

**COMMUNICATION BARRIERS WITH THE COMMUNITY IN  
DAKUTA, NORTH ACEH DUE TO LOW INDONESIAN LITERACY  
AND INTEREST IN ENGLISH**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research explores the communication barriers faced by the people of Dakuta, North Aceh, caused by low literacy in Indonesian and limited interest in English. Using qualitative methods with in-depth interviews and participatory observation, the study identifies the impact of language disability on social interaction and educational effectiveness in the village. The results show that low Indonesian literacy hinders residents' participation in education programs and community activities, while limited interest in English exacerbates challenges in the learning process. The research suggests the need for a holistic approach that includes improving Indonesian literacy and better strategies in English language teaching, taking into account the local linguistic context to effectively overcome communication barriers.*

**Keywords:** *Communication Barriers, Dakuta, Education, English, Indonesian Liter.*

## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is crucial for the well-being and development of any community (Lubis, 2020). However, in regions with low literacy rates and limited proficiency in English, such as Dakuta in North Aceh, communication barriers can significantly hinder community engagement and access to information. Effective communication is an important foundation in the successful implementation of community programs and education initiatives. In rural areas of Indonesia, such as Dakuta in North Aceh, communication barriers stemming from language proficiency issues pose a significant challenge. This research aims to identify the communication barriers faced by the Dakuta community, focusing on the impact of low Indonesian language literacy and limited interest in English.

Indonesia with diverse ethnic groups and separated by the many islands spread across the peninsula from Sabang to Marauke makes Indonesia rich in language, literature, race that is rich in diversity (Liliweri, 2003). Indonesia, with its diversity of languages and dialects, presents a unique linguistic landscape. Indonesian, as the national language, is essential for effective communication across the archipelago. However, in many remote villages, including Dakuta, the use and mastery of Indonesian is still limited. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of enthusiasm and mastery of English, which has recently been introduced in the local school curriculum.

In Dakuta, the introduction of English as a subject for all grades this year-after a limited trial in 2020-highlights a significant shift in education policy. While this progress represents a positive step, the challenges of implementing the new curriculum are further complicated by the low levels of Indonesian literacy among children and adults. This barrier comes in many forms, including difficulties in understanding and interacting during educational programs and social activities.

This issue is further complicated by the community's tendency to rely more on Acehese in daily interactions. This linguistic preference creates barriers for those who lack confidence in using Indonesian, as well as adding another layer of difficulty in the integration of English education. For example, during community service efforts and educational activities such as Qur'an teaching and skills training, the need for intermediaries who can bridge the language gap highlights the practical difficulties faced by educators and residents.

Recent studies, Afiatni, et al (2016) have highlighted the challenges faced by new members in online health forums, such as Milis Sehat, where psychological, semantic, and technical barriers impede mutual understanding and effective communication. Similarly, in Dakuta, these barriers are exacerbated by the limited proficiency in Indonesian and English, leading to difficulties in accessing and understanding health information, participating in community discussions, and receiving support from healthcare providers.

This article explores the communication barriers faced by the community in Dakuta, North Aceh, specifically due to low Indonesian literacy and interest in English. The significance of this study lies in exploring how these linguistic barriers affect communication and educational outcomes in Dakuta. By examining the relationship between Indonesian language literacy, interest in English and communication challenges, this research aims to provide insights into potential strategies to improve language education and strengthen community engagement. Understanding these barriers is critical to developing effective programs that can meet the unique needs of rural communities and promote better national and global language integration.

Through this investigation, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on language policy and education in multilingual contexts, as well as offer

practical recommendations for overcoming communication barriers and creating more inclusive learning environments.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research adopted a qualitative approach to explore the communication barriers faced by the community of Dakuta Village, North Aceh, related to low Indonesian literacy and interest in English. Qualitative research is descriptive research is a certain tradition in science that fundamentally relies on observing humans in their own areas and dealing with these people in their own language (Moleong, 2002). The primary method used was in-depth interviews, designed to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by various stakeholders in the village. These interviews were conducted with village heads, teachers, parents and representatives from local organizations, with the aim of exploring their perspectives on how language issues affect daily communication and the education process in the village.

The interview instrument was developed with open-ended guiding questions that allowed in-depth exploration of various aspects related to language literacy and interest in English. The interview process was conducted face-to-face at the research site to ensure a more direct and authentic interaction. Each interview was recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed for further analysis, allowing the researcher to obtain detailed and contextualized information regarding the language barriers faced by the community.

Data obtained from the interviews were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, where interview transcriptions were coded to identify key themes and patterns related to communication barriers. This analysis helped to understand how limitations in Indonesian and English affect social interactions and the education process in Dakuta. Data validity and reliability were ensured through triangulation by comparing results from different sources and verifying findings with participants. The study followed ethical research standards by maintaining the confidentiality of participants and obtaining the necessary consent from the authorities and individuals involved

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research reveals the communication barriers faced by the people of Dakuta, North Aceh, caused by low literacy in Indonesian and limited interest in English. Based on in-depth interviews with village heads, teachers, parents and representatives of local organizations, it was found that:

### **1. Low Indonesian Literacy:**

Interviews with village heads and teachers revealed that many residents, especially parents and children, have low levels of Indonesian literacy. This affects their ability to understand and participate in education programs that use Indonesian as the language of instruction. For example, a mat-maker mother interviewed expressed her discomfort in speaking Indonesian with outsiders for fear of making mistakes, indicating limited literacy and confidence in the language.

Furthermore, interviews with teachers identified that limited Indonesian literacy among students impacts on the teaching and learning process at school. This difficulty creates barriers in teaching and understanding materials delivered in Indonesian, reducing the effectiveness of the educational process. In addition, teachers reported that many students have to rely on peers to translate or explain materials, which adds complexity to learning and hinders their academic achievement.

This problem is also compounded by low interest in English, which was recently

introduced in the school curriculum. Interviews with parents indicate that they feel unable to support their children in learning English due to their own limitations in the language. This situation creates additional gaps in English education and hinders the successful implementation of the new curriculum. In conclusion, Indonesian literacy barriers and limited interest in English create significant challenges for the Dakuta Village community, affecting both daily communication and the overall education process.

## 2. Interest in English

Interviews with teachers and parents indicate that there is limited interest in English among students and the community in general. When English was introduced into the school curriculum, challenges arose as many students did not have a sufficient foundation in English and did not receive adequate support at home. Most parents also felt unable to assist their children in learning English due to their own limitations in the language.

In addition, this limited interest is compounded by parents' inability to provide additional support in English learning at home. Many parents feel they do not have sufficient English skills to help their children with English-related tasks and exercises. This creates an additional gap in English education, where students not only struggle with the material at school but also lack support from their home environment. This situation suggests that without adequate support from both school and family, efforts to improve English language acquisition in this village become increasingly challenging.

Thus, low interest in English, combined with limited educational support at home, hinders students' ability to progress in English. These challenges require a more comprehensive approach to English language teaching, including the improvement of parents' English language skills and the provision of additional support at school. More effective and adaptive solutions are needed to overcome these barriers and improve English language interest and skills in Dakuta Village.

## 3. Impact on Social and Educational Communication

Participatory observations and interviews revealed that language barriers affect communication in social and educational activities. For example, when teaching the Quran, some children do not understand Indonesian and require translators from their more fluent friends. This adds complexity to the teaching process and hinders the effectiveness of the program.

In addition, language barriers also impact on social interactions outside the formal education context. In community activities and social gatherings, difficulties in communicating in Indonesian create distance between community members and event organizers. This can inhibit active participation from residents, limiting their opportunities to engage in activities that have the potential to enrich their social and cultural experiences. The inability to communicate effectively in the language of instruction results in a lack of engagement and integration in community activities, which in turn affects social cohesion and the delivery of important information.

This issue emphasizes the need for better strategies to overcome language barriers in educational and social contexts. To improve teaching effectiveness and participation in community activities, it is important to develop approaches that consider local language needs and provide additional support. Educational programs should include communication exercises that enable students to better understand the material, while community activities need to be tailored to ensure that all community members can actively participate and feel involved. By addressing these language barriers, it is hoped that social interactions and educational processes in Dakuta Village can be more effective and inclusive.

The results of this study are in line with the multilingual communication theory proposed by Baker (2011), which suggests that limited language acquisition can hinder effective communication in a multilingual context. The low literacy of Indonesian in Dakuta Village creates obstacles in daily interactions and the implementation of educational programs, which results in a lack of effectiveness in the teaching and learning process and community engagement.

According to Hymes (1972), communication competence includes not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language in a social context. This research found that lack of confidence in using Indonesian, coupled with limitations in English, led to difficulties in communication between educators and students and between the community and outsiders. These barriers exacerbate challenges in language of instruction integration and foreign language teaching.

Furthermore, the results support Cummins' (2000) theory of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which states that adequate language skills are essential for effective communication and learning. In Dakuta Village, low Indonesian language proficiency and limitations in English hinder the achievement of communication competencies necessary to understand and engage in educational programs.

The findings are consistent with Afiatni et al. (2016), who identified psychological, semantic, and technical barriers in online health forums, such as Milis Sehat, where new members faced significant challenges in effective communication. In Dakuta Village, similar barriers are compounded by limited proficiency in Indonesian and English, leading to difficulties in accessing and understanding health information, participating in community discussions, and receiving support from healthcare providers.

Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of language learning emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in language development. This theory suggests that learning occurs through social interactions and that cultural tools play a critical role in this process. The barriers observed in Dakuta Village, including insufficient social interaction and cultural support for language development, align with the challenges identified by Afiatni et al. (2016) in online forums where interaction constraints affected communication.

Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis provides further insight into the necessity of language practice for effective learning. According to this theory, language learners need opportunities to produce language output to develop their language skills fully. The challenges faced by the community in Dakuta Village, similar to those observed in the online health forums, highlight the importance of creating opportunities for language use and practice in both Indonesian and English.

Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis adds another dimension by emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition. Learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to language slightly beyond their current proficiency level. In Dakuta Village, providing comprehensible input in both Indonesian and English could facilitate more effective language learning and communication, much like addressing the communication barriers in online forums.

Finally, Scarcella and Oxford's (1992) theory of language learning strategies underscores the importance of employing effective strategies to overcome language barriers. Their research suggests that learners who use a variety of strategies are better equipped to handle language learning challenges and achieve higher proficiency levels. Addressing the language barriers in Dakuta Village would benefit from incorporating

diverse language learning strategies to support both Indonesian and English language development, paralleling the need for strategic approaches observed in online health forums.

This research underscores the importance of a holistic approach in addressing language barriers, including the provision of additional support for improved language literacy and a better introduction to English. It is hoped that educational programs and community initiatives can be adapted to address the challenges faced by the people of Dakuta, so that communication and learning can take place more effectively and inclusively.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that this research shows that low Indonesian literacy and interest in English in Dakuta result in significant barriers to social and educational communication. Limitations in Indonesian hinder residents' active participation in education programs and community activities, while incompetence in English compounds difficulties in learning and support at home. Interviews and observations indicate that this lack of language skills affects daily interactions, reduces the effectiveness of the teaching process and inhibits community involvement in social activities.

The importance of a holistic approach in addressing language barriers in Dakuta becomes clear from the findings of this study. To improve communication and learning, there needs to be a concerted effort in improving Indonesian language literacy and introducing English effectively by considering the local language background. Additional support for language education as well as adjustments to education policies according to the local linguistic context will be key in overcoming these challenges and facilitating better language integration in the daily lives of villagers.

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