

The Culture of *Misuh* in Contemporary Multicultural Surabaya

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of *misuh*, a form of course or profane language, in public advertisements in Surabaya, Indonesia, conceptualizing it as both a linguistic practice and a social phenomenon that reflects broader cultural transformations in an increasingly urbanized and multicultural society. Historically associated with expressions of intimacy, assertiveness, humour, and informal social regulation, *misuh* has undergone functional and spatial transformations alongside increasing demographic diversity and the modernization of urban governance. Employing a qualitative research design based on in-depth interviews and field observations, this study investigates residents' perceptions of written *misuh*, its perceived communicative effectiveness, and the sociocultural factors associated with its persistence or decline in public spaces. The findings indicate that although *misuh* remains visible in the urban linguistic landscape, its occurrence has decreased and is increasingly concentrated in localized areas or neighbourhoods characterized by relatively high levels of public non-compliance. This pattern is associated with three interrelated factors: increasing cultural pluralism and the consequent demand for more inclusive forms of public communication; changing language ideologies that increasingly position *misuh* as impolite, inappropriate, or socially undesirable; and the strengthening of institutional mechanisms for regulating public space through signage, closed-circuit television (CCTV), and public reporting systems. The study further identifies a shift of *misuh* into alternative media, particularly truck bodies, which function as mobile semiotic spaces for the expression of identity, humour, social criticism, and religiosity. Overall, the findings suggest that *misuh* has not disappeared from Surabaya's linguistic landscape but has undergone significant symbolic and functional transformation. These transformations reflect ongoing negotiations of identity, changing configurations of social power, and evolving language ideologies and social values within an increasingly modern and multicultural urban environment.

Keywords: culture; *misuh*; Surabaya; multiculturalism; local identity

Budaya Misuh dalam Masyarakat Multikultural Kontemporer Surabaya

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji dinamika *misuh*, sebuah bentuk umpatan atau bahasa kasar, dalam iklan publik di Surabaya, serta menganalisisnya sebagai fenomena linguistik sekaligus sosial yang mencerminkan transformasi budaya lebih luas dalam masyarakat yang sedang mengalami urbanisasi. Secara historis berfungsi sebagai ekspresi keakraban, ketegasan, dan kontrol sosial informal, *misuh* telah mengalami pergeseran fungsi dan kehadiran spasial seiring dengan meningkatnya keragaman demografis serta modernisasi tata kelola perkotaan. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, termasuk wawancara mendalam dan observasi lapangan, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi warga terhadap *misuh* dalam bentuk tertulis, efektivitas yang dirasakan, serta faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap keberlangsungan atau penurunan penggunaannya. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun *misuh* masih ada, kemunculannya telah berkurang dan kini sebagian besar terbatas pada area atau lingkungan tertentu yang memiliki tingkat ketidakpatuhan publik yang lebih tinggi. Penurunan ini dipengaruhi oleh tiga faktor utama: meningkatnya pluralisme budaya yang menuntut komunikasi lebih inklusif; munculnya ideologi bahasa yang memandang *misuh* sebagai

tindakan tidak sopan atau tidak pantas; serta penguatan mekanisme kelembagaan formal untuk mengatur ruang publik melalui papan tanda, CCTV, dan sistem pelaporan. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi adanya perpindahan penggunaan misuh ke media baru, khususnya pada badan truk, yang berfungsi sebagai ruang bergerak untuk mengekspresikan identitas, humor, kritik sosial, dan religiusitas. Secara keseluruhan, temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa misuh tidaklah hilang, melainkan telah mengalami transformasi simbolis dan fungsional, yang mencerminkan negosiasi identitas yang terus berlangsung, pergeseran struktur kekuasaan, serta evolusi nilai-nilai sosial di Surabaya yang semakin modern dan multikultural.

Kata Kunci: budaya; misuh; Surabaya; multikulturalisme; identitas lokal

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a tool of communication; it also reflects the identity, cultural values, and social dynamics of a community (Kramsch, 2014). Through language, individuals and social groups articulate their worldviews, lived experiences, and value systems (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Nunan & Choi, 2010). Language functions as a medium that connects people to their social realities, such that every lexical choice, intonation, and speech style is never entirely neutral (Delin, 2000). It carries traces of history, power relations, and cultural constructions that shape a community. In certain societies, language even becomes a symbol of group belonging. Regional linguistic features, dialects, or speech styles often serve to mark local identity and distinguish one group from another. Such linguistic practices reinforce internal solidarity while simultaneously delineating social boundaries (Ferrari, 2020). Thus, language operates as a social mechanism through which individuals understand themselves and others. Moreover, language reflects ongoing social change. Shifts in social, economic, and political conditions are often mirrored in linguistic evolution: new words emerge, old meanings shift, and communicative styles adapt to contemporary needs. This demonstrates the dynamic and adaptive nature of language. In Surabaya, one of the most distinctive forms of verbal expression is *misuh*, the habitual use of coarse words, insults, or profanity in informal communication. Terms such as *jancuk* (fuck you) or *asu* (literally means dog, a harsh insult) are not only used to express negative emotions but also function as markers of intimacy,

humour, and solidarity (Annafi et al, 2024). *Misuh* has long been embedded in the cultural identity of Surabaya and forms part of the *arek Suroboyo* dialect. In this context, *misuh* is not always interpreted as impolite; Rather, it is understood as an expressive, honest, and egalitarian communicative style (Arif & Jatiningsih, 2019). Strikingly, *misuh* appears not only in spoken interactions but also in written form, particularly in public advertisements posted in front of houses, narrow alleys, or urban residential areas. These messages often contain threats or stern warnings and, despite their harsh tone, function as mechanisms of informal social regulation.

Existing scholarship, however, has examined *misuh* almost exclusively as a spoken, face-to-face phenomenon within a relatively homogeneous arek community (Annafi et al., 2024; Arif & Jatiningsih, 2019). In these studies, *misuh* is treated as an emblem of shared local identity. Its meaning is largely taken for granted among interlocutors who already share the same cultural code. Two gaps follow from this focus. First, little is known about written *misuh* as a form of public, one-to-many communication, such as signs and admonitions posted for anonymous passers-by rather than spoken to known interlocutors in a shared conversational frame. In this written context, the interpretive work of the reader becomes just as important as the intent of the writer in determining whether the expression still functions as regulation rather than as mere abuse.

Second, the literature has not addressed how *Misuh* is received in a multicultural, rather than a culturally homogeneous, urban population. Surabaya's rapid growth into a metropolitan

city has brought sustained migration and the settlement of ethnic communities with different norms of politeness and different degrees of familiarity with local linguistic codes (Masruroh et al., 2022; Prayitno & Basundoro, 2015). Because prior studies assumed a shared cultural script among speakers, they cannot tell us whether *misuh* retains its function as an in-group marker of solidarity and effective informal regulation when its audience includes newcomers who do not share that script. Nor can they tell us whether, for that audience, the same words are simply read as rudeness or aggression, stripped of the affective and cultural meaning that makes them acceptable to locals. This is precisely the gap this study addresses: the intersection of written, rather than spoken, *misuh* and multicultural, rather than homogeneous, reception, and what that intersection reveals about the durability of *misuh* as a marker of Surabayan identity amid ongoing social change.

This gap raises a set of interrelated questions: How is *misuh* practiced and perceived in an increasingly heterogeneous society? Are *misuh*-based admissions still considered effective? How do newcomers interpret such expressions? Does cultural diversity undermine the social legitimacy of *misuh* as a hallmark of Surabaya's communicative style? And how do these changes reflect broader transformations in values, norms, and social structures?

This study addresses these questions by examining *misuh* in public recognition as both a linguistic phenomenon and an indicator of social change. It investigates not only the presence of written *misuh* but also how residents, both locals and newcomers, evaluate its politeness, effectiveness, and relevance in a modern urban context. In doing so, the study positions *misuh* as an analytical entry point for understanding cultural adaptation, shifting norms of civility, and the formation of collective identity in an increasingly plural Surabaya.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative naturalistic approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with long-term Surabaya residents and direct observations of locations where *misuh*-based monitions were or were displayed. Interviews explored residents' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of the social functions of *misuh*, while observations provided insight into the spatial and social contexts of its use. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how mischief is negotiated, maintained, or abandoned in everyday life. By integrating linguistic, anthropological, and sociological perspectives, this introduction underscores that *misuh* is not merely a linguistic artifact but a reflection of broader social transformations in contemporary Surabaya.

FINDINGS

Based on in-depth interviews with long-term residents of Surabaya, individuals who identify as native inhabitants of the city, this study identifies several significant findings regarding the presence and evolving use of *misuh* in written public admissions. These findings not only describe empirical conditions observed in the field but also illuminate broader socio-cultural dynamics unfolding in Surabaya as it transforms into an increasingly multicultural metropolitan centre.

The first finding reveals that public advertisements containing *misuh* can still be found in certain areas of the city; however, their frequency and distribution have declined markedly compared to a decade ago. Although this study does not employ systematic quantitative measurements, respondents consistently reported that such writings are now far less common. In the past, harshly worded admonitions could be easily encountered in village alleys, densely populated neighbourhoods, or informal urban settlements. Today, their presence is sporadic and no longer constitutes a familiar feature of the urban landscape.

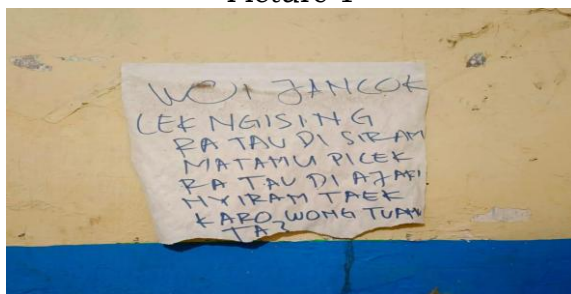
This decline suggests a shift in public communication norms, reflecting broader social transformations within the city.

One example still found in the field reads: "*ojok guak sampah nang kene cok, ketemon tak pecel ndasmu*" ("don't throw your trash here; if I catch you, I will smash your head") (see picture 1). The sign was created in response to persistent illegal dumping in front of a resident's home. impressively, the sign also includes a second line written in standard Indonesian, "don't throw away trash", indicating an attempt to combine local expressive force with a more formal register.

Another example reads: "*woi jancok lek ngising ra tau disiram matamu pickek ra tau ditajar nyiram taek karo wong tuamu ta?*" (see picture 2). This message was posted in a boarding house where one resident repeatedly failed to flush the toilet. The writer hopes that the offender will recognize the social pressure embedded in the message and stop the behaviour. These examples illustrate how *misuh* is mobilized not merely as profanity but as a communicative strategy intended to provoke compliance through emotional intensity.



Picture 1



Picture 2

The second finding indicates that although the overall number of *misuh*-based admonitions has decreased, they persist in areas where the population remains relatively local or culturally homogeneous, as well as in locations characterized by recurrent "public non-compliance." Respondents frequently mentioned illegal dumping sites as typical examples. In the absence of formal surveillance or enforceable regulations, landowners or local residents' resort to harsh language as a means of reprimanding, shaming, or intimidating offenders. In such contexts, *misuh* functions as a direct and forceful mechanism of informal social control. These signs are typically found in peripheral alleys, vacant lots, or areas that receive limited attention from municipal authorities. Thus, the continued presence of *misuh* in written admonitions can be understood as a grassroots response to regulatory gaps or ineffective enforcement.

The third finding concerns the reasons behind the decline in the use of *misuh* in public admissions. Respondents identified at least three major factors. First, the increasing cultural diversity of Surabaya's population has made coarse language less appropriate for a heterogeneous audience. As the city becomes more plural, communication practices must accommodate a wider range of cultural expectations and linguistic sensibilities. Second, there is a growing awareness among residents that harshly worded admonitions may reflect poorly on the community, projecting an image of incivility or poor ethics. As a result, many residents now prefer to use more polite or formal language when issuing warnings. Third, the modernization of urban governance, marked by the proliferation of official signage, CCTV surveillance, and formal reporting mechanisms, has reduced the need for residents to produce their own forceful admonitions. As institutional authority expands, the role of citizen-generated linguistic enforcement diminishes.

The fourth finding highlights a notable shift in the spatial distribution of *misuh*. While *misuh* was once commonly found on walls, fences, or neighbourhood structures, it now appears more frequently on the bodies of large trucks traveling across cities and provinces. The writings on these trucks extend beyond admonitions; they include sexual innuendo, social critique, humor, and even religious messages.

This phenomenon suggests that *misuh* and other forms of expressive language have migrated to a more mobile medium with broader visibility. Trucks serve as alternative expressive spaces where drivers or vehicle owners can display identity, emotion, or worldview without being constrained by local norms. In this sense, the truck body becomes a semi-public canvas that circulates linguistic creativity across regional boundaries.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that *misuh* has not disappeared from Surabaya's public sphere but has undergone significant transformation. Its declining presence in fixed neighborhood spaces, persistence in culturally homogeneous areas, and reemergence in mobile contexts reflect shifting social norms, changing power relations, and evolving forms of identity expression in a rapidly modernizing and diversifying urban environment. The phenomenon of *misuh* thus offers a valuable lens through which to understand the interplay between language, culture, and social change in contemporary Surabaya.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the use of *misuh* in public advertising is not merely a linguistic phenomenon. It is also a reflection of broader shifts in social structure, increasing demographic diversity, urban modernization, and the transformation of public expressive spaces. These changes indicate that the culture of *misuh* has not disappeared. Rather, it has been adapted to new and

evolving social contexts in contemporary Surabaya. The following sections organize these findings around the study's five research questions, drawing on sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and urban studies to explain why *misuh* persists in some contexts, weakens in others, and is read so differently by different residents of the city.

The Practice and Perception of Misuh in an Increasingly Heterogeneous Society

Misuh continues to appear in various corners of the city, particularly in written warnings that contain elements of threat or stern admonition. Such messages are typically posted in front of urban residential areas or narrow alleyways that function as everyday social interaction spaces. Their presence cannot be understood simply as spontaneous emotional outbursts. Instead, they represent deliberate forms of social communication designed to achieve specific functions. In this context, *misuh* operates as a rhetorical strategy used to capture attention, assert social boundaries, and exert psychological pressure on readers to comply with expected norms. In other words, *misuh* functions as a mechanism of informal social control, working through linguistic intensity and the emotional impact it produces.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through Gumperz's (1992; 1993; Gordon, 2011) concept of contextualization cues. Language in public spaces does not merely convey literal meaning. It also signals how a message should be interpreted by its reader. In Surabaya, the use of *misuh* in public advertisements serves as a contextual marker that heightens the sense of urgency, social proximity, and moral seriousness. Harsh words signal that the violation in question is not trivial but a matter of genuine concern for local residents. This finding directly answers the first research question, since it shows that in a heterogeneous society *misuh* is still

practiced as a locally coded signal of seriousness, but that its success depends entirely on whether the reader shares the interpretive code the writer assumes. Where that code is shared, as it typically is among long-term residents, the harsh wording is read as concern rather than hostility. Where it is not shared, as is increasingly the case in a plural city, the same signal risks being misread, which is precisely the tension this study sets out to investigate.

Austin's (Allan & Asher, 1997; Leilei & Chunfang, 2023) speech act theory further illuminates the social function of *misuh*-based messages. Language, in this view, is not only descriptive but performative. Written advertisements containing *misuh* do not simply inform. They perform acts of warning, reprimanding, or threatening, all intended to change behavior. Thus, *misuh* becomes part of a performative repertoire with direct social consequences, and its perceived legitimacy in a heterogeneous society depends on whether the audience recognizes the illocutionary force behind the words rather than just their surface rudeness.

The Persistence and Declining Effectiveness of Misuh-Based Admonitions

The second research question asks whether *misuh*-based admissions are still considered effective. The findings suggest a more complicated answer than a simple yes or no. *Misuh* has not vanished from Surabaya's linguistic landscape, and it continues to be produced by residents who believe it works. At the same time, several respondents indicated that its performative force has weakened over time. This decline can be explained through three complementary theoretical frameworks: Foucault's power-knowledge paradigm, behaviorist reinforcement theory, and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic capital. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive account of how social change, power structures, and cultural

dynamics shape the effectiveness of linguistic practices in Surabaya.

From a Foucauldian perspective (Harris, 2011; Turkel, 1990; Spierenburg, 2004), power operates effectively only when it is supported by systems of surveillance and known sanctions. *Misuh*-based admonitions attempt to produce effects of power through language alone. Without supporting mechanisms, whether from residents or formal authorities, their performative force diminishes. Repeated violations without consequences generate a new form of knowledge among would-be offenders: that the prohibited behavior will not actually be punished. As a result, *misuh* gradually loses its legitimacy as an instrument of informal social control, even where it continues to be displayed.

Behaviorist theory (Burhanuddin et al., 2021; Anastasie & Cyprien, 2021; Ajdini, 2021) offers a complementary explanation for this decline. Harshly worded admonitions fail to produce the expected negative reinforcement when offenders face no real consequences for ignoring them. Meanwhile, the writers of such messages experience a kind of punishment themselves, in the form of frustration or helplessness, when their warnings go unheeded. This discourages residents from continuing to write or repost such messages over time. At the same time, offenders receive positive reinforcement whenever they continue to litter or violate norms without repercussions, which further entrains the ineffectiveness of the message. Moreover, *misuh*, which previously received positive reinforcement within Surabaya's cultural context, increasingly encounters social sanctions as newcomers with different norms of politeness enter the city and read the same words as simple aggression rather than accepted local practice.

Bourdieu's framework further expands this analysis by showing how changes in Surabaya's social arena and shifts in symbolic legitimacy reshape linguistic practices (Bourdieu, 1991;

Fowler, 2020; Hanks, 2005). The growing presence of newcomers, who bring different habitus and different forms of symbolic capital, redefine what is valued in everyday social interaction. In an environment that increasingly prioritizes professionalism, politeness, and a modern civic identity, *misuh* loses its status as a legitimate form of expression among at least part of the audience it reaches. It is no longer read universally as a marker of local intimacy but, for a growing share of residents, as a communicative style that is incompatible with emerging dominant norms. This answers the second research question by showing that the effectiveness of *misuh* is not uniform across the city's population. It remains effective within the interpretive community that shares its cultural code, but its force is weakening at the level of the city as a whole.

Newcomers' Interpretation of Misuh: From Solidarity Marker to Perceived Aggression

The third research question concerns how newcomers interpret *misuh*-based expressions, and the findings here are the clearest evidence of a widening interpretive gap. From the perspective of linguistic anthropology, Duranti (2011; 2005; 1997) argues that forms of communication considered rude in one culture may serve legitimate social functions in another. In Surabaya, *misuh* is often understood by long-term residents as an expression of honesty, spontaneity, and social closeness. Its use in public admissions can therefore be seen as a culturally grounded adaptation to the need for regulating communal spaces. It reflects a communication style that is egalitarian, direct, and unembellished, traits closely associated with the “*arek Suroboyo*” identity. For someone raised within this code, a harshly worded sign functions less as an insult and more as a familiar, almost affectionate, form of civic reminder.

Newcomers, however, typically approach the same message without access to this shared code. Because they

lack the cultural and historical grounding that allows *jancuk* or *asu* to be read as intimacy rather than insult, they are far more likely to interpret such signs literally, as verbal aggression directed at them personally. This divergence can be understood through Linguistic Accommodation Theory (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991), which posits that speakers tend to adjust their linguistic style to achieve social convergence with a wider or more diverse audience. In a city that is becoming increasingly pluralistic, the use of *misuh*, once considered normal and culturally appropriate within local communities, becomes less effective precisely because not all cultural groups understand or accept such communicative norms. As a result, some residents have begun adopting more neutral and inclusive linguistic forms in public admissions, in order to avoid misunderstanding and to maintain social harmony with an audience that now includes strangers to the local code. This finding suggests that the interpretive gap identified in this study is not merely a matter of individual sensitivity but a structural consequence of a city whose audience for public language has expanded far beyond the community that originally produced the code.

Cultural Diversity and the Social Legitimacy of Misuh as a Hallmark of Surabaya

The fourth research question asks whether cultural diversity undermines the social legitimacy of *misuh* as a hallmark of Surabaya's communicative style. The findings suggest that legitimacy is being renegotiated rather than simply lost. The emerging awareness among residents that harshly worded admonitions may project a negative image of the community can be explained through the concept of language ideology (Schieffelin et al., 1998; Woolard, 1992). Language ideologies refer to socially shared beliefs about what constitutes proper, polite, or civilized language, and these beliefs are never fixed but shift as a community's

self-image changes. As Surabaya develops into a modern urban center, residents appear to internalize new ideologies that associate linguistic politeness with an urban, respectable identity. This shift reflects a broader cultural revaluation in which *misuh* is no longer seen universally as an expression of honesty or spontaneity but, for a growing portion of the population, as a potential marker of disorderliness or backwardness.

This revaluation is reinforced by changes in urban governance. The modernization of urban governance and the increasing role of state apparatus in regulating public space can be understood through Foucault's (Villadsen, 2015; Lorenzini, 2023) concept of governmentality. Modern governance regulates citizen behavior not only through law but also through infrastructure, surveillance technologies, and spatial regulation. The presence of official signage, CCTV cameras, and formal reporting mechanisms reduces the need for residents to assume the role of informal enforcers through personally written admissions. In this sense, linguistic authority in public space is gradually shifting from individual residents to formal institutions, which renders them less necessary, and by extension less legitimate, as a tool of informal social control. Taken together, these findings indicate that cultural diversity does not eliminate the legitimacy of *misuh* outright. Instead, it narrows the social space in which *misuh* is read as legitimate, confining that legitimacy increasingly to intra-community contexts while eroding it in the broader, plural public sphere.

Misuh as an Indicator of Broader Transformations in Values, Norms, and Social Structure

The fifth research question asks how these changes in the use and reception of *misuh* reflect broader transformations in Surabaya's values, norms, and social structures. The evidence discussed above suggests that

misuh functions here as a diagnostic case rather than an isolated curiosity. Language does not merely follow social change passively. It also serves as a sensitive and early indicator of how a community's values are shifting, often before those shifts are visible in formal institutions or policy. The decline of *misuh* in public admonitions reflects at least three overlapping transformations: demographic change brought by sustained migration, a shift in language ideologies toward urban respectability, and the increasing institutionalization of public space through formal surveillance and governance. Each of these transformations independently reduces the social utility of *misuh*, and their combined effect explains why the practice, while not extinct, occupies a narrower and more contested place in the city's linguistic landscape than it once did.

This broader transformation is also visible in the spatial migration of *misuh* itself, from static surfaces such as walls and fences toward mobile media such as truck bodies. From the perspective of linguistic landscape studies (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Dagenais et al., 2008), public space is an arena where language is displayed, negotiated, and contested, and trucks function as mobile semi-public spaces that extend linguistic reach beyond fixed geographic boundaries. While *misuh* was once tied to specific local contexts, such as a particular neighbourhood or alleyway, it now circulates across cities and provinces, becoming part of a broader and more heterogeneous linguistic landscape than the one in which it originated. Butler's (McKinlay, 2010) theory of performativity is useful here, since it highlights that language is not merely communicative but constitutive of identity. Writings on trucks, including those containing *misuh*, serve as performances of social identity by drivers or vehicle owners, who project personas that may be masculine, humorous, religious, critical, or provocative. *Misuh* thus becomes part of

a deliberate identity construction enacted in public view, rather than a strictly local mechanism of social regulation.

Read alongside Hebdige's (2012) account of subcultural expression, these mobile displays of *misuh* can be understood as a form of subtle resistance to mainstream norms of politeness, one that simultaneously fosters internal solidarity among transportation workers and other groups who use similar linguistic displays. This is compounded by what Jacquemet describes as linguistic deterritorialization, in which language becomes detached from specific spatial contexts. When *misuh* relocates from a residential wall to a truck, it loses its anchoring in a particular local community and becomes part of a more fluid, trans-local communicative flow. This shift represents more than a change in physical location. It represents a transformation in the social function of *misuh* itself, from a tool of localized social control to an expression of identity, humour, critique, and even spirituality within a broader and more dynamic public sphere.

Finally, this transformation must be read against the backdrop of Surabaya's demographic pluralism. As the city evolves into one of Indonesia's most advanced metropolitan centres, it has become home to Madurese, Javanese, Chinese-Indonesian, Batak, Bugis, Minang, and migrant communities from Eastern Indonesia, among others. This demographic diversity introduces new cultural norms, linguistic expectations, and standards of politeness that reshape everyday communication practices well beyond the specific case of *misuh*. Words once understood locally as expressions of intimacy or spontaneity are increasingly interpreted differently by newcomers unfamiliar with the local cultural code, and for some migrants *misuh* is perceived as verbal aggression rather than egalitarian communication. These divergent interpretations create ongoing symbolic tension, which in turn

shapes how local residents adjust their communicative behaviour in public.

As a result, the use of *misuh* in written admonitions is subject to continual reconsideration, particularly once its audience is no longer limited to the local community that produced it. In this sense, Surabaya's pluralism does more than simply add new voices to an existing linguistic landscape. It actively transforms how local linguistic practices such as *misuh* are negotiated, preserved in some contexts, and abandoned in others, offering a concrete illustration of how urban language change and urban social change move together rather than in separate tracks.

CONCLUSION

This study of the use of *misuh* in public advertising in Surabaya reveals a complex set of sociolinguistic dynamics that reflect broader transformations in social structure, cultural values, and mechanisms of social control within an increasingly modern urban environment. The findings demonstrate that *misuh*, once an integral component of the egalitarian communicative style characteristic of Surabaya's local identity, has undergone a significant repositioning in both meaning and function as the city expands and its population becomes more diverse.

First, the declining frequency of *misuh*-based public signage indicates a shift in communicative norms. In an increasingly plural society, *misuh* is no longer perceived as an effective or inclusive mode of expression. Linguistic Accommodation Theory suggests that speakers adjust their language to align with more heterogeneous audiences. This implies that local linguistic practices must negotiate with new norms introduced by migrants, resulting in a partial loss of *misuh*'s social legitimacy.

Second, changing perceptions of *misuh* are shaped by emerging language ideologies within modern urban society. Growing awareness that harsh language may project a negative image of the community has encouraged residents to

adopt more polite and formal communicative forms. This shift aligns with broader ideological trends that value civility and professionalism in Surabaya's social arena.

Third, the modernization of urban governance and the expanding role of formal institutions in regulating public space have diminished the function of *misuh* as an informal mechanism of social control. With the proliferation of official signage, CCTV surveillance, and formal reporting systems, residents no longer rely on personally crafted, harshly worded warnings to enforce norms. A Foucauldian analysis suggests that without effective systems of surveillance, the threats embedded in *misuh* lose their disciplinary power.

Fourth, the migration of *misuh* to new mediums, such as truck bodies, indicates not disappearance but transformation. From a Bourdieusian perspective, shifts in the social arena have altered the distribution of symbolic capital: *misuh* loses legitimacy in formal public spaces yet persists within subcultures that maintain different communicative habits.

Overall, this study affirms that *misuh* is not merely a linguistic artifact but a meaningful indicator of broader social change. It reflects ongoing negotiations of identity, shifting power relations, and evolving value systems within a rapidly developing and increasingly multicultural Surabaya.

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