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The Stigmatization of *Ngapak Dialect*: A Case Study of Ngapak Students in Semarang

Yoga Andika Saputra^{1*}, Harto Wicaksono²

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia.

* Correspondence author: yogaandikasapoetra@students.unnes.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's linguistic diversity is under threat, with a steady decline in the use of local languages despite constitutional protections. In urban centers like Semarang, dialects such as Ngapak face social stigma, leading migrant students to adjust their speech patterns. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on speech strategies, this study examines deeper sociolinguistic issues, including dialect stigma and language-based marginalization. Using qualitative case study approach, this study was conducted in Semarang Central Java. Data were collected through semi-structured interview with 20 participants, observation, social media analysis, and online surveys. They were then categorized using the CAT framework and compiled into a comprehensive research report. The findings show that stigmatization is rooted in historical, institutional, and popular factors. Ngapak students employ convergence, divergence, and maintenance strategies depending on context and interlocutor, with a stronger tendency toward convergence. These strategies influence how they are perceived and socially integrated. In conclusion, their communication strategies reflect their efforts to navigate stigma, negotiate identity, and maintain linguistic pride within a linguistically diverse campus environment.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is home to a linguistic diversity, with over 600 local languages spoken nationwide. Although there are constitutional guarantees that formally protect this national heritage, including Government Regulation No. 57/2014, the reality is far more concerning. Many of these languages are now under threat, with some

even facing the risk of extinction. The 2020 census recorded that 74.77% of the population used local languages daily, a decline from the 79.64% reported in 2010 (BPS, 2024:57). This decline reflects an earlier UNESCO report, which found that 31 of the 139 languages in Indonesia were already classified as critically endangered (Moseley & Alexandre, 2010:52–55). Although there is no explicit state-sponsored discrimination against local languages, the exclusive use of Indonesian in formal education and the lack of attention to heritage language education have contributed to the declining use of local languages among students (Bowden, 2013:3; Fatimah et al., 2025:15–22). Not only has the lack of educational support for local languages contributed to their endangerment, but the declining number of intergenerational transmissions also plays a critical role (Anindyatri & Mufidah, 2020; Zen, 2021). Beyond rural areas, urban societies also appear to contribute to this trend.

Like many urban centers in Indonesia, Semarang attracts a significant influx of high school graduates seeking better educational opportunities. Among them are speakers of Western Javanese or the Ngapak, whose dialect is phonologically distinct from the Mataraman dialect commonly spoken in the city (Sutrisno et al., 2024:7–9; see also Yannuar et al., 2022:21–24). While their presence enriches the linguistic diversity of the city's migrant population, their dialect is often stigmatized as humorous in everyday life (Anggareni & Rakhmad, 2020; Hasanah, 2021). A clear example of the stigmatization appears on a TikTok video posted by PKO B UNNES in 2024, where Mataraman students at Universitas Negeri Semarang humorously mimic their friends' Ngapak dialect. Such online mockery reinforces the prevalent stigma and pressures Ngapak students to adjust their speech patterns by conforming to more socially accepted norms, i.e., the Mataraman dialect or Indonesian. Thus, college students in Semarang form a relevant group for examining how marginalized groups, including Ngapak speakers, respond to dialect stigmatization. Migrating from a Ngapak-speaking region to Mataraman-dominated urban center places them to noticeable linguistic differences. Furthermore, campus environments have long shaped social identity, making individuals more responsive to pressures and prompting them to adapt their speech amid linguistic discrimination.

One common outcome of the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect is the social discomfort its speakers experience when they are outside their cultural region. Studies conducted at Universitas Negeri Semarang and Universitas Diponegoro revealed that Ngapak students tend to slow down their speech or code-switch between their dialect, Indonesian and Mataraman Javanese. These behaviors appear to be primarily driven by a reluctance to maintain their dialect due to feelings of embarrassment caused by the stigma attached to it (Anggareni & Rakhmad, 2020; Jumaida & Rokhman, 2020; Mujiastuti & Rahardjo, 2023). Despite potential communicative barriers, some students at Universitas Negeri Semarang continued to use their Ngapak dialect rather than make any speech adjustment. However, some found it easier to switch to Mataraman Javanese or Indonesian instead (Jauza et al., 2024). These studies found that Ngapak students employ different communication adjustments under certain circumstances.

While previous studies have discussed the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect and the adaptive behaviors of its speakers, few have framed these phenomena through a theoretical framework. This lack of theoretical framing is where Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) becomes particularly relevant. According to Giles (Dragojevic et al., 2016:36; see also Presbitero, 2021), Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) refers to how individuals modify their speech patterns to reduce social distance, either consciously or unconsciously, by adjusting their communication to one another. CAT focuses on when, how, and why people adjust their speech patterns through two strategies: converging with or diverging from their interlocutors. Pepinsky et al. (2024:2504) and Dragojevic et al. (2016:37) expand this framework by emphasizing a third strategy called maintenance, where speakers continue using their native speech patterns without any adjustment. Dragojevic's framework extends beyond these core strategies by considering the underlying motivations, adjustment dimension, and subsequent social impacts. As such, CAT will serve as the basis for examining the forms of accommodation employed by Ngapak students in Semarang and the motivations driving them.

Several studies have already applied Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to examine migrant students' speech adjustment strategies in diverse linguistic settings. Sari et al. (2019) found that most international students at Universitas Negeri Surabaya employed the negative politeness strategy or divergence to maintain their distinct identity in a foreign country. Meanwhile, Pattanese students at IAIN Tulungagung maintained their distinct non-verbal style while also attempting to converge (Jazeri & Nurhayati, 2019). Studies conducted outside Indonesia found different patterns, as Indonesian students in China tended to converge by adapting well to local norms and acquiring Chinese language grammatical structures. However, they still faced difficulties with tonal pronunciation (Jandevi & Zareen, 2020). Bibi & Hamida (2024) also found a similar pattern at Airlangga University, where most international postgraduate students adopted convergence strategies to align with Indonesian norms, despite facing significant language-related challenges. Nguyen (2021) found that Vietnamese students in Taiwan used English to bond with local students. However, they occasionally used Vietnamese to emphasize their distinctiveness. Although these CAT-based studies emphasize convergence in their findings, they have also revealed other forms of accommodation strategy, which may similarly emerge among Ngapak students in Semarang.

Both studies on the speech strategies of the Ngapak students in Semarang and the broader application of CAT offer relevant findings into how migrant students strategically accommodate their speech patterns under certain circumstances. However, they have not yet addressed deeper sociolinguistic issues such as dialect stigma and language-based marginalization. As such, this study aims to examine: (1) the sociolinguistic factors contributing to the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect; (2) the accommodation strategies employed by Ngapak students in Semarang; and (3) the social implications of these strategies. Understanding how Ngapak students respond to the stigmatization of their dialect is important

as Indonesia's local languages continue to lose their active speakers. Thus, by looking at how Ngapak students in Semarang employ communication accommodation strategies, this study aims to bridge the existing gap and offer practical insights for preserving local languages under pressure from language shift.

2. Method

A qualitative case study approach is employed to examine deeper sociolinguistic aspects arising from the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect. Although CAT began as a quantitatively driven theory, over the past 50 years, it has opened spaced for qualitative perspectives. Coolidge (in Meyerhoff, 2023:4) views CAT as a higher-order communication element grounded in complex interactions, making a qualitative approach appropriate for such discussions. On the other hand, a case study aims to understand an issue or problem through events, processes, activities, or programs involving one or more individuals (Creswell in Sinthania, 2022:69). As such, this study focuses heavily on the communication accommodation among Semarang's Ngapak students as a representative case.

This study was conducted in Semarang, which serves as the capital city of Central Java. The city has around 6 million residents who are largely Javanese, primarily belong to the Mataraman subgroup (BPS, 2025). As such, the Mataraman dialect served as the city's lingua franca alongside Indonesian. Speakers of this dialect typically pronounce "a" as /ɔ/ in both open and closed syllables, a feature commonly but mistakenly written as "o." Although Setara Institute (2024) ranked Semarang as Indonesia's fifth most tolerant city toward minority groups, such tolerance rarely includes linguistic minorities. As a result, migrant students from outside Semarang often face subtle language-based discrimination, particularly Ngapak students whose dialect retained the /a/ sound. The map in Figure 1 below illustrates the general division of Javanese dialects across Central Java. Semarang is marked in dark red and surrounded by red zones representing Mataraman-speaking regions. In contrast, the green zones indicate the Ngapak-speaking regions, which are the places where many of the migrant students originally come from.

Figure 1. The dialectal divisions of the Javanese language in Central Java



Source: Personal illustration adopted from Nothofer (1982).

Research process began by identifying sociolinguistic problems faced by Ngapak students in Semarang as the contextual basis, followed by a literature review on language stigma attached to their dialect and the application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in sociolinguistic fields. The next stage involved formulating the research problem based on the three accommodation forms of CAT: convergence, divergence, and maintenance. After formulating the research problem and study aim, the researcher developed a data collection strategy. This study also aims to apply data triangulation, a method commonly used in several CAT-based studies (see Aboba & Montgomery-Vestecka, 2023; James et al., 2023; Wahyuningtyas et al., 2023). Accordingly, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, social media content analysis, and online surveys via Google Forms. They were then categorized using the CAT framework and compiled into a comprehensive research report.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed information about participants' experiences with Ngapak dialect stigmatization and the accommodation strategies they employ. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants consent to collect verbatim linguistic data needed for CAT analysis. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and divided into two groups: 10 Ngapak students as the main participants and 10 non-Ngapak friends as supporting participants. Main participants consisted of 4 Northern Ngapak speakers, 4 Southern Ngapak speakers, 1 bilingual in Northern Ngapak and Mataraman Javanese, and 1 bilingual in Southern Ngapak and Mataraman Javanese. Half of them enrolled in public universities such as Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Diponegoro, and Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo. The rest attended private institutions, including Universitas Islam Sultan Agung, Universitas Semarang, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang. The supporting informants were either L1 speakers of Mataraman Javanese or Indonesian. Both Ngapak and non-Ngapak participants were offered to fill the aforementioned survey, which was designed to address questions that were less feasible to explore through interviews.

Participatory observation was conducted informally during interactions with participants and their friends, whether Ngapak or non-Ngapak speakers. This technique focused on capturing nonverbal behaviors and other accommodation strategies that may not be explicitly mentioned during interviews or online surveys, particularly sudden code switching and the pronunciation of certain words that do not fully align with their respective accents. Given the natural flow of these interactions, direct recording was not always possible or appropriate. Therefore, field notes were used to carefully document specific cases of accommodation strategies.

Throughout the data collection process, the study adhered to ethical principles. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, provided informed consent, and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. They could discontinue participation at any time without consequences, and only relevant responses from interviews and surveys were included in the paper, while all other data remained unpublished. Interview excerpts were pseudonymized to maintain

anonymity. The collected data were then examined using the Miles and Huberman model, categorizing information into relevant and supporting material. Relevant data were presented narratively to address how (accommodative strategies), why (affective or cognitive motives), and when (contexts or settings), while supporting information, such as online survey responses, was included in tables. Both narratives and tables appear in the second discussion section. Finally, conclusions were drawn from identified patterns, with accommodation narratives grouped into convergence, divergence, and maintenance discussions according to the CAT framework.

3. Result and Discussion

• Factors Contributing to the Stigmatization of Ngapak Dialect

The study identifies multiple interrelated factors that contribute to the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect among college students in Semarang, including its historical root during the Sultanate of Mataram rule, exclusion from formal education, media reinforcement, internalized stigma in intimate contexts, gendered experiences and socio-economic status.

Historical Roots

The stigmatization of Ngapak dialect has been prevalent since the era of the Mataram Sultanate from 1587 to 1755. The sultanate designated Ngapak regions as *Mancanagari Kilen*, or the Western Frontier Province (Purwoko, 2017). This designation contributed to their stigmatization as peripheral and alienated them from the dominant Mataraman cultural sphere in the east (Khotimah, 2017:88).

Pejorative proverbs such as “*adoh ratu, cedhak watu*” (“far from civilization, close to savagery”) and “*kebo cinancangan dadhung adhi*” (“servants bound to their masters”) emerged as ideological tools to reinforce this marginalization (Antoni & Fadlilah, 2022:78–83; Ramadhan & Masykur, 2020:105–106). The 1755 Treaty of Giyanti successfully partitioned the sultanate into Surakarta and Yogyakarta which then also perpetuated the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect. It continued even further as Indonesia gained its independence.

Educational Exclusion

In the post-independence era, the government reinforced the dominance of the Mataraman dialect through *Muatan Lokal Bahasa Jawa* (Javanese language heritage education), which mandated the use of the dialect as the sole medium of instruction. While another Western Javanese variety, known as the Cerbon dialect, enjoys curricular recognition, both from the City Government of Cirebon and the Provincial Government of West Java, its Ngapak counterpart in Central Java remains excluded (Cahyaningsih et al., 2025; Fathimatuzzahro & Wicaksono, 2024).

This early marginalization often appears in class, where Javanese language teachers from Ngapak regions consciously alter their realization of open and close /a/ syllables into the Mataraman-like /ɔ/. This practice might have ended if the Regencial Government of Banyumas had implemented its plan to introduce

Ngapak into the local curriculum. However, the plan was never implemented, at least not by 2022, when some informants had already graduated.

Media Reinforcement of Dialectal Stigma

Popular culture, including media representations, significantly reinforced the stigma against the Ngapak dialect. One example appeared in a 2024 TikTok video from PKO B UNNES, a group of Mataraman students at Universitas Negeri Semarang, who mimicked the Ngapak dialect in a humorous tone.

Television programs like *Bocah Ngapa(K) Ya* and TikTok accounts such as @rofiqkompak1 and @raflychaniag0 also portrayed Ngapak as comical and lacking seriousness (Ahdanisa & Fateah, 2024; Fiorentya & Wijana, 2025; Wibowo, 2023). The latter is particularly known for parodying Ngapak speakers who code-switch between Ngapak and Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, a phenomenon which he refers to as *bahasa Paksel*. Their portrayals collectively contribute to the stigmatization of Ngapak by influencing public perception, especially among audiences unfamiliar with the dialect, including those in campus environments.

Internalized Stigma in Intimate Relationships

Within emotionally intimate interpersonal relationships, the Ngapak dialect is often subject to internalized stigma from its speakers. For instance, ngapak students in romantic relationships often avoid using their dialect with their partners, even when both come from the same linguistic background. This avoidance emerges from the common perception that regional varieties like Ngapak lack the emotional nuance needed for romantic expressions. On the other hand, the Indonesian language has become the default “language of love” among Gen Z Javanese. As a result, both the avoidance and the preference for Indonesian further reinforce the stigma attached to the Ngapak dialect.

Gendered Experiences

While romantic contexts reflect how people viewed Ngapak as inappropriate in romantic settings, gender-related factors also shape how the stigma is experienced and responded to. Based on both interview data and Google Form responses, male Ngapak students tend to maintain their dialect more consistently than female students. Several male participants stated they were unbothered by being laughed at. In contrast, many female participants reported consciously adjusting their speech patterns to avoid ridicule. This gender-related tendency supports Kuran & McCaffery’s (2008) finding, which suggests that men are generally more tolerant of discrimination than women. It also aligns with broader sociolinguistic trends. Labov’s (1990) study found that men are more likely to use non-standard forms and show lower sensitivity to socially evaluative features, while women tend to favor more prestigious forms and respond more strongly to linguistic stigma.

Socio-economic Status

The last relevant factor is socio-economic status. Many Ngapak students from higher-income families have been exposed to Indonesian from an early age, as

their parents deliberately use it at home when speaking to them. Such early exposure leads to a gradual dialect shift or even dialect loss long before they enter university. Their family's preference for Indonesian reinforces the stigma that Ngapak is less valued, leading children to avoid using it in subsequent social settings. This factor reflects findings by Jumadi et al. (2024) and Pramuniati et al. (2019), who reported that families with higher socio-economic status in Indonesia tend to use prestigious languages such as Indonesian when raising their children. They argue that many parents choose Indonesian because the language provides wider economic opportunities.

- **How, Why, and When Ngapak Students Accommodate Their Speech**

While Ngapak students often internalize the stigma attached to their dialect, they also contribute to its reinforcement during social interactions. This section discusses the three forms of accommodation, namely convergence, divergence, and maintenance, along with the contexts and motives behind each form. As a result, convergence draws greater attention in the discussion as it is the strategy Ngapak students use most often to avoid ridicule, gain acceptance, and aligns with dominant norms.

Convergence

Ngapak students have started to converge their speech since coming to Semarang as freshmen. Convergence, as defined by Dragojevic et al. (2016:36–37) and Giles et al. (1973:178–179, 2023:4), is a cooperative accommodation form of one's speech patterns to become more similar to one's speaking partner or interlocutor. Such definition is evident in how Ngapak students in private institutions, such as Universitas Islam Sultan Agung, Universitas Semarang and Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang often alter their native /a/ vowel in open and closed syllables into Mataraman-like /-ɔ/ when speaking to their friends. Vowel alteration is the most straightforward strategy for them to adapt and avoid being laughed at due to the stigmatization of their dialect. According to the CAT framework designed by Dragojevic et al. (2016:37), their strategy falls under the upward dimension, where they shift toward the more prestigious Mataraman dialect. However, their strategy is also dimensionally partial because they can only modify vowels and cannot fully adopt features such as the accent. In terms of the reciprocal dimension, their convergence is asymmetrical since their interlocutors maintain their native dialect. These upward, partial, and asymmetrical convergent dimensions toward the Mataraman dialect indicate that students in those private institutions are primarily local. In contrast, Ngapak students in public institutions such as Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Diponegoro and Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo tend to shift toward Indonesian or Colloquial Jakartan. While convergence in both types of institutions reflects upward and partial dimensions, the pattern observed in public institutions appears symmetrical because interlocutors adjust to their speech reciprocally, particularly when using Indonesian. Nevertheless, this does not negate the prevalent stigma of their dialect as a source of ridicule. Instead, it

reinforces that local and other migrant students perpetuate such stigma, thus indirectly driving Ngapak students to converge.

Formal settings reflect stricter convergent dimensions compared to informal settings, which are more varied depending on the type of institution. Situations like lectures, internships, and bureaucratic settings typically reflect upward, nearly full and symmetrical convergent dimensions, as both Ngapak students and their interlocutors fully and reciprocally shift to standard Indonesian. Their shift toward the language is socially expected, as local languages are seen as inappropriate in such settings. The exclusive use of Indonesian in schools further reinforces negative views of local languages, including stigmatizing the Ngapak dialect. But it cannot be denied that using Indonesian facilitates mutual understanding across different linguistic backgrounds. Table 1 below shows Ngapak students' language preferences across social settings.

Table 1. Ngapak Students' Language Preferences across Social Settings

Social setting	Interlocutor	Preferred language(s)	Accommodation form(s)
Class (lecturing)	Lecturer	Standard Indonesian	Convergence
		Ngapak Javanese	Maintenance
	Non-Ngapak peer	Common Indonesian	Divergence
		Common Indonesian	Convergence
		Colloquial Jakartan	Convergence
		Mataraman Javanese	Convergence
Dormitory	Administrator	Standard Indonesian	Convergence
		Ngapak Javanese	Maintenance
	Non-Ngapak peer	Common Indonesian	Divergence
		Common Indonesian	Convergence
		Colloquial Jakartan	Convergence
		Mataraman Javanese	Convergence
Intimate setting	Parent(s)	Ngapak Javanese	Maintenance
		High register Javanese	Convergence
		Common Indonesian	Divergence
	Non-Ngapak confidant	Ngapak Javanese	Maintenance
		Common Indonesia	Convergence
		Colloquial Jakartan	Convergence
		Mataraman Javanese	Convergence
		Romantic partner	Common Indonesian
Working field	Superior	Standard Indonesian	Convergence
	Coworker	Common Indonesian	Convergence
Bureaucratic matters	Faculty	Standard Indonesian	Convergence
Casual activities	Elderly	Standard Indonesian	Convergence
		High register Javanese	Convergence
	Non-Ngapak peer	Ngapak Javanese	Maintenance
		Common Indonesian	Divergence
		Non-Ngapak peer	Common Indonesian

		Colloquial Jakartan	Convergence
		Mataraman Javanese	Convergence
Conflict response ¹	Stigmatizing speaker	Ngapak Javanese	Divergence

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Although external factors, such as the stigma, often drive Ngapak students to employ convergence, internal motives also play a significant role. According to Dragojevic et al. (2016:41–42), there are two primary motives to adjust one’s speech patterns: affective and cognitive. Ngapak students who converge their speech patterns either to gain social acceptance or assimilate into the Semarangan society are likely driven by affective motives. In contrast, cognitive motives are evident when they adjust their speech to facilitate mutual understanding. Anton’s experience illustrates both motives, as he recalled a moment when his interlocutor could not understand him due to his accent and lexical choices. He eventually adjusted his speech to be more comprehensible, which he described in the following interview excerpt:

Kan nyong njagong karo batire nyong sapa ya (sing Mataraman) tekan Batang. Pas rong obrolan pertama kuwe nyong sadar nek logat karo kata-katane nyong kuwe bedha karo batire. (Wonge) bola-bali takon maksude kiye apa, maksude kuwe apa terus ya wis nyong ganti ning basane (wonge) dicampur karo basa Indonesia.

One time I had a conversation with my (Mataraman) friend from Batang. During the first two sentences, I could not help but notice how different my accent and words were from his. (He) kept asking, What's this? What's that and that moment I decided to speak his dialect mixed with some Indonesian instead (Anton, UNISSULA Ngapak student from Kebumen).

However, the deeply rooted stigmatization attached to the Ngapak dialect remains the main factor behind their convergence. Dalia, a Mataraman informant from Semarang whose friend speaks Ngapak, further acknowledged that Ngapak sounds “funny.” Her statement shows that the stigma is not only perceived by Ngapak students, but is also perpetuated by their local Semarangan (Mataraman) friends. Over time, Ngapak students internalize this external factor. They begin to see their dialect as inherently odd and become reluctant to use it. Instead, they adopt their interlocutor's dialect, Mataraman or even Indonesian, to be accepted. This internalization motivates them to converge in ways that reflect an affective motive. Both external and internal factors are reflected in their experiences. The following excerpts show how stigma is perceived by Dalia, a Mataraman informant, and how it is internalized by Rahma, a Ngapak student, leading her to adjust her speech:

¹ This form of downward divergence typically appears as a reaction to mockery or discrimination, where speakers intentionally reinforce their dialect features (Data drawn from in-depth interviews).

Awal-awal aku ngrungokke Rahma ngomong to, menurutku deknen lucu ndeng... Ono beberapa kata sing iku ki bedho mbek logate dewe... Sing paling tak notice selain sing akhirane /-a/ ki pas deknen ngundang Pak Hadi to dadi /pak ha.di/. Nek dewe kan biasane /pa? ha.di/ to ning Semarang mbek basa Indonesia.

The first time I heard Rahma speak, it sounded funny to me... There were several words that differed between our dialects....One thing I noticed, aside from the final /-a/ vowel, was the way she pronounced our lecturer's name, Pak Hadi, as /pak ha.di/ instead of /pa? ha.di/, which is how we usually say it in Semarang and the Indonesian language (Dalia, UNNES Mataraman student from Semarang).

Sing soal Pak Hadi-Pak Hadi kuwi tela bener kan nek hurup Ngapak 'k'-ne diucapnane genah makane pas nyong ngomong 'pak' mesti nek dirungakna dadi /pak/. Weruh sih ya nek mandan lucu bahkan ketone aneh. Makane nek nyong njagong karo batire mesti ngganggo basa Jawa (Mataraman). Untunge jurusane nyong basa Jawa dadi gampang nek (arep tiru-tiru) kaya kuwe.

That Pak Hadi thing is true because for Ngapak speakers the 'k' is clearly pronounced /k/. As so (my pronunciation) of 'pak' really sounds like /pak/ and I know it sounds funny, even weird, when non-Ngapak speakers hear it. That's why when i'm with them, I use (Mataraman) Javanese and luckily my Javanese literature major leans that way so it's easier for me (to converge) (Rahma, UNNES Ngapak student from Kebumen).

Besides stigma, external factors such as the broader linguistic diversity within Semarang universities also encourage them to converge. One example is the growing number of Anak Jabo, a colloquial term for students from Jabodetabek, in Semarang. The term Jabodetabek refers to Greater Jakarta, which includes the cities of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. These students bring the Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, which also threatens the everyday use of the Ngapak dialect. The dialect is widely perceived as a prestigious speech that many Indonesian Gen Z use as a lingua franca, mainly on social media and sometimes in daily life. Besides, its status as a colloquial form of standard Indonesian, also known as *bahasa gaul*, makes it easier for non-native speakers to adopt. As a result, Ngapak students who feel reluctant to converge toward the Mataraman dialect often shift instead toward Colloquial Jakartan.

Just as Ngapak students shift toward the Mataraman dialect, those who prefer Colloquial Jakartan also show multiple dimensions of convergence. The first is upward convergence, as Colloquial Jakartan is perceived to carry higher social prestige. The most easily recognizable trait of their strategy is the use of first- and second-person pronouns like "lu-gue" (an informal way of saying "you-I") and colloquial expressions such as "anjir," "anjay" (slang exclamations similar to "damn" or "whoa"), or even the Arekan Javanese-borrowed "jancok" (a strong profanity often compared to the English 'f-word'). However, since Colloquial Jakartan is not native to them, this trait remains partial. Most still retain the phonological features of their native dialect, just as they do when shift toward the Mataraman dialect. This can be seen in Dalia's observation as a local

Mataraman speaker that her Ngapak friend continued to use the voiceless velar plosive /k/ instead of the more common glottal stop /ʔ/ when switching to Indonesian (of any variety). Such accent maintenance is evident in her friend's pronunciation of "Pak Hadi" as /pak ha.di/, rather than /paʔ ha.di/, which is common in Mataraman and Colloquial Jakartan, as well as Standard Indonesian. Furthermore, they often drop the realization of the glottal stop /ʔ/ in vowel-final content words, leaving "Bekasi" pronounced as /bə'ka.si/ rather than /bə'ka.siʔ/ or /bə'ka.siʔ/. The glottal stop, however, remains a noticeable trait in Colloquial Jakartan (see Wallace in (Kurniawan, 2023:269-270) for further explanation of /ʔ/ in Colloquial Jakartan). Another distinctive trait of their shifting strategy can be observed in pronouncing the first-person-singular pronoun "gua," which is typically realized as /g^hua/ rather than the more common /gu:a/. Interestingly, whether Anak Jabo or not, interlocutors respond positively by converging their speech to use similar lexical features and leaving some words unique to their dialect. For instance, instead of using the Colloquial Jakartan expression "kaga danta lu" (lit. "you make no sense"), which contains the culturally-bound lexeme Batavian "danta," the interlocutors tend to opt for the more widely recognized phrase "ga jelas lu." This response shows that Ngapak students' accommodation towards the dialect is dimensionally symmetrical. To summarize, their convergence is upward due to the perceived prestige of the variety; partial as they continue to maintain Ngapak's phonological traits; and asymmetrical as their interlocutors similarly adjust by using neutral lexicons.

Divergence and Maintenance

The second accommodation form in CAT is the non-cooperative accommodation strategies, which include divergence and maintenance. These two strategies are often discussed or treated as related concepts, but differ in specific ways. Dragojevic et al. (2016:37) state that divergence refers to the deliberate choice to adjust one's speech patterns to be more dissimilar from one's interlocutor(s). On the other hand, maintenance refers to continuing one's usual speech patterns without adjusting to the interlocutor(s). One example of non-cooperative maintenance is Ngapak students who maintain their dialect when interacting with non-Ngapak speakers, even when they know this may limit mutual understanding. However, not all maintenance strategies should be interpreted as non-cooperative. When two Ngapak speakers communicate using their native dialect, the lack of adjustment reflects mutual alignment rather than resistance, and thus can be considered accommodative maintenance. This mutual alignment typically occurs within students' regional associations, such as Gama Satria Banyumas or Forum Mahasiswa Tegal at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Classifying the latter as non-cooperative overlooks that, Giles in (Dragojevic et al., 2016:42) emphasizes that non-cooperative strategies highlight the difference from the out-group, not the in-group.

Divergence, like convergence, involves a range of dimensions that reflect underlying communicative motives and strategies. Ngapak students who deliberately alter their speech to be less intelligible to non-Ngapak interlocutors demonstrate affectively motivated divergence. This strategy allows them to

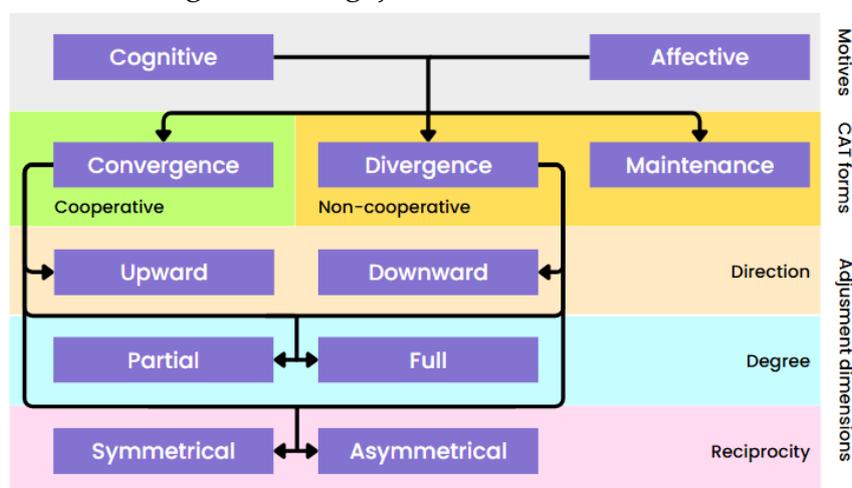
emphasize their *ngapakness* and resist the prevalent stigma. Evidence of this motivation is found in the response of a 21-year-old informant from Banyumas during the interview, when asked how she would react if someone mocked her accent. She answered in Indonesian, ending her statement with the Ngapak word *gibeng* (to punch), which marks the use of her dialect. While it remains unclear whether she has ever actually carried out such an action, the statement most likely reflects a hypothetical reaction to discriminatory behavior rather than a past event. Her response illustrates a downgrade dimension of divergence, where she deliberately employs a dialect commonly perceived as lower in prestige. In such cases, interlocutors who do not speak Ngapak are likely to respond in two ways. Some interlocutors respond with symmetrical divergence by mocking or exaggerating their native speech patterns, while others would show asymmetrical divergence by shifting their speech toward Ngapak instead. Depending on the context, Ngapak students may also fully or partially diverge. Full divergence typically occurs when they know their interlocutor understands Ngapak or feels their identity is threatened. In contrast, partial divergence emerges when they switch into Ngapak while codeswitching with the Mataraman dialect and/or Indonesian, as evidenced by the earlier example, in which the informant ended an Indonesian response with the Ngapak verb “*gibeng*” (meaning “to punch”). Although the latter dimension may reflect convergence, Dragojevic et al. (2016:38) clarify that divergence and convergence are not mutually exclusive and may occur simultaneously. Thus, Ngapak students’ divergent strategies reflect the downgrade dimension, but may vary in degree (full or partial) and reciprocity (symmetrical or asymmetrical).

Unlike divergence, maintenance does not involve dimensional complexity; it simply refers to maintaining one's native speech. This non-accommodative form typically occurs in environments where the Ngapak dialect is accepted. No specific adjustment is involved in this strategy, since maintenance refers to not altering one's speech patterns. For instance, Southern Ngapak typically continue using their dialect without adjusting when interacting with Northern Ngapaks, as most lexical differences are interchangeable and mutually intelligible. Both speakers clearly understand that “*arep*” in Southern Ngapak corresponds to “*pan*” in Northern Ngapak, which means “to intend (to do something).”

- **CAT Impacts on Ngapak Students' Social Interactions**

As previously discussed, Ngapak students demonstrate clear patterns in accommodating their speech. Motivationally speaking, both affective and cognitive motives influence their tendency to converge, diverge, or maintain their speech patterns. These accommodation forms are not mutually exclusive but are often flexible, depending on their interlocutors and the social contexts they encounter. The same applies to the corresponding accommod dimensions, which do not strictly align with any single accommodation form. While convergence is typically associated with partial shifts toward more prestigious varieties, it can also occur fully, as evident from Ngapak students' fluency in using standard Indonesian in formal contexts. In general, their accommodative dimensions can be illustrated as shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Dragojevic’s CAT framework



Source: Primary data

Given the complexity of these accommodation strategies, each comes with its own impact. Ngapak students who converge toward the Mataraman dialect or Colloquial Jakartan experience easier acceptance in various social contexts. Shifting to the Mataraman dialect allows them to avoid being laughed at when speaking their native Ngapak dialect, particularly during peer interactions. It also makes them perceived as adaptable and exemplifies the common Indonesian proverb: *“Dimana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung”* (akin to “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”). However, this often comes at the cost of alienating themselves from their cultural upbringing. For those who shift toward standard Indonesian, the accommodation tends to be limited to formal settings such as classrooms, professional environments, or administrative affairs. The adjustment does not necessarily alter their overall speech patterns in such contexts since using the language is socially expected. Shifting toward Colloquial Jakartan, on the other hand, represents a more voluntary form of convergence influenced by peer-group dynamics and the prestige attached to urban youth culture. By adopting Colloquial Jakartan traits such as using *“lu-gue”* pronouns and slang expressions, Ngapak students integrate more easily into diverse peer circles. Unlike convergence to the Mataraman dialect, which may feel imposed, convergence to Colloquial Jakartan often reflects personal choice and identity negotiation within the multicultural campus environment. However, even after this shift, the phonological differences sometimes lead others, including interlocutors and fellow Ngapak speakers, to make fun of them. Still, informants said they know when and where to adjust their speech. On the other hand, students who do not conform to urban standards will most likely engage in non-cooperative forms: divergence and maintenance. Maintaining the dialect allows them to emphasize their linguistic pride and resist the pressure to fully adjust to dominant speech norms, as does divergence. Such non-cooperative intentions are reflected in the local Ngapak proverb *“ora Ngapak, ora kepenak”* (literally, “without Ngapak, it does not feel right”), which expresses their pride toward the dialect.

Consequently, both divergence or maintenance is often perceived as a sign of being less adaptable, unfriendly, or unwilling to integrate with the host culture.

To be clear, this study shows that Ngapak students in Semarang universities employ all three communication accommodation strategies. Some converge toward Mataraman Javanese to facilitate integration into the host culture, i.e., the Semarang society. Others do so by using Colloquial Jakartan or common Indonesian when interacting with non-Javanese students and, to a lesser extent, with their fellow Javanese friends. Ngapak students may also engage in non-accommodative strategies: divergence and maintenance. The former is used to assert their *ngapakness* identity or to resist the persistent stigma attached toward their dialect, while the latter appears when they interact with fellow Ngapak students, usually within their regional student associations. In contrast, they are most likely to converge with standard Indonesian in formal settings, which is also common among college students in general. These three primary forms of accommodation are driven by cognitive and affective motivations, which shape the direction, degree, and reciprocity dimensions of either convergence or divergence as illustrated in **Figure 2**. Though not limited to these, cognitive motives appear primarily in divergence, while affective motives are more evident in convergence. Overall, these findings align with the CAT framework and address gaps in previous research, which often overlook deeper sociolinguistic aspects in CAT. Unlike prior studies that tend to focus on a single strategy, usually convergence, this study examines the deeper sociolinguistic aspects within the Ngapak migrant student community in Semarang, including the three primary accommodation forms, motivations, and adjustment dimensions.

4. Conclusion

The stigmatization of Ngapak dialect emerges from historical, institutional, and popular factors that led to social discomfort, particularly among Ngapak students in Semarang. They employed varied communication accommodation strategies: such as convergence, divergence, and maintenance, to navigate the prevalent stigma attached to their dialect. These strategies are driven by both affective and cognitive motives, where they adjust their speech to gain social acceptance, avoid ridicule, or express identity (affective), and to enhance mutual understanding in communication (cognitive).

Convergence appears to be the most common strategy, as evidenced by how they shift toward the Mataraman dialect, standard Indonesian, or Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian in formal and informal settings. Divergence and maintenance tend to emerge in response to mockery or within in-group interactions, as shown by students who reinforce Ngapak features to emphasize pride or maintain their dialect among fellow Ngapak speakers. These communication accommodation strategies have impacted how Ngapak students are perceived and socially integrated within campus environments. Convergence facilitates a better mutual understanding and aligns with dominant norms, but may lead to alienation from their linguistic roots. Divergence and maintenance, on the other hand, help them to resist linguistic marginalization.

This study solely deals with the complex sociolinguistic aspects arising from the stigmatization of Ngapak dialect. While the sampling primarily focused on Ngapak students in Semarang universities, future research could expand the sample to include Ngapak speakers in other cities or different age groups (e.g., high school students or migrant workers) to provide a broader perspective. In addition, the reliance on self-reported data from interviews and surveys may lead to recall bias and social desirability. Such limitations could be addressed by developing the surveys into quantitative approaches. Doing so would fill a gap in CAT-based dialectological research in Indonesia, where most studies, including this one, remain predominantly qualitative compared to the more quantitatively driven research conducted abroad.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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