

## **Address Terms in the Bolango Language in Tolondadu Village, Bolaang Uki District**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Previous studies have examined address systems in several Indonesian regional languages; however, systematic documentation of address terms in the Bolango language, particularly within the sociocultural context of Tolondadu Village, remains limited. This gap highlights the need for in-depth analysis to clarify the forms and communicative functions of Bolango address terms and to contribute to local language preservation efforts. This study aims to describe the types of address terms and their functions in the Bolango language. The theoretical framework employed is sociolinguistic theory, particularly Koentjaraningrat's classification of address terms (in Karel, 2022:23), which categorizes address terms into three types: personal name address terms, kinship address terms, and non-kinship address terms. This research applies a qualitative descriptive method with a sociolinguistic approach. The data consist of spoken utterances containing address terms produced by the community of Tolondadu Village. The study involved 15 informants, consisting of native speakers representing family members, community leaders, religious figures, traditional authorities, and general community members. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, listening, recording, note-taking, and documentation techniques. The findings indicate that address terms in the Bolango language consist of personal name address terms, kinship address terms, and non-kinship address terms. Kinship address terms are the most dominant and are frequently extended beyond biological relationships to express respect and solidarity. Non-kinship address terms are mainly used in religious, customary, and formal social domains. Furthermore, address terms function to express respect, intimacy, and politeness, as well as to initiate and maintain effective communication. Their use is strongly influenced by age, social status, and the social relationship between speakers and addressees. In conclusion, the Bolango language possesses a diverse and culturally embedded system of address terms that reflects social hierarchy, solidarity, and community values. This study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship and supports the

documentation and preservation of the Bolango language for future generations.

**Keywords:** Address Terms; Bolango Language; Sociolinguistics; Tolondadu Village

## INTRODUCTION

Language functions as the primary medium of human communication through which individuals convey ideas, emotions, and social intentions. In sociolinguistic studies, language is not merely viewed as a system of sounds but also as a reflection of social structure and cultural values within a community. One important linguistic element that illustrates social relationships is the use of address terms. Address terms regulate interaction, express politeness, and signal relative status and intimacy between speakers (Ronald Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015; Janet Holmes, 2013).

Address terms are linguistic forms used to call, refer to, or greet someone in communication. Their use is closely related to social norms such as age, social status, kinship relations, and degree of familiarity between interlocutors. In many Indonesian speech communities, address systems are culturally embedded and function as markers of respect, solidarity, and social distance. Therefore, the study of address terms provides valuable insight into the social organization and cultural values of a community.

The Bolango language, spoken in parts of North Sulawesi, including Tolondadu Village, Bolaang Uki District, represents one of Indonesia's local linguistic identities. Like many regional languages in Indonesia, Bolango exists within a multilingual environment where Indonesian functions as the national and educational language. This sociolinguistic situation creates dynamic patterns of language maintenance and shift.

Several previous studies on Bolango have focused primarily on phonology, morphology, or general language description. However, no previous study has systematically examined the classification, contextual distribution, and communicative functions of address terms in the Bolango language within a specific sociocultural setting such as Tolondadu Village. Moreover, earlier research has not analyzed how address terms operate across religious, customary, and everyday social domains, nor has it explored their pragmatic functions in maintaining social harmony. This lack of focused sociolinguistic documentation constitutes a clear research gap.

In addition, recent empirical studies on minority and regional languages in Indonesia indicate a growing tendency toward language shift among younger generations due to formal education, urbanization, and increased exposure to Indonesian and digital media (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). These studies show that younger speakers often reduce the use of

traditional linguistic forms, particularly culturally marked expressions such as honorifics and kinship-based address terms. Such patterns have also been observed in several eastern Indonesian languages, where simplification of address systems signals broader sociolinguistic change.

Although anecdotal observations in Tolondadu Village suggest that younger speakers increasingly prefer Indonesian forms of address in formal and semi-formal interactions, there has been no empirical investigation documenting this tendency within the Bolango-speaking community. Without systematic research, it is difficult to determine whether traditional Bolango address terms remain robust or are gradually diminishing in use. Therefore, this study aims to describe the types of address terms used in the Bolango language in Tolondadu Village and to analyze their meanings and communicative functions within different social domains. By explicitly documenting the structure and usage patterns of Bolango address terms, this research not only fills an existing gap in sociolinguistic scholarship but also contributes to broader efforts in language documentation and preservation in Indonesia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sociolinguistics examines the dynamic interface between language and society, analyzing how linguistic forms reflect and reinforce social structures (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Within this field, *address terms* occupy a central role because they encode social meanings related to status, intimacy, solidarity, and politeness (Holmes, 2013; Zhang & Hu, 2021). Address terms not only identify interlocutors but also index the relationships between speakers in contextually sensitive ways.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Address Terms**

#### **Traditional Conceptualizations**

Classical sociolinguistic theories classify address terms based on structural categories such as kinship, personal names, titles, and non-kinship designations (Holmes, 2013). These classifications have provided foundational taxonomies for understanding address systems in many languages. However, while traditional taxonomies describe what forms exist, they often do not critically interrogate *why* certain forms vary across social contexts, or how changes in social norms influence address behavior over time.

#### **Language Contact and Address Variation**

Language contact and multilingualism are central in understanding address term variation, particularly in minority or regional languages. UNESCO (2021) and the Indonesian Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (2023) report increasing language shift among younger speakers due to formal education, urban migration, and digital media exposure. In such contexts, younger speakers may adopt

simplified or hybrid address forms, gradually reducing the complexity of traditional systems (Smith, 2024).

### **Sociolinguistic Implications**

This literature suggests two important theoretical implications relevant to the current study. First, address systems are influenced by sociolinguistic ecology, meaning the multilingual environment in which speakers negotiate identity and politeness norms across languages. Second, intergenerational differences in address term use can signal ongoing shifts in language attitudes and community values. These insights challenge earlier assumptions that address systems are stable and merely reflect fixed cultural norms. Instead, they position address terms as actively negotiated resources within changing sociocultural landscapes.

### **Gaps in Existing Literature**

Although much research has described address systems in languages such as Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese (Holmes, 2013; Li & Wu, 2022; Zhang & Hu, 2021), there is still limited sociolinguistic research that critically examines address terms in Indonesian regional languages. In particular, studies rarely explore their pragmatic functions, interactional variability, and broader sociocultural influences. Furthermore, existing work on Bolango has mainly focused on phonological, morphological, or lexical description, without providing a detailed sociolinguistic analysis of address behavior. This review reveals a need for research that analyzes address terms not only structurally but also functionally within interaction, considers sociolinguistic forces such as multilingualism and language shift, and documents address systems in understudied regional languages like Bolango within specific socio-cultural contexts. The present study responds to these gaps by combining structural description with functional analysis, situating Bolango address terms within broader sociolinguistic processes.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Sample**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the use of address terms in the Bolango language within its natural sociocultural setting. The research was conducted in Tolondadu Village, Bolaang Uki District. The study involved 15 informants who are native speakers of Bolango and actively use the language in daily communication. The informants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as language proficiency, active usage, and willingness to participate. Demographically, the participants were categorized into three age groups: five informants aged 18–30 years, five aged 31–50 years, and five aged over 50 years. The sample consisted of eight females and seven males representing various social roles, including family members, community leaders,

religious figures, customary authorities, and general community members. This composition ensured variation in terms of generation, gender, and social roles.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The data consisted of spoken utterances containing address terms collected through multiple techniques, including participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, listening, recording, note-taking, and documentation. Natural conversations were observed in various contexts such as family interactions, religious activities, customary events, and general community settings to capture authentic language use. In addition, interviews were conducted to clarify meanings, contextual usage, and sociocultural considerations influencing the selection of address terms. All recorded data were transcribed and systematically organized to facilitate analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied methodological and source triangulation by combining multiple data collection techniques and involving informants from diverse demographic backgrounds. Member checking was conducted by confirming preliminary interpretations with selected participants. In addition, peer debriefing with fellow linguists was carried out to refine data categorization and minimize researcher bias.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of data collected from 15 informants yielded a total of 126 address-term occurrences across family, religious, customary, and general social interactions. These were classified into three categories: kinship address terms (68 occurrences / 54%), personal name address terms (34 occurrences / 27%), and non-kinship address terms (24 occurrences / 19%). The frequency distribution indicates that kinship forms dominate the Bolango address system, reflecting the community's strong orientation toward familial and hierarchical relationships.

Personal name address terms (27%) were commonly used among peers and close relatives, particularly among speakers aged 18–30 years. These forms often appeared in shortened or modified versions of proper names to signal intimacy and familiarity. For example: “*Yu, mai no ’u momoli buku te sekolah.*” (Yu, please bring my book to school.) In this utterance, *Yu* a shortened form of *Ayu* functions as an informal marker of closeness. Such usage was predominantly observed in casual, low-formality contexts where social distance between speakers was minimal.

Kinship address terms constituted the most dominant category (54%), appearing in both nuclear family interactions and extended community settings. Terms such as *mama*, *papa*, and *yama* were frequently used not only for biological relatives but

also metaphorically for older community members. For instance: “*Yama, tolong ajari kita doa ini.*” (Father, please teach us this prayer.) Here, *yama* expresses respect and hierarchical positioning. The extension of kinship terms beyond blood relations demonstrates their role in reinforcing solidarity and cultural norms of deference toward elders.

Non-kinship address terms (19%) were primarily found in formal or semi-formal domains, especially religious and customary contexts. These forms include institutional or role-based titles such as *imam* or *pa imam*. An example is: “*Pa Imam, boleh kami mulai kegiatan?*” (Mr. Imam, may we begin the activity?). This form combines an honorific prefix with a religious title, signaling institutional respect and authority. Compared to kinship forms, non-kinship address terms occurred less frequently and were mostly produced by adult and older speakers.

Functionally, the data indicate that address terms in Bolango serve to express respect, signal intimacy, manage hierarchy, and maintain communicative harmony. The quantitative dominance of kinship terms supports the view that the Bolango address system is culturally kinship-centered. However, younger speakers demonstrated fewer uses of extended kinship and traditional role-based forms, suggesting early signs of simplification influenced by Indonesian language practices. These findings reveal both the structural richness of the Bolango address system and emerging sociolinguistic shifts within the community.

The present study’s finding that kinship address terms are the most dominant category within Bolango comprising 54 % of total occurrences—aligns with patterns observed in other Indonesian language communities where kinship forms convey respect, hierarchy and social cohesion. For example, research on the Buol language shows that address forms such as kinship and names are shaped by social position and age, and that younger speakers’ use varies according to context and familiarity, similar to Bolango (Laindjong et al., 2025). Likewise, studies on Malay address terms in Marok Kecil found that kinship and social hierarchy factors influence address selection within the family domain. These parallels suggest that across eastern and western Indonesian speech communities, kinship-oriented address systems continue to function as central sociolinguistic resources that index respect and solidarity.

While earlier descriptive studies in Indonesian contexts often treat address terms at the level of *form and frequency*, the findings in this study extend those insights by demonstrating how Bolango address terms are pragmatically applied across domain boundaries family, religious, customary, and general social interactions. For example, the use of *pa imam* in formal religious settings echoes observations from Bali where role-based and hierarchy terms signal institutional authority. In the Sudaji Balinese context, address terms like titles and power-based forms act similarly to negotiate social distance and maintain respect in communal interactions. This comparison underlines that beyond family kinship, role-specific

and hierarchical address terms are important in many Indonesian sociolinguistic systems.

Moreover, the relative decline in extended kinship and traditional non-kinship forms among younger Bolango speakers resonates with broader sociolinguistic shifts reported in other local language environments. For instance, Minangkabau research shows intergenerational variation in traditional kinship terms, with younger speakers increasingly influenced by wider social environments in their choice of address terms. Similarly, research on Sasak address terms indicates that sociolinguistic change, including external influence and changing social networks, affects the frequency and form of address term use. These patterns suggest that indigenous address systems across Indonesia are experiencing comparable pressures from broader linguistic contact and modern sociocultural dynamics.

Importantly, the Bolango data add pragmatic depth to the literature. Previous work on Indonesian address terms often quantifies forms (e.g., Balinese or family kinship terms) without situating them within functional continua of *power–solidarity negotiation*. In contrast, Bolango address term usage not only confirms hierarchical alignment (respect for elders) but also illustrates how social solidarity is constructed through extended kinship address use even outside biological contexts. This mirrors findings in some Indonesian and ethnolinguistic settings where address terms extend beyond kin boundaries to enact communal inclusion, even as sociocultural values adapt.

In sum, this study contributes to the Indonesian sociolinguistic canon by bridging structural description with functional analysis, showing that Bolango address forms are not merely lexical categories but active tools for negotiating social relationships across domains. By comparing Bolango to other regional address systems and including both generational and domain-specific variation, the study strengthens the scholarly contribution on how local address systems persist, change, and interact with broader Indonesian linguistic ecologies.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Bolango language in Tolondadu Village possesses a structured and culturally embedded system of address terms consisting of personal name, kinship, and non-kinship forms. Among these, kinship address terms are the most dominant and frequently extended beyond biological relationships to express respect, solidarity, and social hierarchy. The use of address terms is influenced by age, social roles, and communicative domains, reflecting the community's strong orientation toward relational harmony and cultural values.

At the same time, the findings indicate early signs of simplification among younger speakers, particularly in the reduced use of extended kinship and traditional role-based forms. This suggests that while the Bolango address system remains functional and meaningful, it is experiencing gradual sociolinguistic pressure

within a multilingual environment. Thus, address terms in Bolango do not merely function as linguistic labels but serve as symbolic markers of identity, hierarchy, and communal cohesion.

A practical implication of this study is the need to integrate traditional Bolango address terms into local educational and cultural preservation programs, such as incorporating them into village-based language learning activities, storytelling sessions, and school cultural curricula. By actively teaching and modeling culturally appropriate address forms to younger generations, community leaders and educators in Tolondadu Village can strengthen intergenerational transmission and help sustain the linguistic and cultural identity embedded in the Bolango address system.

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