

Forms of the Bajo language register in the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the forms of language registers in the Bajo language as used by the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District. While previous studies have primarily focused on language attitudes and contact phenomena, this research addresses a critical gap by analyzing how registers operate as domain-specific systems of meaning that organize knowledge, social roles, and everyday practices. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation and elicitation of naturally occurring utterances across three key domains: fishing, trade, and education. The findings reveal that Bajo registers extend beyond lexical variation and function as structured semiotic systems embedded in social life. In the fishing domain, registers encode ecological knowledge, procedural labor, and maritime cognition through stable lexical items and morphologically marked verbs. In the trading domain, registers construct economic roles, transactional processes, and material classifications, reflecting both market-based and reciprocal forms of exchange. In the educational domain, registers emerge within a context of institutional bilingualism, where Bajo mediates the transmission of formal knowledge, supports classroom interaction, and localizes educational practices. This study argues that Bajo registers function simultaneously as communicative tools, cognitive frameworks, and cultural archives. Their continued use across multiple domains demonstrates that linguistic vitality is sustained not only through attitudes but through the functional integration of language in economic and institutional practices. By foregrounding the epistemic and social dimensions of register, this study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship on language maintenance in multilingual coastal communities.

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Introduction

Language constitutes one of the fundamental dimensions of social and cultural life, functioning as a primary medium for interaction, identity formation, and the transmission of values within a speech community (Al-khresheh, 2025; Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025). Every act of speaking is shaped by an interconnected set of situational components—such as who is speaking, to whom, where, when, and for what purpose—so that the linguistic forms produced by speakers are consistently inflected by specific social configurations (Abassi & Zatorre, 2025; Temirgazina, 2019). Language is therefore never understood as a neutral system detached from its users, but rather as a social phenomenon that reflects the structures, power relations, and everyday practices of the communities in which it is embedded (Boutet et al., 2025; Ekawati, 2019; Puumala & Maïche, 2021; Raviv et al., 2020; Rymes & Smail, 2021).

The diversity of speakers' social, cultural, economic, educational, and geographical backgrounds renders language inherently heterogeneous. Differences in region, social group, communicative situation, and historical period give rise to linguistic variations that reflect how a community organizes its experiences and knowledge (Antunes et al., 2020; Kulkarni, 2015; Mallinson, 2024; Padilla-Iglesias et al., 2020; Sharma, 2017). These variations may manifest as dialects, sociolects, idiolects, or functional varieties employed for specific purposes. One important type of variation related to language use across fields, activities, and communicative functions is *register*, a linguistic variety that emerges from differences in situational context, levels of formality, and the communicative channels through which interaction takes place (Jódar, 2019; Li et al., 2023; Pescuma et al., 2023).

The concept of register initially emerged in relation to professional groups that required communication that was rapid, accurate, and efficient within their communities. To meet these communicative demands, members of such groups developed specialized expressions understood only by insiders who shared similar knowledge, experiences, and professional interests (Adams et al., 2022; Goulart, 2022; Kaneyasu & Kuhara, 2020; Masullo et al., 2025; Michon, 2021). Register may thus be defined as the use of particular vocabulary and linguistic forms associated with specific occupations or social groups, such as registers of medicine, commerce, banking, agriculture, journalism, or education (Ambrish et al., 2025; Díaz, 2022; Szmrecsanyi & Engel, 2023; Yurchenko et al., 2023). The language employed by individuals engaged in a particular profession often displays distinctive lexical and grammatical features not commonly used by others, making registers markers of social identity as well as indicators of membership within a community of practice (Fang et al., 2020; Gal, 2019; Smaldino, 2019). Research on register is therefore essential not only for describing the characteristic lexical forms associated with specific professional domains, but also for understanding how register variation within the Bajo language organizes, represents, and structures social practices, local knowledge, and everyday activities in coastal communities.

The daily activities of the Bajo community in Bajo Village reveal distinctive linguistic features used to name fishing tools, describe fishing procedures, conduct transactions involving marine products, and facilitate classroom interaction. These terms are often intelligible only to members of specific subgroups and are not always readily accessible to outsiders, including individuals who reside in the same area but do not work as fishers or traders (Arifin et al., 2020; Badara et al., 2019; Boni et al., 2024; Sifatu et al., 2019). In this context, the Bajo register should be understood not merely as a set of lexical variations but as a repository of ecological knowledge, local economic practices, and cultural values that sustain solidarity within the coastal community. Documenting and analyzing such registers is crucial not only for advancing sociolinguistic research but also for supporting efforts to preserve local linguistic heritage that is increasingly vulnerable to marginalization (Akmal et al., 2026; Awal, 2024; Gaparalievich et al., 2024; Goulart et al., 2020; Kundra et al., 2025; Tuan et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that the Bajo language has evolved in response to social, cultural, and interethnic dynamics. Linguistic variation within Bajo reflects the complexity of social relations in coastal communities, including influences from other ethnic groups that enrich the dialectal forms and registers used by its speakers (Takwa & Sarmadan, 2025). This observation is supported by Jalaludin & Maulud's (2021) study, which found that the Bajo community in Ternate maintains a strongly positive language attitude, allowing the Bajo language to remain vital in everyday social domains. Such positive attitudes contribute significantly to the continuity and diversification of Bajo registers. Meanwhile, Yudiastini's (2019) research on Bajo–Sasak language contact identifies instances of code-switching and code-mixing as linguistic adaptations to multilingual environments. These phenomena demonstrate not only the linguistic flexibility of Bajo speakers but also the ways in which their social identities are negotiated through language choice. In a related study, Ntelu et al. (2022) show that despite living in a multiethnic society, the Bajo community in Boalemo Regency continues to use the Bajo language predominantly in daily interactions, signaling strong speaker loyalty as a key mechanism of language maintenance. Although these studies have highlighted dialectal variation, language attitudes, and contact-induced linguistic change, no research has yet provided a systematic description of professional registers within the Bajo community—particularly in the coastal settlement of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District, where social heterogeneity and diverse economic activities shape communicative practices. This gap in the literature forms the central research niche of the present study, which aims to analyze and describe the forms of Bajo registers in relation to the socio-professional contexts of coastal life.

Drawing on this research gap, the present study aims to provide a detailed description of the Bajo language registers used by the coastal community of Bajo Village across three principal domains: fishing, trading, and educational settings involving teachers and students. Halliday (1978) conceptualizes register as a linguistic variety shaped by *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*, each reflecting the type of activity, the nature of social relationships, and the communicative channel involved. Hudson (2012) similarly asserts that register

arises from the interaction between language users and the social activities in which they participate. Together, these perspectives underscore the central role of occupational and social activities in shaping the register varieties employed in the everyday interactions of the Bajo coastal community.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to describe the forms of Bajo language registers used by the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District, with particular attention to the domains of fishing, trading, and educational interactions involving teachers and students. By mapping these register forms, the study seeks to demonstrate how functional linguistic variation operates within a heterogeneous coastal community, while also emphasizing the importance of documenting and analyzing registers as part of broader sociolinguistic inquiry and efforts to preserve regional linguistic heritage.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, as its primary focus is to provide an in-depth account of linguistic phenomena based on speakers' naturally occurring utterances. Such an approach enables the researcher to capture social meanings, interactional contexts, and language practices in their natural settings. As Creswell & Creswell (2018) emphasize, qualitative research seeks to explore and interpret phenomena within their real-world environments. Consistent with this view, Moleong (1989) asserts that qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of observed words and behaviors, making it particularly suitable for examining register variation within a specific community.

The data for this study consist of utterances containing distinctive Bajo register terms used by members of the coastal community in Bajo Village, Tilamuta District, Boalemo Regency. These data were drawn from naturally occurring language use across three primary social domains: fishing, trading, and educational interactions involving teachers and students. Focusing on these domains enables the researcher to trace register variation in relation to context, profession, and social relations. This approach aligns with Halliday's (1978) view that linguistic variation is closely tied to the situational parameters of language use, namely *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*.

Data collection was carried out using the *observation* and *elicitation* methods, two primary field techniques outlined by Sudaryanto (2015) as central procedures in linguistic research. Through observation, the researcher examined language use in natural settings without intervention, allowing authentic data to be captured. The elicitation method involved guided conversations or interviews with speakers to obtain specific register forms that might not emerge during spontaneous interaction.

In presenting the data, conversational extracts are organized into two components: P1 (elicitation prompts) and P2 (speakers' responses). The elicitation prompts (P1), originally posed in Indonesian, are presented in English for clarity and consistency in reporting. Meanwhile, the responses (P2), which constitute the primary data of analysis, are retained in the original Bajo language and accompanied by English translations where necessary. This procedure ensures both analytical transparency and accessibility for an international readership while preserving the authenticity of the linguistic data.

All utterances were audio-recorded, transcribed, and systematically classified according to their respective social domains and linguistic forms. The transcription process followed a careful representation of phonological and lexical features of Bajo speech to maintain data accuracy. To ensure data validity, the researcher conducted repeated checks of the transcriptions and cross-referenced them with field notes and interview results. Data credibility was further strengthened through methodological triangulation by comparing findings from observation and elicitation and verifying key interpretations with selected informants or expert speakers. Miles et al. (2014) emphasize that triangulation is essential for ensuring consistency and credibility in qualitative research.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, following the stages proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994) namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and organized data relevant to the focus of the study. The data were then presented descriptively in categories of register based on social domains. The final stage, conclusion drawing, was conducted iteratively by continuously verifying emerging interpretations against the data and relevant sociolinguistic frameworks, particularly the concept of register. Through these procedures, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and theoretically grounded account of the forms of Bajo language registers in the everyday life of the coastal community in Boalemo.

Results and Discussion

Forms of the Fishermen's Register

Register is a semantic concept that refers to configurations of meaning tied to specific situational contexts shaped by the *field* of discourse, the *tenor* of participants, and the *mode* of communication

(Halliday, 1978). Within this framework, linguistic variation is understood not merely as differences in form but as reflections of social activities, interpersonal relationships, and communicative channels. In the coastal community of Bajo Village, the fishing profession constitutes a highly dominant social domain, giving rise to specialized lexical items that are fully understood only within the fishermen's community. Consequently, fishermen's terminology can be regarded as a register that functions to mark group identity and reinforce social solidarity (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015).

Findings from this study show that the Bajo fishermen's register exhibits two major structural forms: (1) single lexical items, and (2) complex forms. Complex forms include basic stems, affixed words, compounds, and phrasal constructions. However, these forms should not be seen merely as formal linguistic categories. More importantly, they reveal how the Bajo fishing community organizes work routines, classifies the marine environment, encodes technical procedures, and transmits ecological understanding through language. In other words, the fishermen's register is not simply a vocabulary of occupation, but a semiotic system through which maritime life is made meaningful, shareable, and socially recognizable.

P1: What activities do you do before going to sea?

P2: *madate kinakang* (cooking rice)

This interpretive pattern becomes visible from the data. When the informant states *madate kinakang* (cooking rice) in response to the question about activities before going to sea, the expression does more than denote a domestic action. Linguistically, *madate* is an affixed verb meaning 'to cook', while *kinakang* is a noun meaning 'rice'. Yet, at the interpretive level, this pair indicates that the fishermen's register does not begin only at sea; it begins within the routine structure of preparation before departure. The phrase encodes a pre-maritime rhythm of life in which domestic labor supports fishing labor. Thus, the register reflects not only occupational action but also the habitual sequence that sustains the fishermen's livelihood. What appears lexically simple therefore carries a deeper social meaning: fishing is represented not as an isolated act of catching fish, but as a chain of disciplined and culturally repeated practices.

P1: What are the Bajo terms for boat, oar, lamp, net, engine, and fishing rod?

P2: For boat, it is *lepa*; oar is *busey*; lamp is *damar*; net is *ringgi*; engine is *masina*; and fishing rod is *pissi*.

A similar pattern can be seen in the lexical set *lepa*, *busey*, *damar*, *ringgi*, *masina*, and *pissi* for 'boat', 'oar', 'lamp', 'net', 'engine', and 'fishing rod'. At the structural level, these are single, uninflected nouns functioning as referential terms for fishing tools. However, their analytical significance lies in their lexical stability. The absence of morphological variation suggests that these terms have become socially sedimented as technical vocabulary within the fishermen's community. This stability is important because in high-risk occupational settings, especially at sea, precision of reference is not merely communicative efficiency but also a condition of coordinated action. In this sense, the register constructs technical authority: those who master these terms demonstrate competence, experience, and group membership. The vocabulary therefore works simultaneously as a practical instrument of communication and as a symbolic marker distinguishing insiders from outsiders. Such stable nominal systems are typical of occupational registers where precision and shared understanding are crucial (Hudson, 2012).

P1: What are the Bajo terms for beach, coral reef, bait, wave, seaweed, and fish?

P2: For beach, it is *igaguso*; coral reef is *karangan*; bait is *empa*; wave is *goya'*; seaweed is *samo'*; and fish is *dayya*.

The ecological dimension of the register becomes clearer in the expressions *igaguso* ('beach'), *karangan* ('coral reef'), *empa* ('bait'), *goya'* ('wave'), *samo'* ('seaweed'), and *dayya* ('fish'). Grammatically, these items are monomorphemic nouns. Yet their significance cannot be reduced to naming. Together, they form a semantic field through which the Bajo community maps and categorizes the marine world. This indicates that the fishermen's register functions as a repository of ecological knowledge. The sea is not approached as an abstract natural environment, but as a lived and differentiated space whose elements must be recognized, named, and interpreted for economic survival. The vocabulary therefore reveals an epistemic function of language: it stores practical environmental knowledge and makes that knowledge transmissible across speakers and generations. In this regard, the register is not merely communicative but also cognitive and cultural.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'wind season'?

P2: For wind season, it is *buttu sangei*.

This epistemic function is reinforced by the expression *buttu sangei'* (wind season). Structurally, the phrase consists of the nominal forms *buttu* (season) and *sangei* (wind). However, beyond its compositional

meaning, the expression reflects how the Bajo fishermen conceptualize time through environmental cycles. The term does not only refer to a seasonal condition; it encodes a temporal orientation that is crucial for navigation, timing, and risk management. Thus, the register captures a maritime temporality in which time is understood through wind, waves, and ecological change rather than through abstract calendrical categories alone. This suggests that the fishermen's register embodies a local environmental rationality, one that links linguistic form to survival-based knowledge.

P1: What are the Bajo terms for 'to discard,' 'to lift,' and 'to carry'?

P2: For 'to discard,' it is *ditiba*; 'to lift' is *diketeng*; and 'to carry' is *diboa*.

The verbs *ditiba*, *diketeng*, and *diboa* further deepen this pattern. Morphologically, these forms employ the prefix *di-* and denote actions such as discarding, lifting, and carrying. In the earlier version, these items were mainly identified as passive constructions. Yet interpretively, their importance lies in the way they foreground process rather than individual agency. The repeated use of action forms related to handling, moving, and transferring objects suggests that the fishing register is heavily oriented toward procedural labor. What is central in these verbs is not who performs the act, but the sequence of operations necessary within fishing work. This reflects a collective labor logic: work at sea is structured through shared tasks and coordinated actions, and the register encodes these processes as routine operational knowledge. In other words, morphology here is not merely grammatical; it is tied to the organization of labor. The consistency of the passive construction suggests a systematic morphological process within the register, aligning with observations from morphological studies in Indonesian regional languages (Parera, 1988).

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'catching fish'?

P2: For catching fish, it is *nyandeké dayya*.

The same may be observed in the expression *nyandeké dayya* ("to catch fish"). Linguistically, *nyandeké* is an affixed verb and *dayya* is a noun meaning 'fish'. However, as a register unit, this construction does not merely represent an action-object relation. It functions as a condensed expression of occupational purpose. In the fishermen's register, catching fish is not just one activity among others; it is the central action around which tools, space, time, and bodily movement are organized. Therefore, this phrase may be read as a linguistic core of the fishing domain itself. It reflects how the register compresses an entire field of work into a compact verbal expression that is immediately intelligible to members of the occupational community.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'bait made of cloth strips'?

P2: For bait made of cloth strips, it is *pasirintang*.

Material specificity also appears in the term *pasirintang* for a bait made of cloth strips. At the descriptive level, this is a simple noun. Yet its analytical value lies in the fact that it indexes a very particular fishing technique. The existence of a specific lexical item for this object indicates that the fishermen's register is sensitive to fine distinctions in tools and methods. Such specificity is not accidental. It points to a close relationship between linguistic differentiation and technical practice. The more specialized the labor, the more precise the vocabulary needed to sustain it. Thus, *pasirintang* shows that the register is shaped by a practical need to distinguish not merely objects in general, but objects according to their functional role in fishing activity.

P1: What is the Bajo term for boat equipment used for going to sea?

P2: For boat equipment used for going to sea, it is *patenda*.

Likewise, *patenda* (mooring rope) may seem only to name a piece of equipment, but interpretively it reflects how objects essential to maritime mobility and safety become lexically fixed within the register. A term such as this suggests that the Bajo fishermen's linguistic world is highly attentive to the operational infrastructure of seafaring. Naming here is not trivial; it is part of a linguistic system that secures clarity in the handling of crucial tools. The term therefore contributes to a broader pattern in which the register serves as an instrument of precision, risk reduction, and occupational coordination.

P1: When do you return from going to sea?

P2: For returning in the afternoon, it is *mole kimoa*.

The phrase *mole kimoa* ("to return in the afternoon") also deserves deeper attention. Structurally, *mole* functions as a verb and *kimoa* as a temporal descriptor. However, this expression is important because it shows that the fishermen's register does not only encode tools and actions, but also the temporal rhythm of work. Returning in the afternoon is not simply a time reference; it indexes a socially recognizable pattern of livelihood. The phrase reveals how temporal experience is embedded in occupational language. Fishing

is therefore represented linguistically through a cyclical movement of departure, work, and return, and the register helps stabilize this routine as part of collective maritime life.

P1: What are you doing now?

P2: For removing fish from the net, it is *ngalikkanang dayya ma ringgi*.

A stronger integration of action, object, and instrument can be seen in *ngalikkanang dayya ma ringgi* (removing fish from the net). Here, *ngalikkanang* is a derived verb, *dayya* means 'fish', *ma* indicates a relational element comparable to 'from', and *ringgi* means 'net'. Unlike isolated lexical items, this expression presents a procedural event in a more complete semantic frame. It encodes not only what is done, but also to what and through what medium. This indicates that the fishermen's register contains constructions capable of representing complex work sequences rather than single referents alone. Such expressions reveal a practical syntax of labor in which the relationship between action, object, and instrument is linguistically organized. In interpretive terms, this demonstrates that the Bajo fishermen's register is not a loose collection of terms, but a coherent linguistic system aligned with the logic of maritime work.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'in the middle of the sea'?

P2: For in the middle of the sea, it is *mattinga di lao*.

The phrase *mattinga di lao* (in the middle of the sea) adds a spatial dimension to this system. Composed of *mattinga* (middle), *di* (in), and *lao* (sea), the expression appears straightforward. Yet spatial expressions of this kind are fundamental in a fishing community, because they encode orientation, location, and positional awareness. The register therefore reflects not only vocabulary but a maritime cognition: a way of perceiving and navigating space that is central to everyday survival. The sea in this register is not an empty background but an organized field of positions, directions, and practical reference points.

Taken together, these data show that the Bajo fishermen's register forms more than a semantic field tied to fishing activities. It constitutes a structured linguistic repertoire through which occupational knowledge, ecological classification, temporal orientation, and collective labor processes are expressed and maintained. Lexical items such as *madate*, *kinakang*, *lepa*, *busey*, *damar*, *ringgi*, *masina*, *pissi*, *igaguso*, *karangan*, *empa*, *goya*, *samo*, *dayya*, *buttu sangei*, *pasirintang*, *patenda*, *mole kimoa*, *ngalikkanang dayya ma ringgi*, and *mattinga di lao* do not merely name objects, actions, and places. They reveal how the Bajo community conceptualizes the sea as a domain of livelihood, knowledge, and identity. From a broader sociolinguistic perspective, this finding extends Halliday's (1978) conception of register as a configuration of meanings shaped by field, tenor, and mode. In the Bajo context, register is not only a "variety according to use," but also a cultural archive of maritime life. It stores local ecological intelligence, encodes the discipline of fishing labor, and marks the symbolic boundaries of the fishermen's community. The fishing register therefore has interpretive significance beyond description: it shows that language functions simultaneously as a tool of communication, a medium of knowledge transmission, and a marker of collective identity in the coastal life of the Bajo people.

Forms of the Traders' Register

The presence of the Bajo language register within the trading domain plays a significant role in sustaining the socioeconomic interactions of the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District. Although fishing remains the primary occupation, trading activities constitute a dynamic social arena in which language is continuously negotiated, reproduced, and adapted. The consistent use of Bajo across generations—by adults, adolescents, and children—in market exchanges and small-scale transactions indicates that language here functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a marker of social belonging. In this sense, the trading domain becomes a site where economic activity and linguistic identity intersect, reinforcing the resilience of the Bajo language within a multilingual environment.

Structurally, the Bajo trade register consists of basic lexical items, affixed forms, and phrasal constructions. However, these categories should not be understood merely as linguistic classifications. Rather, they reflect how the community conceptualizes economic activity, organizes transactional relationships, and encodes social roles within everyday commerce. The register therefore operates as a semiotic system that translates economic practices into shared linguistic forms.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'seller'?

P2: For seller, it is *manyelo*.

The base form *nyelo* ('to buy') further illustrates this pattern. While it may function as both verb and noun depending on context, its flexibility suggests that buying is not treated as a discrete event but as a recurring and normalized activity within daily life. The register thus reflects the routinization of economic

interaction, where acts of buying are embedded in continuous social exchange rather than isolated transactions.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'barter' (exchange of goods)?

P2: For barter, it is *siselo aiyai*.

The expression *siselo aiyai* ('barter') introduces an additional layer of meaning. Structurally combining a verbal element with a nominal complement, it represents reciprocal exchange. However, interpretively, this term points to an alternative economic logic that coexists with monetary transactions. The presence of a specific term for barter suggests that the Bajo trading system is not exclusively market-driven but also incorporates relational and reciprocal forms of exchange. Language here encodes not only economic practice but also underlying social values such as mutuality and cooperation.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'buying water' (mineral water)?

P2: For buying water, it is *nyelo boe*.

Similarly, the phrase *nyelo boe* ('buying water') demonstrates how the register integrates action and object into fixed expressions. The impossibility of inserting elements between *nyelo* and *boe* indicates that certain transactional patterns have become lexicalized. This reflects a tendency toward efficiency and predictability in communication, where frequently occurring economic actions are condensed into stable linguistic units. Such forms reveal how repetition in economic practice leads to stabilization in language.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'rice'?

P2: For rice, it is *buas*.

P1: What are the Bajo terms for 'onion,' 'chili,' and 'tomato'?

P2: For onion, it is *bawa*; chili is *cabi*; and tomato is *tamate*.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'vegetables'?

P2: For vegetables, it is *ganga*.

The lexical items *buas* (rice), *bawa* (onion), *cabi* (chili), *tamate* (tomato), and *ganga* (vegetables) represent another important dimension of the trade register. While they function as basic nouns, their significance lies in their role as markers of everyday subsistence economy. These terms are not specialized or technical in the same way as fishing tools; rather, they index the circulation of essential goods within the community. The absence of morphological variation in these items suggests a high degree of lexical stability, reflecting the centrality of these commodities in daily life. Thus, the register reveals a semantic field structured around basic needs and routine consumption.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'plastic bag'?

P2: For plastic bag, it is *karitas*.

The term *karitas* (plastic bag) further illustrates how the register adapts to changing material conditions. Unlike traditional lexical items, this term reflects the incorporation of modern objects into local linguistic systems. Its presence indicates that the Bajo trade register is not static but responsive to shifts in economic practice and material culture. Language here functions as a flexible system that absorbs new elements while maintaining its structural coherence.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'coins'?

P2: For coins, it is *doi batu*.

The expression *doi batu* (coins) provides an example of metaphorical structuring within the register. The combination of *doi* (money) and *batu* (stone) evokes the physical solidity of coins, distinguishing them from other forms of currency. This suggests that the trade register does not rely solely on direct reference but also employs metaphor as a means of categorization. Such metaphorical constructions reveal how economic objects are interpreted through sensory and material experience.

P1: What is the Bajo term for 'tray'?

P2: For tray, in original Bajo it is *katoa*.

The term *katoa* (metal tray) likewise reflects the material infrastructure of trading activity. Although it appears as a simple noun, it indexes a set of practices related to storage, display, and handling of goods. The presence of such terms indicates that the trade register encompasses not only commodities and transactions but also the tools and spaces that support economic interaction. Language therefore maps not only what is traded but how trading is physically organized.

Taken together, these findings show that the Bajo traders' register is more than a collection of lexical items associated with commerce. It constitutes a structured linguistic system that encodes economic roles, transactional processes, material objects, and social relationships. Expressions such as *nyelo*, *manyelo*, *siselo aiyai*, and *nyelo boe* reflect how actions are transformed into roles and routines, while lexical items such as *buas*, *bawa*, *cabi*, *tamate*, *ganga*, *karitas*, *doi batu*, and *katoa* reveal how everyday commodities and tools are linguistically organized within the marketplace. Such patterns align with Halliday's (1978) view that register emerges from recurring activities and social relations, revealing how linguistic choices become conventionalized within specific occupational practices.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, the persistence of these forms across generations illustrates that the trading domain functions as a crucial site of language maintenance. The continuous use of Bajo in economic interaction reinforces communal identity and sustains linguistic vitality in a multilingual setting. In line with Fishman's view, everyday economic domains play a central role in preserving minority languages, while Holmes' perspective highlights that language choice in such contexts is closely tied to identity and social networks. Thus, the Bajo trade register should be understood not only as a functional variety of language but as a mechanism through which economic life, cultural identity, and linguistic continuity are mutually reinforced.

Forms of the Educational Register

The use of language in the educational setting of Bajo Village, Talamuta District, reveals distinctive linguistic dynamics shaped by the interaction between teachers—most of whom come from outside the Bajo community—and students who are predominantly native speakers of the Bajo language. This sociolinguistic configuration produces a form of institutional bilingualism in which Indonesian serves as the primary instructional code, while Bajo functions as a supporting code in informal and semi-formal classroom interactions. This pattern aligns with Holmes' (2013) concept of *domain-based language choice*, wherein local languages continue to maintain their vitality within interpersonal domains even when the national language dominates the formal domain of schooling.

Within the framework of register analysis, the linguistic variations that emerge are shaped by the three contextual variables identified by Halliday: field, tenor, and mode. The educational field necessitates specific lexical items—such as “reading,” “memorizing,” and “completing assignments”—which, in practice, undergo phonological and morphological adaptation when expressed in Bajo. Additionally, differences in linguistic competence between teachers and students influence code selection, particularly when students draw upon Bajo registers to respond to instructions or to describe their academic activities. This interplay of codes demonstrates how linguistic structure, social relationships, and communicative purpose jointly shape register use in the classroom.

In the Bajo lexicon, several words exhibit notable differences between their spoken and written forms. These discrepancies arise from various phonological processes, including the insertion of additional vowels or consonants, the strengthening of initial sounds, and the presence of glottal or stress-based modifications. For example, the word *bboo* ('book') is often realized phonetically as *mbboo*, indicating the insertion of a nasal consonant /m/ at the onset to facilitate articulation. A similar phenomenon occurs with *jja* ('clock' or 'hour'), which is pronounced *ja'*, where the final glottal stop marks a stressed or truncated articulation. Such shifts demonstrate that the written representation of Bajo does not fully capture the dynamics of its oral tradition, reflecting a community where orthographic conventions are less standardized than spoken norms.

Morphological variation is also evident in affixed forms, particularly in vocabulary used within the educational domain. For instance, the word corresponding to 'writing' appears in multiple forms—*nenules* and *tulesang*—each shaped by different affixation patterns. The verb 'to read' alternates between *ngabaca* and *macca*, while 'to play' is expressed either as *babangka* or *kukuri*. Likewise, 'to write' is articulated as *nules* by some speakers and *manules* by others, and 'to sing' can appear as either *menyanyi* (a borrowing from Indonesian) or *uyya* (a more traditional Bajo form). These lexical divergences reflect sociolinguistic factors such as age, exposure to Indonesian, level of education, and intra-community linguistic transmission. Younger speakers or those with greater schooling often display forms influenced by Indonesian morphology, whereas older speakers tend to preserve more conservative or vernacular variants.

At the phrasal level, register variation is equally evident. Phrases commonly used in classroom contexts undergo adaptation into Bajo structures. For example, the Indonesian phrase 'membaca teks' ('to read a text') appears as *macca teks* or *ngambaca teks*, each reflecting different verbal prefixes and phonological realizations. Similarly, the phrase 'mengerjakan tugas' ('to do an assignment') is rendered as *ngaraja tugas* or *karaja tugas*, demonstrating alternations in prefixation and the integration of educational

terminology into Bajo syntax. These forms illustrate how the Bajo language accommodates new semantic fields while maintaining its morphological patterns, thereby shaping a distinct pedagogical register within the community.

The following section presents the forms of linguistic registers used in the educational domain among speakers of the Bajo language.

P1: Sir, what activities do you do before starting your teaching duties?

P2: Before going to school, I prepare my school clothes (*napasadia badu sikola*), then I take a bath (*mamandi*) and change clothes. In addition, I also prepare teaching materials, such as a laptop, markers, and a textbook (*boo pelajaran*). After everything is ready, I go to school.

These broader patterns become more concrete in the interactional data. When the teacher describes pre-teaching routines using *napasadia badu sikola*, *mamandi*, and *boo pelajaran*, the expression encodes more than preparation. Structurally, *napasadia badu sikola* is a compound indicating 'preparing school clothes,' yet interpretively it reflects the institutionalization of discipline and readiness as part of teaching identity. The inclusion of *boo pelajaran* (from Indonesian *buku*) demonstrates lexical borrowing that has been phonologically adapted, indicating that educational objects are localized within the Bajo linguistic system. Thus, the register captures how formal schooling practices are embedded within everyday routines and expressed through familiar linguistic forms.

P1: When you go to school, may I ask whether you use transportation or walk?

P2: Since the distance between my house and the school is quite close, I usually just walk (*numalang nai*).

The expression *numalang nai* ('to walk') used in describing movement to school illustrates how even mundane activities are encoded through idiomatic constructions. Its meaning cannot be directly derived from its components, suggesting that mobility is linguistically framed through culturally specific expressions. This indicates that the educational register extends beyond classroom interaction into the broader routines that structure participation in schooling.

P1: What do you do next, Sir?

P2: After arriving at school, the students carry out the morning assembly (*nabares pagi*).

Institutional practices become more explicit in *nabares pagi* (morning assembly). The prefix *na-* marks habitual or collective action, indicating that school routines are linguistically conceptualized as repeated communal practices. This shows how institutional activities are absorbed into the morphological system of Bajo, rather than remaining external or foreign constructs.

P1: What do you do to begin the learning activities?

P2: First, I greet the students, and they respond. Then I ask how they are, using expressions such as *ai kabar?* or *ai aka?*, which are answered by the students with Alhamdulillah *ala-ala* ("I am fine").

Interactional dynamics are particularly visible in the greeting sequence *ai kabar / ai aka* and the response *ala-ala*. These forms demonstrate code coexistence, where indigenous and borrowed elements operate side by side. The use of reduplication in *ala-ala* indicates evaluative meaning and emotional tone, contributing to a relational atmosphere in the classroom. Interpretively, these expressions function to reduce social distance between teacher and students, balancing institutional authority with interpersonal warmth.

P1: What do you do next, Sir?

P2: After that, I explain to the students, saying, *Ana-ana*, hari ini kita *nabalajar* surah Al-Ma'un ("Children, today we will study Surah Al-Ma'un").

The address term *ana-ana* ('children') and the verb *nabalajar* ('to study') further illustrate how core educational activities are localized. Reduplication in *ana-ana* marks collectivity, reinforcing the idea of the classroom as a communal space, while *nabalajar* integrates learning into the Bajo morphological system. Together, they indicate that teaching and learning are not merely institutional processes but socially embedded interactions.

P1: Have you previously given homework?

P2: Yes, I first ask the students, *Ana-ana* apakah *anudipuge PR?* ("Children, have you done the homework?").

The form *anudipuge* ('to do homework') demonstrates how complex academic activities are expressed through affixation. The layering of morphological elements reflects an attempt to align new semantic

domains—such as homework—with existing linguistic resources. This suggests that the educational register evolves by expanding the functional capacity of the language.

P1: What is the Bajo term for “to check,” Sir?

P2: It is *nadipriksa* (“to check”). Then I look at who has not completed the task, because *naditabuang nilai* (“a score/grade is given”).

Similarly, *nadipriksa* (‘checked’) and *naditabuang* (‘given a score’) show how assessment practices are linguistically encoded. While influenced by Indonesian forms, these expressions are adapted into Bajo phonological and morphological patterns. This indicates that even evaluative mechanisms of schooling are integrated into the local linguistic system, allowing institutional authority to be communicated through familiar forms.

P1: What is the Bajo term for “to take attendance,” Sir?

P2: It is *nadiabsen* (to take attendance), or I check their presence. Then a classmate may respond, “*oh, piddi*” (“sick”).

The expression *nadiabsen* (‘to take attendance’) and the response *piddi* (‘sick’) highlight how administrative and personal dimensions of classroom interaction coexist. While *nadiabsen* reflects adaptation of formal terminology, *piddi* remains a basic lexical item, indicating that student conditions are expressed through everyday language. This interplay reveals that the educational register bridges formal institutional discourse and personal experience.

P1: Are they usually also asked to memorize?

P2: Yes, *namanghafal* (“to memorize”). Memorizing is done so that they can *ngatonang* (“understand”).

Learning processes are further articulated through *namanghafal* (‘to memorize’) and *ngatonang* (‘to understand’). These forms indicate that cognitive activities are conceptualized through action-oriented verbs, suggesting that knowledge is framed as something to be actively performed rather than passively received. This aligns with the broader pattern in which the register emphasizes process over abstraction.

P1: Sir, how do teachers provide reinforcement in the Bajo language?

P2: Oh, we say *laso* (good), then clap (*nupak tangan*). We can also praise them by saying *pandre* (smart) and *ngatonang* (understanding).

Affective dimensions of teaching appear in expressions such as *laso* (good), *pandre* (smart), and *nupak tangan* (to clap). These forms demonstrate that motivation and evaluation are conveyed through culturally grounded expressions, reinforcing emotional engagement in the learning process. Language here functions not only to transmit knowledge but also to shape attitudes and relationships within the classroom.

P1: What do you do at the end of the lesson?

P2: At the end of the lesson, I usually just give a small assignment, *namunang tugas* (to give assignments).

Finally, the expression *namunang tugas* (to give assignments) illustrates how closing routines are linguistically structured. The prefix *na-* again marks action within a procedural framework, indicating that instructional sequences—from opening to closing—are systematically encoded within the register.

Taken together, these excerpts demonstrate that the Bajo educational register encompasses basic lexical forms, affixed verbs, compounds, and reduplications that reflect both linguistic structure and cultural practices within the community. The consistent use of Bajo forms in classroom interaction reveals the vitality of the language in the educational domain, even as Indonesian functions as the primary instructional code. These linguistic choices illustrate an ongoing negotiation of identity, a process of adapting local language to formal educational contexts, and a continuity of linguistic tradition within the Bajo-speaking community.

Overall, the mapping of Bajo language registers in the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District, across the three principal domains of fishing, trade, and education demonstrates that functional linguistic variation is consistently anchored in social activities, participant relations, and communicative channels, as conceptualized by Halliday. In the fishing domain, registers appear predominantly as simple lexical items and affixed verbs that encode ecological knowledge of the sea, fishing gear, seasons, and work procedures at sea. In the trading domain, registers take the form of specialized terms for agents, commodities, means of exchange, and trading facilities, many of which are basic nouns and derived forms marking transactional processes. In the educational domain, registers emerge through combinations of basic words, affixed forms, compounds, reduplications, and phrases that articulate school routines, teaching-learning activities, assessment practices, and strategies of pedagogical reinforcement. Taken

together, these three fields indicate that the Bajo language does not merely operate within the domestic sphere but is deeply embedded in economic and institutional practices, thereby becoming a crucial pillar of linguistic vitality in the face of Indonesian dominance.

These findings both corroborate and extend previous research on the Bajo language and coastal communities. Studies by Takwa & Sarmadan (2025), Jalaludin & Maulud (2021), and Ntelu et al.(2022) show that positive language attitudes and strong speaker loyalty play a key role in maintaining the use of Bajo in multiethnic environments, while Yudiastini (2019) highlights code-switching and code-mixing as natural adaptive strategies in multilingual social spaces. The present study adds a new dimension by demonstrating that language maintenance is manifested not only at the level of attitudes and contact phenomena, but also systematically in the professional registers of fishers, traders, and educators. In this way, the fishing register preserves ecological and maritime knowledge, the trading register reflects the logic of local economic practices, and the educational register records processes of knowledge and value transmission in the classroom. This contribution is significant not only for the advancement of sociolinguistic scholarship, but also for efforts to safeguard regional linguistic heritage that is increasingly vulnerable to marginalization if it is not carefully documented and critically analyzed.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the register forms of the Bajo language in the coastal community of Bajo Village, Tilamuta District, are not merely lexical and morphological variations, but a structured semiotic system shaped by domain-specific social practices. Across fishing, trading, and education, register variation reflects how the community organizes knowledge, enacts social roles, and sustains cultural continuity through language. In fishing, registers encode ecological knowledge and maritime practices; in trading, they structure economic interactions and social relations; and in education, they mediate institutional bilingualism between Bajo and Indonesian. These findings show that Bajo registers function simultaneously as communicative tools, cognitive frameworks, and cultural archives, indicating that variation is integral to how the community understands and navigates its world. The study extends sociolinguistic perspectives by demonstrating that “varieties according to use” are deeply embedded in systems of knowledge, identity, and practice, particularly in multilingual and occupational contexts. Moreover, the persistence of these registers highlights their role in sustaining the vitality of the Bajo language, which remains actively used across economic and institutional domains despite Indonesian dominance. This suggests that language maintenance is driven not only by attitudes but also by functional integration in everyday life. Future research should explore how these registers evolve across generations amid educational standardization, economic change, and language contact to better understand the dynamics of language continuity and adaptation.

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