the choice of speech level at the moment of interaction when social distance, transaction purpose, or institutional authority changes the choice of variety. Putra (2022) discusses the preservation of *base alus* in aristocratic families, while this study broadens the focus from "preserved or not" to the time of use, conditions of use, and functions of use of *base alus*, including in non-aristocratic contexts. Kurniawan & Amrulloh (2018) and Mugni (2016) discusses the fading of *base alus* among the younger generation, while this study interprets this narrowing as an impact of changes in cross-domain interaction norms, rather than merely a shift in linguistic attitudes. Pratama et al. (2023) mapping elite code transfer and Khalik (2014) discusses the choice of multilingual community codes, whereas this study places code-switching alongside speech level as a package of politeness and authority strategies that work differently according to speech events. Rachmawati (2008) and Sadunih et al. (2018) observing variation and code-switching in bilingual families and urban communities, while this study places that variation within the framework of communication ethnography to reinforce the argument that the level of Sasak language functions as a device for negotiating status, closeness, and legitimacy that changes according to context, in line with the findings of other studies that use Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework to read the relationship between language and culture broadly.

However, these studies still leave several important research gaps. Firstly, much research on Sasak has focused on speech patterns or dialect variations in general, but has not systematically traced speech codes across domains (family, social, economic, and institutional) within a comprehensive analytical framework. Secondly, studies on code-switching and code-choice tend to focus on specific groups (e.g. the Sasak elite, aristocratic families, or bilingual families in cities) without explicitly linking how traditional social stratification (menak-jajar karang) interacts with modern professional status (teacher, head teacher, village official, trader). Thirdly, although some studies mention using a communicative ethnography approach, not many have fully utilised Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model (Bergqvist, 2025; Figueroa, 2022; Ray et al., 2011) to analyse real conversation data in the Sasak language by examining the Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre in detail.

In this context, this research is important and urgent. Theoretically, this research offers novelty in the form of: (1) mapping of Sasak speech codes (BA, BJ, and possible code mixing) across different communication domains; (2) analyses that explicitly link traditional social stratification with modern

professional and institutional structures; and (3) systematic application of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model to interpret the use of the Sasak language as an integral cultural practice. In practical terms, this research is relevant to efforts to preserve and plan for the Sasak language, as it shows concretely in which areas and in what forms BA and BJ are still used, shifting, or fading. These findings are expected to form the basis for the development of regional language education materials, language preservation policies, and a more sensitive understanding of the dynamics of politeness and social identity in contemporary Sasak society.

## Method

This research method uses a qualitative approach with Dell Hymes' communication ethnography to examine language practices in natural social situations. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, patterns, and functions of language code usage in social interactions (Moleong, 2018). Communication ethnography refers to a framework Hymes (2020) which places language as part of a communication event and analyses it through the components of SPEAKING, namely *Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre*. The main data consists of Sasak language speech, covering the selection of base alus (BA) and base jamaq (BJ), the use of greetings, and styles of speech in various contexts, including family, social interactions, economic activities (markets/kiosks), and institutions (village offices/schools). The data sources involved eight speakers of the Sasak language from diverse social backgrounds and professions, including the general public. Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in the form of speech recordings, in accordance with qualitative and ethnographic research recommendations (Creswell & Creswell, 2019; Sutopo, 2022).

The data were analysed descriptively and qualitatively, adapted from Miles & Huberman (2020), covering data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. At the reduction stage, researchers select, group, and classify utterances relevant to the focus of the study, particularly the use of codes, code switching, and style shifts based on social domain and stratification, as well as their relationship to the SPEAKING component in code selection. The validity of the findings is ensured through source triangulation and method triangulation (Guba & Lincoln, 2024; Endraswara, 2022), namely by comparing information from various sources and combining observations, interviews, and documentation. Data verification was carried out by reconfirming the results of the interpretation with a number of key sources (Lapan et al., 2022; Yin, 2019). This series of procedures supports the comprehensive, contextual, and scientifically accountable mapping of Sasak language codes.

## Results and Discussion

### Form and Structure of Sasak Language Speech Codes

The first conversation data between Lalu Adi, Lalu Nandi, and Lalu Abdullah shows that in the realm of the Sasak aristocracy, speakers consistently use Base Alus (BA) as the main code. Viewed through the lens of Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication, the Participants in this speech event are the speakers, all of whom hold the title of *Lalu* (male aristocrats), while the Setting is the alley in front of the house in the late morning during the fasting month, when the uncle is about to go to the market and his nephew asks "*meq mamiq mbe naq de (side) lumbar ni?*" (where are you going now, uncle?). The BA form is clearly visible in lexicon such as *mamiq* 'noble uncle', *lumbar* 'to go/depart', *gantos* 'to wait', and *tiang* 'I'. In terms of ends (purpose), this conversation is merely light everyday chatter, but socially it serves to reinforce identity and politeness among fellow aristocrats. The sequence of actions was logical: asking about the destination, explaining that they were going to the market to buy vegetables for breaking the fast, inviting him to come along, and confirming their readiness to leave; all took place in Key's relaxed but polite manner. The choice of BA in this context shows that among the aristocracy, even in informal and intimate situations, the prevailing norms (Norms) still require the use of a refined style as a form of mutual respect and preservation of social dignity. In other words, BA here is not only a language code, but also a symbol of class and solidarity among the menak group.

In the second piece of data, the conversation between Baiq Ridwah, Baiq Sahnim (both noblewomen) and *Tipah* (not a noblewoman) shows the transition and mixing of BA and BJ codes in the social sphere of mothers before breaking the fast. The setting is in front of a resident's house in *Dalem Jero*, where they are discussing what to eat for breaking the fast. When speaking to each other, Baiq Ridwah and Baiq Sahnim tend to maintain BA, but when speaking to Tipah, they use many BJ lexemes such as *kemu* 'you' and *aoq* 'yes'. Within the framework of Participants, there is interaction between two social categories: the nobility (*Baiq*) and the *jajar karang* (*Tipah*). From the perspective of instrumentalities, the shift from BA to BJ is not accompanied by a change in topic or atmosphere, but follows who the interlocutor is, meaning that code

choice is largely determined by social structure. Normatively, Sasak society still strongly upholds the tradition that BA is more appropriate for use among nobles, whereas when speaking with the *panjak/jajar karang* class, it is more appropriate to use BJ. However, because both Baiqs were accustomed to living in an environment with two codes (BA–BJ), they unconsciously incorporated elements of BA and BJ into a single sequence of utterances. The third piece of data, a conversation between a mother and her child while cooking for iftar, shows the educational function of BA in the context of young families: the mother deliberately uses BA to accustom her child to speaking politely to parents, while the child responds with BA because it has been internalised as the "language of the home". Here, BA serves a dual function as a means of communication and a medium for passing on values of politeness and social identity.

Overall, these three data points show that the form and structure of Sasak speech codes are closely related to social stratification, the realm of communication, and the purpose of interaction. These findings are consistent with research Nurullayali et al. (2021) which distinguishes the use of base alus by the *menak* class and base *jamaq* by the *jajar karang* class, and shows that the choice of variety reflects the social class of the speaker. These results are also consistent with studies Al-Pansori (2022) on Sasak social stratification (raden/menak vs *jajar karang*) and its connection to lexical variation and speech levels. Fakihuddin et al. (2021) specifically shows that the Sasak diction in the choice of words *tiang*, *silaq*, *nggeh* is used to mark the high–low status of the speaker and the interlocutor, which we find exactly in the lexicon *mamiq*, *tiang*, *lumbar*, *gantes* in the data. Research Yudiastini (2008) The Sasak code selection pattern also reveals symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns: BA is used symmetrically among nobles, while BJ is used to mark solidarity or social distance, a pattern that is clearly evident in the Baiq–Baiq vs Baiq–Tipah interaction. From a methodological perspective, the use of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model in analysing speech events is consistent with ethnographic studies of communication (Ariadi & Putra, 2024). About the bilingualism of the Sasak community, as well as a study Wahidah (2024) which uses Hymes' speech components to examine the use of the Sasak language in family and school environments. Finally, the strong emphasis on the family as a space for passing on BA is in line with research on the preservation of the Sasak language within the family, which confirms that the use of polite language at home is key to maintaining the identity and politeness of the younger generation. Thus, this study not only captures the form of BA and BJ codes at the speech level, but also confirms previous findings that the Sasak language is a living reflection of customary relations, social class, and cultural inheritance processes, which can be read very clearly through the lens of Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication.

## **Ethnographic Form of Sasak Language Communication Based on Social Stratification**

The following conversation between Lalu Jepri, Lalu Zaenul, and Lalu Wira illustrates the form of verbal communication between fellow aristocratic men discussing fasting during Ramadan. Within the framework of Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication, the setting of this speech event was a relaxed situation in their social environment (social sphere), with participants who all held the title *Lalu* as a marker of male aristocratic status. The content of the conversation (*Ends*) was not formal, just light chatter about "broken fasts" and hopes that the next fast would be more perfect, but the way they spoke still used Base Alus (BA) consistently. This is evident in the use of polite pronouns such as *tiang* 'I' and *side* 'you', as well as the coherent and polite sentence structure, even though their ages differ (22, 25, and 35 years old) and the topics discussed are casual. From Key's perspective, the atmosphere was friendly, joking, and reflective about worship, but the norms that apply in the Minangkabau community still require the use of BA as a form of politeness and shared identity. There appears to be no code-switching or style shifting to BJ, because basically in horizontal interactions between nobles, BA is the default code that affirms solidarity and social dignity.

When linked to the social stratification of Sasak society, this data shows that language choice is not only determined by age and proximity, but primarily by social status and aristocratic titles. Although the topics were light and the relationships between participants were friendly, the speakers remained "bound" by the norm that fellow aristocrats should speak politely. Here, BA serves as a class marker and symbol of membership in the *menak* group, as well as a means of maintaining the group's image as one that upholds good manners (Pertejo & Martínez, 2025; Lubbe et al., 2022). In contrast, the researchers then explained that in other events involving nobles and *jajar karang* (non-nobles), the use of Base *Jamaq* (BJ) appeared alongside BA: BA was maintained for fellow nobles, while BJ was used when dealing with speakers who did not have titles. This shows that in Sasak society, the traditional social structure (*menakvsjajar karang/panjak*) is still alive and clearly reflected in everyday language practices. This data reinforces that, from an ethnographic communication perspective, the Sasak language is not merely a means of communication, but also a reflection of the values, social hierarchy, and cultural identity of its speakers.

## Language Shift in Society as Viewed from Dell Hymes' Theory

Conversation data collected at Hj. Baiq Rauhiyah's kiosk reveals a rich discourse situation for reading code-switching based on social stratification. The setting for this narrative event is a small-scale economic transaction space, namely a kiosk, in a relaxed atmosphere. Participants include the seller (Hj. Baiq Rauhiyah, a noblewoman with the title Haji), buyer 1 (Tipah, from the jajar karang class), and buyer 2 (Hj. Baiq Naihan, a noblewoman with the title Haji). Conversations have a dual purpose: they are transactional in nature, serving to set prices, ensure availability of goods, and decide on purchases; and they are social in nature, reflecting status and hierarchical relationships. Judging from the sequence of actions, the narrative begins when buyer 1 asks the price of sugar, the seller answers and confirms the price increase, followed by buyer 1's expression of surprise. Then buyer 2 enters and asks about a similar item, and the seller shifts focus while adjusting his language. The key conversations tend to be familiar, straightforward, and pragmatic, but there are moments of respect through subtle vocabulary when dealing with fellow nobles with the title Haji. The apparent instrumentality is the transition between Base Jamaq (BJ) and Base Alus (BA). The norms at work demand vertical politeness that follows social class and title. The genre of discourse that emerges is oral transactional speech. This pattern is consistent with the findings Gislason (2021) and Leongómez et al. (2017) which explains that the level of Sasak speech is always closely related to the social relationship between the speaker and the listener, especially in communities that still maintain a structure of nobility and commoners.

Empirically, the code shift is very clear in the seller's communication strategy. When interacting with buyer 1, Tipah, who comes from the jajar karang class, the seller tends to use BJ with straightforward and economical diction. This can be seen in responses such as "*aok taek ne*" in response to price increases and expressions that encourage immediate purchasing decisions. BJ functions as an effective form of communication in the realm of buying and selling, feeling familiar and not too formal for customers from lower social classes. Conversely, when the seller switches to buyer 2, Hj. Baiq Naihan, who is also a nobleman and holds the title of Haji, uses language that rises to BA. Forms such as "*silak side ape de peta*" show the use of the polite pronoun *side* and the polite directive verb *silak*. Here, the seller switches styles from BJ to BA in response to changes in the opponent's profile. This phenomenon is very much in line with the study Al-Pansori (2022) which shows that in Sasak culture, the difference between menak and jajar karang is clearly reflected in the choice of speech level, where alus is used more often for people with higher social status and titles.

From a pragmatic point of view, the transition from BJ to BA and vice versa has at least three main functions. First, the indexical function, because BA indexes the presence of high social status and equality of honour between the seller and buyer 2, who are both aristocrats and hold the title of Haji, while BJ indexes functional closeness in the realm of transactions and status distance with jajar karang. Secondly, the function of politeness, because BA safeguards the face of high-status interlocutors through the choice of respectful pronouns, more complete sentence structures, and more refined intonation. Thirdly, the managerial function, because in situations where two customers are being served at the same time, the code switch acts as a floor marker, making it clear who is being served and to whom the utterance is directed. Husnan (2011) and Wilian & Husaini (2018) mentioning that the Sasak language has patterns of formal speech, polite speech, and speech for highly respected interlocutors, and mastery of these patterns is an important part of the communicative competence of Sasak speakers. The results of this study reinforce the finding that kiosk sellers are not only linguistically proficient, but also socially sensitive when choosing BA or BJ.

If the speech events in this kiosk are interpreted using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework, it becomes apparent that communication shifts are not isolated linguistic phenomena, but rather social practices that weave together variables such as setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre into a single entity. Kiosks, as semi-public spaces, bridge two social worlds, namely the world of the aristocracy and the world of the commoners, so that the two registers BA and BJ coexist in the same situation. When dealing with aristocrats with the title Haji, BA is used to affirm honour and equality of status. When serving the coral reef, BJ was chosen for its proximity, communication efficiency, and suitability to the customer's social background. This pattern of shift supports the findings Marhaida et al. (2024) and Purwandini (2015) about the importance of the family, economic and religious spheres in the preservation and change of BA and BJ usage in Sasak society. Both studies emphasise that the family and everyday interaction spaces such as markets, kiosks, and food stalls are the main arenas where language norms, including code-switching, are practised and reproduced. Thus, the example of conversation at Hj. Baiq Rauhiyah's kiosk shows that in Sasak society, language is a very subtle social navigation tool. The choice of BA or BJ is not just a matter of habit, but also a strategy for regulating distance, closeness, power, and honour.

Conversation data recorded at the village office between Mr Baihaki (village secretary), Baiq Lina (village official), Mr Apip (village official) and Hendra (community member) reveals an interesting shift in communication when viewed through the lens of Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication. The words spoken by Pak Baihaki like "*laek sejarah idupku kence bapak bi, ye doank kence eku bareng, kan jak lek bale taok ne ngeji laek*". (In the past, my life was the same as your father's. He was my only friend, and we used to study the Koran together at his house).

The setting of the narrative is a semi-formal space in the village office, with participants who all come from the aristocracy but have different duties and positions. The conversation appears light-hearted, discussing the origins and past of one of the characters (Mr Hendra), but behind this, the conversation also serves to negotiate social and professional relationships. The act sequence begins with questions about the child's identity, an explanation of their origins, then moves on to the life story and social style of the figure being discussed. The key situation tends to be familiar and somewhat joking. However, the pattern of Instrumentalities reveals something important, namely the use of Base Alus (BA) and Base Jamaq (BJ), which no longer fully follow the lines of aristocratic descent, but are influenced by position in the village government structure.

The key situation tends to be familiar and somewhat joking. However, the pattern of Instrumentalities reveals something important, namely the use of Base Alus (BA) and Base Jamaq (BJ), which no longer fully follow the lines of aristocratic descent, but are influenced by position in the village government structure. Conversely, Baiq Lina and Mr Apip, although also aristocrats, often used BA when speaking to Mr Baihaki, with polite pronouns such as *side* (you) and *tiang* (I) to show respect. This shows that in the context of village offices, formal positions can shift the logic of traditional stratification. The prevailing norms are no longer solely traditional norms of menak-jajar karang, but also bureaucratic norms where superiors are treated with a refined manner and, conversely, superiors feel it is natural to use a lower register with their subordinates. This condition is in line with the findings Swetha & Aravind (2025) which states that the choice of Sasak speech level is highly sensitive to power relations and status, as well as the results of the study. Alghuwainem (2025) placing regional language variations within the framework of social relations and the social structure of speakers.

The code shift carried out by Mr Apip further emphasised this dynamic. When speaking with Mr Baihaki, he uses BA to show respect to his superior. However, when speaking to Baiq Lina, who is her equal in position, she unconsciously switches styles by using BJ, for example in the use of the word *ente* (you). This shows an asymmetrical pattern where BA is used vertically upwards, while BJ is used horizontally among peers who are considered equals or who do not hold the highest position in the workplace. This pattern is consistent with research Cambier-Langeveld (2010) explains that the level of Sasak speech is not only determined by lineage, but also by the context and social role of the speaker. Similar findings are also supported by studies Pan & Kádár (2011) This proves that modern society has begun to interact with new categories such as officials, civil servants, and religious leaders, causing the system of linguistic politeness to shift in line with a combination of customs and professions.

From the perspective of language preservation and shift, this statement shows that BA remains a symbol of respect, but its usage may shift from solely following aristocratic titles to following formal positions. Research Wilian (2006) shows that in the realm of education and institutions, teachers and officials are often addressed as BA even though they are not of noble descent. This illustrates that the shift in Sasak language communication based on social stratification is no longer singular, but rather the result of an intersection between traditional stratification and professional stratification. Thus, conversations in this village office show that the Sasak language, especially through BA and BJ, is a very subtle tool for marking rank, respecting authority, and regulating social distance amid changes in the structure of society. The shift in communication in the Sasak language in the present era is the result of interactions between tradition, formal authority, and the need for effective communication in various spheres of life.

The conversation between P1 (a teacher with a noble title) and P2 (a school principal from the jajar karang class) on their way home from school shows an interesting shift in code choice: both speakers use base alus (BA) in a relaxed atmosphere, even though traditionally menak-jajar karang customarily allows menak speakers to continue using base jamaq (BJ) when speaking to non-noble interlocutors. According to Dell Hymes' ethnographic communication, the Setting is in a school environment after school hours (a semi-formal institutional space), the Participants are the menak teacher and the jajar karang headmaster, Ends are casual and informational (greetings, reasons for not going home, motorbike in the repair shop), Act sequence proceeds from the greeting "*endek de man ulek, bu Sul?*" to clarification of the motorbike damage and the names of components, Key is familiar-polite, Instrumentalities uses Sasak language, Norms prioritises respect for position, and Genre is non-transactional conversation. The increase in variety to BA is reflected in lexical forms such as *side* (you), *tiang* (I), the polite response *enggih*, and the mitigating form "*ndak tiang ngerti, pokok sak bagus wah*", which preserves the face of the interlocutor. This pattern is

consistent with the finding that the level of Sasak speech is highly sensitive to actual social relations, not merely lineage Nwoye (2015) and that BA is often activated to reinforce politeness when institutional domains become the framework for interaction.

The shift to BA in the hands of P1 and P2 illustrates the "audience design" hypothesis: the variety chosen follows the profile of the interlocutor in this case formal position. The teacher raised the issue to BA because P2 was the headmaster, while P2 responded with BA to respect P1's traditional status while maintaining his authority as the head of the institution. In other words, two hierarchical axes intersect: the customary axis (nobility-commoners) and the professional axis (teachers-school principals). This finding expands the classical view of BA/BJ mapping, which was previously dominated by genealogical stratification, into a multifactorial configuration that combines institutional status, age, and proximity. Sociopragmatically, BA here performs an indexical function (marking the honour of the position), politeness (maintaining *positive/negative face* through pronouns and polite directive verbs), and managerial (organising turn-taking and speech distance while remaining friendly). A similar pattern was reported in the fields of education and village offices, where non-noble superiors were addressed as BA by noble subordinates, while superiors could shift to BJ or BA depending on the purpose of the interaction and the audience present. At this point, language functions as a social navigation device (Cosentino & Ferretti, 2014) namely, speakers choose BA/BJ to regulate distance, power, and solidarity, as also observed in the context of public services and markets by studies of contemporary Sasak code-switching.

Compared to cross-domain studies of Sasak, these data add to the evidence that BA is not only a ceremonial "elite variety", but also a flexible interactional resource in everyday domains, when institutional norms require respect for position. The phenomenon of code-switching and style-switching without changing topics supports the initial findings regarding symmetrical/asymmetrical BA-BJ patterns in interactions between menak, jajar karang, and religious elites, including the practice of *code-switching* that follows changes in the "addressed audience" in a given speech situation. On the other hand, the continuity of BA in schools reinforces the argument for language preservation through families and educational institutions, where children and school communities become accustomed to using polite expressions, respectful pronouns, and mitigating forms from an early age. With reference to the map of Sasak dialectal-social variation and speech level typology that has been systematically studied Husnan (2011) and Marhaida et al. (2024) as well as recent findings on the interfacing of customs with modern institutional and economic structures (Al-Pansori, 2022; Husnan, 2011; Wahidah, 2024; Wilian, 2006). This conversation between the teacher and the headmaster emphasised that the choice of BA/BJ is now determined by traditional and professional gatherings. This study enriches the ethnographic literature on Sasak communication, showing that today's speakers' communicative competence is not merely about "knowing the form", but also "knowing when, for whom, and for what purpose" that form is used, in line with Dell Hymes' SPEAKING principle, which places language as a context-bound social practice.

## Conclusion

Based on ethnographic findings on communication in various domains (family, social interaction, economy, and institutions), this study concludes that the answers to the research questions "how Sasak speech codes are used and negotiated across domains, what factors determine this, and to what extent traditional social structures are still reflected in everyday language practices" show consistent and data-based patterns. First, base alus (BA) continues to be chosen as a marker of identity and politeness among fellow nobles (menak) in private and semi-public interactions. Second, in economic settings such as kiosks and markets, speakers engage in responsive code-switching; base jamaq (BJ) is used with subordinates for efficiency and closeness, while BA is activated with nobles or religious dignitaries so that the variety not only conveys propositional meaning, but also "addresses" the interlocutor and regulates turn-taking. Thirdly, in institutional settings such as village offices and schools, formal positions can override lineage, so that subordinates from noble families use BA to address their superiors from the lower ranks, and superiors adjust their BA or BJ according to the purpose of the interaction; this confirms the convergence of traditional hierarchy with professional hierarchy. Fourth, in interactions between aristocratic teachers and school principals from the lower classes, both parties consistently elevated their language to BA in order to maintain mutual respect, demonstrating audience design and reciprocal politeness. Fifth, the domain of BA among the younger generation tends to narrow due to the pressure of Indonesian and popular varieties, but it is still preserved in aristocratic families and institutional contexts that uphold norms of politeness. Thus, the research question is answered that the use of BA and BJ in Sasak society is now determined by the dynamic configuration between traditional stratification (menak and jajar karang), religious status, relational closeness, and especially position or profession. The functions of BA and BJ are indexical in nature, serving to mark social status and distance, functioning as a means of politeness to

maintain the honour of the speaker and the addressee, and serving a managerial function in regulating turn-taking and speech distance. Theoretically, code selection can no longer be understood merely as a reflection of lineage, but as a social practice that combines customary and institutional norms, which is a novelty of this study. Practically, the results of this study emphasise the importance of strengthening BA in education and institutional spaces so that Sasak linguistic politeness is preserved amid social change.

## Declarations

**Author contribution** : Lalu Mas'ud was responsible for data collection, leading discussions on data findings, and serving as the lead author of the manuscript in collaboration with the second, third, and fourth authors. Lalu Fakihuddin contributed to the drafting of the manuscript, field data collection, transcription of informant conversations, and data analysis; he also revised erroneous data and edited the manuscript. Herman Wijaya played a role in data collection, the transcription process, and manuscript writing. Titi Setiyoningsih contributed to the writing and editing of the article manuscript, as well as giving approval for the final manuscript.

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