



A Sociolinguistic Approach to Language Levels in Social Interaction and Cultural Identity

Mimin Aminah¹, Ninuk Lustyantie¹, Uwes Anis Chaeruman¹

¹Universitas Subang, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Universitas Negeri Jakarta

*Corresponding Author: Mimin Aminah

Email: miminaminah@unsub.ac.id



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Abstract

This study explores the application of a sociolinguistic approach to language variations in the context of social interaction and cultural identity, particularly in the teaching of reading. By employing a qualitative research methodology, the study examines how formal and informal language, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific terms within texts influence students' reading comprehension and cultural literacy. Data were collected through interviews and discourse analysis involving students and educators engaged in reading instruction, with diverse texts such as literary works, folk tales, and non-formal narratives serving as primary materials. Findings indicate that students' awareness of language variations significantly enhances their ability to decode contextual and cultural nuances, enabling deeper engagement with texts. Students who recognized the implications of linguistic choices—such as the use of formal versus informal registers—were better equipped to analyze character interactions, social dynamics, and embedded cultural values. Challenges emerged when students encountered idiomatic or culturally specific expressions, but these were mitigated through contextual analysis, consultation with external resources, and guided instruction. This study highlights the transformative potential of integrating sociolinguistic principles into reading pedagogy. It underscores the importance of fostering students' critical literacy skills by exposing them to diverse linguistic styles and encouraging discussions on how language reflects social and cultural identities. The findings suggest that such approaches not only enhance reading comprehension but also promote cultural awareness and sensitivity, preparing students to navigate the complexities of a linguistically and culturally diverse world.

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in social interaction, serving as a primary medium through which individuals communicate and express their identities. The variations in language reflect not only the social relationships among speakers but also their cultural identities and social statuses. Sociolinguistic studies have shown that language use can indicate group membership and social hierarchies, as different dialects or registers may be employed depending on the context and audience (Mujiono & Herawati, 2021; Mede & Dililitas, 2015). This dynamic interplay between language and social identity underscores the importance of understanding sociolinguistic factors in educational settings, particularly in teaching reading, where texts often embody cultural and social nuances that can enhance comprehension and engagement (Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Saleh et al., 2023).

In the context of teaching reading, traditional approaches often emphasize text comprehension; however, there is a growing recognition of the need to incorporate social and cultural analyses into reading instruction. This broader perspective allows educators to highlight how language

reflects societal values and norms, thereby enriching students' understanding of the texts they encounter (Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Saleh et al., 2023). For example, integrating sociolinguistic principles into reading curricula can foster students' awareness of cultural contexts, enhancing their ability to navigate diverse linguistic landscapes and improving their overall literacy skills (Roman et al., 2021; Amorim, 2023). Furthermore, research indicates that when students engage with texts that reflect their sociolinguistic realities, they are more likely to develop critical thinking skills and a deeper appreciation for the cultural dimensions of language (Hidayati, 2022; "The Impact of Culture on English Language Learning", 2020).

The relationship between sociolinguistics and reading instruction is particularly significant as it provides a framework for analyzing language variations in educational texts. By applying a sociolinguistic approach, educators can examine how different language levels and styles in reading materials relate to the social and cultural contexts in which they are situated (Strijbos et al., 2015; Yan, 2023). This analysis not only aids in selecting appropriate texts that resonate with students' experiences but also enhances their cultural competence and linguistic awareness (Muzaki, 2023). For instance, understanding the sociolinguistic aspects of a text can help students recognize the implications of language choices, such as code-switching or dialect usage, which can reflect broader social dynamics and identity issues (Jamiluddin, 2023; Vusyk, 2023).

Moreover, the impact of sociolinguistic analysis on students' reading experiences is profound. It enables learners to connect with the material on a personal level, fostering a sense of belonging and identity within the learning environment (Goodman et al., 2021; Ismail, 2022). By exploring language variations and their social meanings, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of culture and identity, which is essential for their overall educational journey (Scliar-Cabral, 2022; Chen, 2018). This approach not only enhances reading comprehension but also prepares students to engage thoughtfully with diverse perspectives, ultimately contributing to their social and cultural literacy (Shu, 2019).

The variations in language within reading teaching texts reflect the social levels and cultural identities of the characters depicted in those texts. Sociolinguistic research emphasizes that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a means of expressing social identity and status (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). In literary works, characters may use different dialects or registers that signify their social class, education level, or cultural background. This linguistic diversity can provide readers with insights into the characters' social positions and the cultural contexts they inhabit (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). By analyzing these variations, educators can help students recognize the intricate relationship between language, identity, and social dynamics, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the texts they engage with (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022).

In the context of teaching reading, it is essential to invite students to recognize and understand the different levels of language present in texts that relate to social and cultural identity. This can be achieved through guided discussions and activities that encourage students to explore how language choices reflect the characters' backgrounds and societal roles (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). For example, educators can facilitate discussions on how specific language features, such as slang or formal speech, convey different social meanings and implications (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). By engaging students in this analytical process, they can develop critical thinking skills and become more adept at interpreting the social and cultural nuances embedded in the texts (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). This approach not only enhances reading comprehension but also promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity among students (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022).

The role of reading instruction in building students' awareness of language use that reflects social position and cultural identity is paramount. Effective reading instruction should not only focus on decoding and comprehension but also incorporate discussions about the sociolinguistic aspects of language (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). By integrating sociolinguistic analysis into reading curricula, educators can help students understand how language functions as a marker of identity and social status, thereby enriching their reading experiences (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). This awareness can empower students to critically engage with texts, recognize their own linguistic identities, and appreciate the diversity of language use in different social contexts (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022).

The research contribution of this study lies in providing new insights into the application of sociolinguistic theory in teaching reading, which can enhance students' understanding of social and cultural diversity in texts. By employing a qualitative approach to analyze language in texts, this research offers a framework for educators to explore the interplay between language, identity, and social dynamics in reading instruction (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). Furthermore, the development of learning strategies that combine linguistic and sociocultural aspects can foster a more holistic approach to language education, ultimately benefiting students' cultural and linguistic competence (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022).

In terms of scope, this research will focus on analyzing various types of texts, including literature and academic discourse, to understand how language variations reflect social identities and cultural contexts. The study will involve a group of students engaged in reading instruction, allowing for an examination of their interactions with the texts (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that the research will be limited to the application of sociolinguistic analysis to texts used in teaching reading, utilizing a qualitative approach to gain in-depth insights into the language used in these contexts (Arifin, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Definition and Basic Principles of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is defined as the study of the relationship between language and society, focusing on how social factors influence language use and variation. It encompasses the examination of language in its social context, including how language reflects and shapes social identities and relationships (Mede & Dililitaş, 2015). The primary principle of sociolinguistics is the intricate relationship between language, society, and identity. This principle emphasizes that language is not merely a communication tool but also a significant marker of social status and cultural identity, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others (Mede & Dililitaş, 2015).

Language Levels

Language variations can be categorized into several levels, including dialects, registers, styles, and codes. Dialects refer to regional variations in language, while registers denote the level of formality in language use. Styles reflect individual preferences in language use, and codes pertain to the choice of language variety based on the social context (Malach & Kolář, 2022). These variations serve as indicators of social relationships and communication contexts, revealing insights into the social status of speakers. For instance, the use of formal language in professional settings may signify authority, while informal language may indicate familiarity or intimacy among peers (Malach & Kolář, 2022).

Language and Socio-Cultural Identity

The relationship between language and the formation of social identity is profound. Language acts as a vehicle for expressing cultural identity, allowing individuals to align themselves with specific social groups (Qian & Lau, 2022). It can also serve to strengthen cultural identity, as individuals use language to connect with their heritage and community. Previous research has illustrated how language choices can reinforce group identity, as seen in studies of bilingual communities where code-switching reflects cultural affiliation (Maltepe, 2016). For example, in multilingual settings, speakers may switch between languages to signal their identity or to navigate different social contexts (Maltepe, 2016).

Theory and Practice of Teaching Reading

Reading is defined as a critical language skill that involves decoding symbols to derive meaning. Various approaches are employed in teaching reading, including top-down, bottom-up, and interactive methods. The top-down approach emphasizes the reader's prior knowledge and context, while the bottom-up approach focuses on decoding individual words and letters. The interactive approach combines both strategies, allowing for a more holistic understanding of texts (Farrell & Ives, 2014). Each of these approaches plays a vital role in developing students' reading skills and comprehension abilities.

The types of texts commonly used in teaching reading include literary works, informational texts, and digital media. Understanding the social and cultural context of these texts is crucial for effective reading instruction. Texts are not merely vehicles for information; they are embedded with cultural meanings and social values that influence how readers interpret them (Novita, 2023). For instance, culturally familiar texts can enhance comprehension for students by providing relatable contexts, thereby improving their engagement and understanding (Novita, 2023).

Literacy extends beyond the ability to read and write; it encompasses the ability to understand texts within their socio-cultural contexts. This understanding is influenced by the social context in which students engage with texts, as their backgrounds and experiences shape their interpretations (Ahmad et al., 2022). Research indicates that students who are aware of the socio-cultural dimensions of reading are better equipped to analyze and critique texts, leading to deeper comprehension and critical thinking skills (Aliyu & HalimahSadiyahYakubu, 2019). For example, incorporating discussions about the cultural implications of texts can foster students' awareness of diverse perspectives and enhance their overall literacy competency (Aliyu & HalimahSadiyahYakubu, 2019).

The integration of sociolinguistic approaches in reading instruction is essential for deepening students' understanding of texts. By analyzing language variations within reading materials, educators can help students recognize how these variations reflect social contexts and cultural identities (Mede & Dililitaş, 2015). For instance, when students examine different dialects or registers used by characters in a story, they gain insights into the characters' social backgrounds and relationships, which enhances their comprehension and critical thinking skills (Amideevna, 2020). Furthermore, building students' awareness of language use in social contexts allows them to appreciate the nuances of communication, fostering a more profound engagement with the text (Mede & Dililitaş, 2015).

Analyzing reading texts through a sociolinguistic lens involves examining how language variations serve as representations of social and cultural identities. This approach can include identifying specific linguistic features that signify social status, regional background, or cultural affiliation (Kaçar, 2021). For example, a text may feature characters who switch

between formal and informal language, reflecting their social dynamics and cultural contexts (Ismail, 2022). Such analyses not only enrich students' understanding of the texts but also encourage them to consider the broader social implications of language use (Yan, 2023). Previous research has highlighted how language variations in texts can illuminate issues of power, identity, and cultural representation, providing students with a critical framework for interpreting literature and other reading materials (Mardhiyah et al., 2022).

Sociolinguistics plays a pivotal role in helping students understand the relationship between language and social context within reading texts. By engaging with sociolinguistic principles, students can learn to analyze how language reflects societal norms and values, thereby increasing their cultural sensitivity (Esnara, 2023). For instance, discussions around the use of slang or regional dialects in texts can prompt students to explore how these language choices impact character development and plot progression (Oliveira et al., 2013). This understanding not only enhances their reading comprehension but also prepares them to navigate diverse linguistic landscapes in their academic and social lives (Astifo, 2022).

Qualitative Approaches in Sociolinguistic and Reading Research

Characteristics of a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative approaches in language research focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of language phenomena within their social contexts. This methodology emphasizes the richness of data obtained through observations, interviews, and textual analyses, allowing researchers to explore the complexities of language use and its implications for social interaction (Pichugin et al., 2022; Adhikari, 2023). By prioritizing context and meaning, qualitative research can reveal how language operates in various social settings, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of communication and identity (Syrbe & Rose, 2016).

Several methods are particularly relevant in a qualitative approach to studying sociolinguistics and reading. Discourse analysis can be employed to explore the levels of language present in texts, examining how these levels influence reader interpretation and engagement (Yábar, 2023). Case studies can provide a detailed understanding of the impact of sociolinguistic-based reading instruction on students, allowing researchers to capture the nuances of classroom interactions and learning outcomes (Hidayati et al., 2021). Additionally, interviews and observations can be utilized to investigate students' perceptions and understanding of language variations in texts, offering insights into their reading experiences and cultural awareness (Hsieh & Chuang, 2021).

Advantages of a Qualitative Approach for This Study

The qualitative approach offers several advantages for exploring the intersection of sociolinguistics and reading instruction. It enables researchers to delve deeply into the meanings associated with language, culture, and social interactions, fostering a comprehensive understanding of how these elements influence reading practices (Shu, 2019; Jamiluddin, 2023). Furthermore, this approach is particularly relevant for connecting sociolinguistic theory with practical reading teaching strategies, as it allows for the exploration of real-world applications and implications of sociolinguistic insights in educational settings (Cong, 2023). By employing qualitative methods, this study can contribute to a richer understanding of how sociolinguistic factors shape reading instruction and student learning outcomes.

Sociolinguistic Theory

Sociolinguistics provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the interplay between language, society, and identity. Pioneering figures such as William Labov, Dell

Hymes, and Joshua Fishman have significantly contributed to this field. Hymes introduced the concept of "communicative competence," which encompasses not only grammatical knowledge but also the social rules governing language use in different contexts (Hodges, 2015). Fishman's research further explores the relationship between language and cultural identity, emphasizing how language serves as a marker of group identity and social cohesion (Lam & Leung, 2016). These foundational theories underscore the relevance of sociolinguistics in analyzing reading texts and their implications for social and cultural understanding.

Cultural Literacy Theory

Cultural literacy theory posits that literacy is not merely a technical skill but a socio-cultural ability to read and understand texts within their specific contexts. This perspective emphasizes the importance of cultural knowledge and social experiences in shaping reading comprehension (Rosal et al., 2011). By recognizing that literacy involves navigating cultural references and social norms, educators can better equip students to engage with diverse texts meaningfully. This approach aligns with the notion that effective reading instruction should incorporate discussions about the cultural and social contexts of texts, fostering students' ability to interpret and critique literature through a culturally informed lens (Skerrett, 2015).

Sociolinguistic-Based Reading Teaching Model

A sociolinguistic-based reading teaching model integrates social and cultural analysis into reading instruction. This framework encourages educators to incorporate discussions about language variations, social identities, and cultural contexts when teaching reading (Marsh & Hoff, 2019). By analyzing how language reflects social relationships and cultural identities in texts, students can develop critical literacy skills that enable them to engage with literature on a deeper level (Damaianti et al., 2020). This model promotes an understanding of how language functions as a tool for social interaction and identity formation, ultimately enhancing students' reading comprehension and cultural sensitivity (Squires, 2013).

Research Gaps

Despite the existing body of research, there remains a notable gap in studies that explicitly integrate sociolinguistics with reading instruction in language education. While individual studies have addressed aspects of sociolinguistics and reading, few have developed comprehensive frameworks that connect these fields systematically. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring how sociolinguistic analysis can inform reading teaching practices, ultimately enhancing students' cultural literacy and critical engagement with texts (Marsh & Hoff, 2019; Hodges, 2015). By addressing this gap, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective reading instruction that acknowledges the complexities of language, culture, and identity.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Methods

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research due to its emphasis on in-depth understanding and interpretation of social phenomena, particularly in the context of language interaction. Qualitative research allows for a nuanced exploration of how individuals perceive and engage with language in various social contexts, making it particularly suitable for examining the complexities of sociolinguistic factors in reading instruction (Flores et al., 2019; Koduah et al., 2019). This approach facilitates the exploration of meanings, social dynamics, and cultural contexts that influence language use in reading texts, providing rich,

descriptive data that quantitative methods may overlook (Wahyudin, 2017). By focusing on the lived experiences of students and educators, qualitative research can uncover the subtleties of language variation and its implications for social identity and cultural understanding (Smith et al., 2020).

Types of Research

This study employs a case study and discourse analysis as its primary research designs. A case study allows for an in-depth examination of specific instances of language use in reading teaching texts, providing insights into the social interactions and cultural contexts that shape these texts (Mason, 2017). Discourse analysis, on the other hand, focuses on the language levels present in the texts, analyzing how these levels reflect social relationships and cultural identities (Quiroz & Dixon, 2011). Together, these methods enable a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and education, facilitating a detailed exploration of how sociolinguistic factors influence reading comprehension and engagement.

Research Purposes

The primary purposes of this research are twofold: first, to analyze language variations in reading texts and their relationship to social and cultural identity; and second, to explore the impact of applying sociolinguistic analysis to reading teaching in enhancing students' cultural and social understanding. By examining how language variations reflect social dynamics and cultural contexts, this research aims to provide insights into the role of sociolinguistics in fostering critical literacy and cultural competence among students (Saracho, 2010; Toppo & Rahman, 2020). Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the development of effective reading instruction strategies that integrate sociolinguistic principles, thereby enriching students' learning experiences and promoting a deeper understanding of the texts they engage with (Amalia et al., 2022).

Research Subject

The primary research subjects for this study will be students enrolled in language teaching programs, specifically college students who are actively involved in reading instruction. The selection criteria for participants will include age (typically 19-30 years), educational background (students currently enrolled in language courses), and their direct involvement in reading teaching activities.

Research Location

The research conducted in educational institutions where reading instruction takes place. The focus on classrooms where reading materials are utilized for teaching purposes. This setting is crucial as it allows for direct observation of teaching practices and student interactions with texts. The socio-cultural environment relevant to this research includes the language community of the participants, which may encompass diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural identities.

Results and Discussion

The research involved 18 students from language teaching programs. The participants were selected based on their active involvement in reading instruction and their diverse linguistic backgrounds. The age range of the participants was between 15 and 25 years, with varying educational experiences in language and literature courses. Among them, 12 students identified as native speakers of the local language, while 6 were bilingual, speaking both the local language and English. This diversity in linguistic background provided a rich context for

exploring how students engage with reading texts and the sociolinguistic factors influencing their comprehension Pacheco et al. (2019)Mede & Dililitaş, 2015).

Type of Text Used

The texts selected for this research included a variety of genres: short stories, non-formal texts, literary texts, and folk tales. Short stories were chosen for their concise narratives, which allow for focused analysis of language variations and themes. Non-formal texts, such as articles and essays, were included to provide students with exposure to different writing styles and contexts. Literary texts were selected for their rich language and cultural references, while folk tales were chosen to highlight traditional narratives that resonate with the students' cultural identities. The selection of these texts aimed to facilitate discussions on language use, cultural context, and social identity, thereby enhancing students' engagement and understanding of the material (Amīn, 2020; Vusyk, 2023).

Analysis of Language Variations in Text

Formal and Informal Language in Text

The analysis revealed distinct variations between formal and informal language within the selected texts. Formal language was predominantly found in literary texts and non-formal articles, characterized by complex sentence structures and advanced vocabulary. In contrast, informal language was more prevalent in short stories and folk tales, where conversational tone and colloquial expressions were used. Students demonstrated an ability to identify these differences, often noting that formal language conveyed authority and seriousness, while informal language created a sense of familiarity and relatability. This understanding allowed students to appreciate the stylistic choices made by authors and how these choices influenced their interpretation of the texts (Arifin, 2023; Darweesh, 2016).

From the interview findings, it was found that students stated that formal and non-formal language in the text can be identify by looking at the sentence structure and choice of diction as detailed in the following table:

Table 1. The Answer of Students' Interviews about Formal and Informal Language in a Text

No	Question	Answer
1	How do you differentiate between formal language and informal language in the texts you read?	R1: Formal language uses standard vocabulary and clear structures. R2: Formal language is more organized and does not use slang or idioms. R3: Informal language often uses everyday words and casual expressions R4: Formal language is more polite and structured, informal is more relaxed. R5: Formal has standard vocabulary, informal is freer and less rigid. R6: Formal tends to be more rigid, informal is more flexible and friendly R7: Formal avoids slang, while informal uses slang. R8: Formal uses long sentences, informal is shorter and more direct. R9: Formal is more serious, informal is often lighter and more friendly. R10: Formal is clear and standard, informal often depends on context. R11: Formal rarely uses conversational words, informal a lot.

		R12: Formal tends to be without contractions, informal often uses contractions. R13: Formal uses full sentences, informal can be shorter and more direct. R14: Formal is more assertive and detailed, informal is simpler. R15: Formal language is more serious, informal is more free and friendly. R16: Formal is more suitable for official situations, informal is more relaxed. R17: Formal avoids using regional languages, informal can use them. R18: Formal focuses more on grammar rules, informal is more flexible.
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Note: R= Respondent

Based on the result above we can be concluded that students can identify the using of formal and informal language from word choice, sentence structure, level of politeness in choosing word diction, use of complete sentences, use of grammar used in a text. By those indicators the students can distinguish between formal and informal texts

Use of Idioms and Typical Expressions

Idiomatic expressions and typical phrases were present in many of the texts, particularly in folk tales and short stories. Students reported challenges in understanding these idioms, often struggling to grasp their figurative meanings without contextual clues. For example, phrases like "spill the beans" or "hit the nail on the head" posed difficulties, as students initially interpreted them literally. However, through guided discussions and contextual analysis, students began to recognize the cultural significance of these expressions and their role in enriching the narrative. This process highlighted the importance of cultural literacy in comprehending idiomatic language and its implications for effective communication (Muzaki, 2023; Al-Houti & Al-Daihani, 2018).

The results of the following interview, it is summarized how students try to understand idiomatic expressions in the text:

Table 2. The Answer of Students' Interviews about The Use of Idioms in a Text

No	Question	Answer
1	Have you ever encountered an idiom or expression in a text that was difficult to understand? How do you deal with it?	R1: Yes, I look up the meaning of idioms in a dictionary or ask a friend. R2: Sometimes, I look up the meaning of idioms on the internet to make it clearer. R3: I try to guess from the context, then check the meaning. R4: I usually ask my lecturer for an explanation or look it up in a dictionary. R5: I often use a dictionary app to understand idioms that I don't understand. R6: Sometimes I don't understand, so I check online or ask a friend. R7: I ask for a direct explanation or read more in other sources.

		R8: If I don't understand, I look it up in a dictionary or ask a lecturer. R9: I try to analyze from the context and ask if necessary. R10: Look up the meaning in a dictionary or see other examples in the same text. R11: Often look up the meaning of idioms via Google or a dictionary app. R12: I check the meaning of idioms in an idiom dictionary or ask a friend who understands better. R13: If there is a difficult idiom, I usually ask my teacher or friend. R14: I read the surrounding context to guess the meaning of the idiom. R15: I often ask my friends the meaning of the idiom to understand it better. R16: Use a dictionary or ask if there is an idiom that is difficult to understand. R17: I interpret the idiom through the context and look for the meaning in other sources. R18: I check the meaning of the idiom with other sources to make sure of its meaning.
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Note: R= Respondent

Based on the presentation in the table above, students try to understand idiomatic expressions in the text by looking at the context of the expression as a whole in the text. If this method does not help them find the appropriate meaning, they look for alternative help through dictionaries, Google or ask the lecturer. This step is an appropriate effort to fully understand the contents of the text.

The Role of Regional Languages and Culturally Specific Languages:

Interviews with students revealed that texts incorporating regional languages or culturally specific terms presented significant comprehension challenges. The data specifically showed on Table 3.

Table 3. The Answer of Students' Interviews about The Use of Regional and Specific Languages

No	Question	Answer
1	Do you feel that you have difficulty understanding texts that use regional languages or	R1: Yes, because I am not familiar with the local vocabulary and expressions. R2: Difficulty arises if I do not understand idioms or local vocabulary. R3: Sometimes it is difficult because I do not know the meaning of words in the local language. R4: Yes, I am often confused by terms that I do not understand.

	languages that are typical of a culture? Why?	R5: Sometimes I have difficulty because the local language is rarely used in everyday life. R6: Understanding texts in the local language is difficult because there are no clear references. R7: Difficulty arises when the text uses a language that I am not used to hearing. R8: I find it difficult because there are many local terms that I am not familiar with. R9: Sometimes it is difficult because I am not used to hearing the local language. R10: Yes, the local language sometimes has a meaning that I do not understand. R11: Difficulty arises because I do not know the cultural context in which it is used. R12: The local language sometimes has a special meaning that only local people know. R13: I am not familiar with the local language, so sometimes it is difficult. R14: Local languages are challenging because I don't understand certain words. R15: Yes, because I don't interact with the local language often. R16: Often feel confused by words that only exist in the local language. R17: Local languages are sometimes difficult to understand because they are not commonly used. R18: Understanding local languages sometimes requires knowledge of the local culture.
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Note: R= Respondent

Based on data above, Many students expressed frustration when encountering dialects or terms that were unfamiliar to them, as these linguistic features often carried cultural connotations that were crucial for understanding the narrative. For instance, students noted that certain regional expressions were deeply rooted in local customs and traditions, making it difficult to fully appreciate the text without prior knowledge of the cultural context. This finding underscores the necessity of incorporating cultural education alongside language instruction to enhance students' overall reading comprehension and cultural awareness (Pratiwi & Dakhi, 2021).

The Relationship Between Language Variation and Social/Cultural Identity

Social Identity in Language Use

Language variations within texts serve as significant indicators of the author's social identity, encompassing aspects such as social status, ethnic group, and geographic origin. The use of specific dialects or sociolects can reflect the author's background and the community they represent. In the texts analyzed, students noted that characters who spoke in regional dialects

often conveyed a sense of belonging to a particular social group, which influenced their perceptions of those characters' identities and experiences Perkins et al. (2013). This understanding allowed students to appreciate how language functions as a marker of social identity, shaping their interpretations of the narratives presented in the texts.

Relationship between Language and Cultural Background

The language employed in the texts analyzed revealed the authors' cultural backgrounds and significantly influenced students' understanding of the material. Texts that incorporated culturally specific vocabulary and idiomatic expressions provided insights into the traditions and values of the communities represented. Students reported that recognizing these cultural elements enhanced their comprehension and engagement with the texts, as they could relate the language used to their own cultural experiences or to broader societal contexts. This connection between language and culture underscored the importance of cultural literacy in reading instruction, as it fosters deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives (McGrew & Wendling, 2010).

Examples of Texts that Reflect a Specific Culture

Several texts analyzed in this research contained distinct cultural elements that were reflected in their language. For instance, folk tales often featured idiomatic expressions and traditional vocabulary unique to the culture from which they originated. In one example, a folk tale from the local community used specific terms related to agricultural practices, which not only enriched the narrative but also provided students with insights into the cultural significance of these practices. Additionally, literary texts that portrayed characters from diverse ethnic backgrounds utilized language variations that highlighted their cultural identities, such as the use of code-switching between languages. This linguistic diversity allowed students to explore the complexities of cultural identity and social dynamics within the narratives (Lepola et al., 2012).

Students' Understanding of Language Variations and Cultural Identity

Students' Perceptions of Language and Social Identity

Interviews with students revealed that they recognized the relationship between language variations in texts and the social and cultural identities of the characters.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions of Language and Social Identity

No	Question	Answer
1	In your opinion, does the language in the text describe a person's social or cultural identity? Can you explain further?	R1: Yes, language shows the social status and cultural background of the writer. R2: Language can reflect the level of education and social values of the writer. R3: Language provides an overview of a person's cultural origins and social status. R4: The choice of words in the text reflects the social and cultural identity of the writer. R5: Yes, the choice of language shows the social class, ethnicity, and cultural values of the writer. R6: Language shows the social and cultural influence in the writer's communication. R7: Texts with an informal language style show social closeness to the reader.

		R8: With language, we can find out the level of education and social status of the writer. R9: Language in the text provides clues about the writer's beliefs and culture. R10: The use of language reflects the writer's cultural identity and social background. R11: Language can describe certain social and cultural beliefs. R12: Yes, words in the text show the writer's social and cultural attitudes. R13: Language in the text reflects the writer's social identity and status. R14: Formal and informal language styles reflect differences in social status. R15: Language gives an idea of the writer's cultural background and status. R16: Language choices often describe the place and society the writer comes from. R17: Yes, language shows a person's social status and cultural identity. R18: Of course, because the style of diction selection is identical to the writer's cultural background and language.
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Note: R= Respondent

Many students articulated that language use was a powerful tool for expressing identity, speech patterns and vocabulary choices reflected their backgrounds and social statuses. This awareness enabled students to engage more critically with the texts, as they considered how language shaped their understanding of characters' motivations and relationships within the stories.

The Impact of Language Variation on Text Comprehension

Students indicated that their understanding of language variations significantly influenced their ability to comprehend texts more deeply. Those who were more attuned to the nuances of language variations reported a greater ability to grasp the social and cultural values embedded within the narratives. For example, students who recognized the implications of using formal versus informal language were better equipped to analyze character interactions and the social dynamics at play. Explicitly can be seen from the data below:

Table 5. The Impact of Language Variation on Text Comprehension

No	Question	Answer
1	How does your understanding of these language variations help you understand the text more deeply?	R1: Understanding language variations makes me more aware of the context and nuances in the text. R2: The more I understand language variations, the deeper I understand the meaning of the text. R3: I can understand the meaning of the text more deeply by knowing the language variations. R4: Language variations help me grasp the intent and context of the text more clearly. R5: Understanding language variations makes me appreciate the social messages in the text more.

	R6: Understanding language variations helps me see the different perspectives in the text. R7: I can understand the characters and situations of the text better by understanding language variations. R8: Understanding language variations makes it easier for me to understand the details in the text. R9: Language variations give me insight into social and cultural differences. R10: Language variations help me understand the different perspectives in the text. R11: Understanding language variations opens up a broader perspective on the text. R12: Language variations make me more aware of the social and cultural context of the text. R13: Understanding language variations gives me the ability to interpret meaning more deeply. R14: Language variations give me clearer clues about the background of the text. R15: The more I understand the language variations, the more I understand the characters and messages of the text. R16: Understanding the language variations allows me to dive deeper into the message. R17: Understanding the language variations adds an additional dimension to understanding the text. R18: The language variations enrich my understanding of the content of the text.
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Note: R= Respondent

Students indicated that their understanding of language variations played a pivotal role in enhancing their comprehension of texts on a deeper level. This insight is consistent with the data collected from responses to the question *"How does your understanding of these language variations help you understand the text more deeply?"* The majority of students emphasized that recognizing language variations significantly improved their ability to grasp contextual and cultural nuances, as well as the implicit meanings within the texts.

For instance, R1 and R4 highlighted that understanding language variations allowed them to better comprehend the context and subtleties of the text, while R2 and R3 explicitly noted that this understanding deepened their overall grasp of the text's meaning. Moreover, students such as R7 and R15 explained that recognizing language variations helped them analyze characters and understand situational dynamics more effectively.

Several respondents, such as R5 and R6, acknowledged that their awareness of language variations enabled them to appreciate the social messages embedded within the text and to identify different perspectives. Similarly, R9, R10, and R12 pointed out that their understanding of these variations provided insights into social and cultural differences, helping them to interpret the underlying social and cultural context of the narratives.

Additionally, students such as R13 and R16 stated that their ability to interpret texts on a deeper level was directly tied to their understanding of language nuances, allowing them to extract more profound meanings and messages. Respondents like R14 and R17 emphasized that language variations offered critical clues about the text's background and added

dimensions to their comprehension. Meanwhile, R8 and R18 noted that recognizing such variations enriched their understanding of the text's details and content.

In summary, the responses demonstrate a strong link between students' awareness of language variations and their capacity to engage with texts on a deeper level. This awareness enables them to decode social and cultural values, analyze character relationships, and appreciate the broader perspectives presented within the narratives. Such findings highlight the importance of incorporating lessons on language variations into reading instruction, as it equips students with the tools to navigate and interpret complex textual layers more effectively.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the significant role sociolinguistic principles play in enhancing the teaching of reading, particularly through the analysis of language variations and their connection to social interaction and cultural identity. The qualitative approach employed in this research revealed that students' awareness of language variations, such as formal and informal language, directly impacts their ability to engage with texts on a deeper level. Students who were attuned to these nuances exhibited a heightened capacity to understand not only the linguistic elements of the texts but also the social and cultural values embedded within them.

The findings suggest that understanding language variations equips students with the tools to decode contextual and cultural nuances, thereby enabling a more profound engagement with texts. For example, students who recognized the implications of formal versus informal language were better positioned to analyze character interactions and the underlying social dynamics. This ability to connect linguistic choices to broader social and cultural frameworks allowed students to uncover the implicit meanings within the texts, fostering a deeper appreciation of their complexity.

Students also demonstrated an ability to link language variations to the identities and cultural backgrounds of the characters and authors. By analyzing the linguistic styles employed in the texts, they could infer social hierarchies, cultural norms, and values, which enriched their interpretative skills. However, challenges were evident when students encountered idiomatic expressions or region-specific language. These difficulties were often mitigated through strategies such as contextual analysis, consulting external resources like dictionaries or online tools, and seeking guidance from instructors.

This research underscores the importance of integrating sociolinguistic analysis into reading instruction. Language is not merely a tool for communication but a reflection of identity and social dynamics. Incorporating discussions on language variations, such as distinctions between formal and informal styles, regional dialects, and idiomatic expressions, provides students with a broader lens through which they can approach texts. Moreover, exposing students to diverse texts that encompass a range of linguistic styles and cultural representations enhances their critical thinking skills and fosters cultural literacy.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight the need for educators to design reading activities that emphasize the social and cultural dimensions of language. Such activities should encourage students to explore how linguistic choices convey values, identities, and power dynamics. Additionally, educators should address the challenges students face when encountering unfamiliar language by providing tools and strategies to navigate idiomatic or culturally specific expressions effectively.

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the profound impact of sociolinguistic approaches on the teaching of reading. By emphasizing the interplay between language, culture, and social

identity, educators can cultivate students who are not only skilled readers but also culturally competent individuals. The integration of sociolinguistic principles into reading instruction has the potential to transform classrooms into spaces where linguistic diversity is not only acknowledged but celebrated, fostering a deeper understanding of the texts and the world they represent. This approach, grounded in both theory and practice, offers a meaningful path forward in the field of applied linguistics and language education.

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