

Foreign Language Intervention In The Use Of The Kaili Ledo Dialect In The Pombewe Village Community: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the forms of foreign language intervention in the use of the Kaili Ledo dialect in the community of Pombewe Village, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi, and to identify the factors that encourage the use of foreign language elements in everyday communication. The study employs a descriptive qualitative design within a sociolinguistic framework. The data consist of community utterances, semi-structured interviews, observations of language use, and questionnaire responses. The informants comprise community and customary leaders, parents, young people, a teacher, and a religious figure, while the questionnaire design involves 40 respondents across five age groups. The illustrative analysis shows that foreign language intervention appears mainly as the insertion of English lexical items into daily conversation, particularly in the domains of technology, social media, education, work, and youth interaction. Frequently used items include online, meeting, download, upload, chat, follow, like, share, update, and weekend. The factors behind this use include the expansion of digital technology, social media exposure, the prestige of English, educational and occupational settings, and the communicative habits of the younger generation. At the same time, Kaili Ledo remains in use within the family, customary activities, community events, and conversations with older speakers. These findings point to lexical intervention accompanied by a tendency toward a functional shift in the use of Kaili Ledo, especially among young speakers, and underline the importance of turning positive attitudes toward the language into consistent practice in the family, schools, customary life, and digital media

INTRODUCTION

Language is a central element of community life because it serves not only as a means of communication but also as a marker of social and cultural identity. In multilingual societies, language use never takes place in a closed space. Sustained contact among regional languages, Indonesian as the national language, and foreign languages gives rise to a range of linguistic phenomena, including borrowing, code-mixing, code-switching, interference, and, over a longer period, language shift (Amalia et al., 2024; Akbar et al., 2025). From a sociolinguistic perspective, these phenomena are not merely structural matters; they reflect how speakers select linguistic forms according to their interlocutors, purposes, settings, topics, and the social norms of their community. Age, education, occupation, social

proximity, and the communicative situation therefore shape language choice as much as the linguistic system itself.

The Kaili language is one of the principal regional languages of Central Sulawesi and is spoken in ten dialects, one of which is Ledo (Syamsuddin et al., 2025). Ledo has a wide geographical distribution, is commonly regarded as the dialect with the largest number of speakers, and has served as the basis for Kaili teaching materials and school-based revitalization efforts in Palu (Syamsuddin & Budiman, 2024; Syamsuddin et al., 2025). This relatively strong position, however, does not make Kaili Ledo immune to change. Recent studies report that Kaili is used less and less in both formal events and everyday interaction, that the number of speakers is declining, particularly among students, and that a growing number of speakers turn to Indonesian or to foreign languages in daily conversation (Syamsuddin & Budiman, 2024; Syamsuddin et al., 2025). In response, the Central Sulawesi Language Center and local schools have implemented revitalization programs under the national regional-language revitalization policy, while other researchers have proposed technology-based approaches to documenting and teaching the language (Gazali et al., 2023; Syamsuddin & Budiman, 2024).

These developments are directly relevant to Pombewe Village in Sigi Regency, one of the areas inhabited by the Kaili community. In this village, Kaili Ledo is used alongside Indonesian and alongside elements of other languages that residents acquire through schooling, technology, employment, social media, and interaction with people from outside the region. Digital technology has considerably widened the scope of this contact. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and various messaging applications expose speakers to foreign vocabulary on a daily basis, and because English dominates the vocabulary of digital interfaces, many of its terms enter everyday speech directly or with only minor adaptation (Indriani & Bram, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2025). Studies of young Indonesian users show that such English items are not simply copied but are also adapted morphologically and used for efficiency, humor, self-presentation, and social bonding (Stevani et al., 2026), while code-mixing on social media tends to occur most often at the word level and to serve identity and stylistic functions (Akbar et al., 2025).

Earlier research has shown that changes in Kaili language use have already occurred across several domains. A study of the language vitality of ethnic Kaili students at Tadulako University found that Kaili is used less within the family, that Indonesian and, to some extent, foreign languages have taken its place, and that this pattern is linked to prestige, function, information technology, and attitudes that favor other languages (Yunidar et al., 2023). Research in the Tawaeli community of Palu attributes the decline of Kaili as a mother tongue to weak efforts to pass the language on to younger generations, limited interest among young people, and insufficient institutional support (Syamsuddin et al., 2025). A study of Kaili-speaking mothers similarly shows that Indonesian is preferred as the household language and that the regional language is modeled only occasionally, which weakens transmission in early childhood (Al'adawiya et al., 2026). Comparable patterns of intergenerational shift have been documented among Malay-speaking families in North Sumatra (Pramuniati et al., 2025), Karonese families in Medan (Kaban, 2024), and young speakers of Skou, Tabla, and Biak in Jayapura (Mukhamdanah et al., 2025), indicating that the pressures facing Kaili Ledo are part of a broader national trend.

To interpret these phenomena, this study draws on several related concepts from the sociolinguistics of language contact. In its classic sense, interference refers to the influence of one language on another in the speech of bilingual individuals, which may surface in sounds, word forms, grammar, meaning, or lexical choice. However, not every foreign-looking element in a Kaili utterance can automatically be treated as interference. It must first be determined whether the element has become an established loanword in the speech community, whether it is inserted spontaneously, or whether it is used because a specialized term has no equivalent familiar to speakers. Lexical borrowing refers to the use of elements from another language that have become relatively conventional in the community, such as the digital terms *online*, *download*, and *upload*, and such borrowing can take the form of loanwords, loan blends, or loan shifts (Indriani & Bram, 2023). Code-mixing occurs when

elements of another language are inserted into an utterance whose grammatical frame remains dominated by a particular language, whereas code-switching is a shift from one language or variety to another across parts of an utterance or across communicative situations (Karyati, 2022; Akbar et al., 2025). In this article, the term foreign language intervention is used as an umbrella term, consistent with the title of the study, while the analysis distinguishes it from these more specific phenomena. The distinction matters because a single English word in a Kaili or Indonesian sentence is not, without its context, sufficient evidence that a speaker has fully switched languages.

The concept of language domains further explains why the same language can perform different functions in different spheres of life, such as the family, education, work, religion, and peer interaction. Recent applications of domain theory in Indonesia show that Indonesian tends to dominate formal and institutional settings while regional languages remain the norm in intimate and everyday interaction (Amalia et al., 2024), and that urbanization, globalization, and professional demands can push local varieties out of public communication (Wulandari et al., 2026). In the context of Pombewe, Kaili Ledo may function as the language of family intimacy, local identity, and customary activity, while Indonesian is used more widely in education and intergroup communication, and English terms appear mainly when speakers talk about applications, devices, work, or online activities. A domain-based reading also guards against overly simple conclusions: the frequent use of English terms in conversations about technology does not mean that English is replacing Kaili Ledo in all situations. Indications of language shift become stronger when the regional language is less frequently passed on to children, loses important domains, or is no longer chosen even when speakers have the opportunity to use it (Pramuniati et al., 2025). Language maintenance, by contrast, occurs when a community continues to use its language and transmits it to the next generation.

Language attitudes, which encompass speakers' evaluations, feelings, and behavioral tendencies toward a particular language, form the final element of the framework. A positive attitude toward a regional language can be seen in pride, a willingness to learn its vocabulary, its use in the family, and support for cultural activities, and the classic dimensions of language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of the norm remain useful lenses for analyzing maintenance. At the same time, the prestige that speakers associate with education, employment, technology, and modern lifestyles can lead them to choose a language they consider more prestigious or practical. Studies of Indonesian youth show that English on social media is valued for its power, prestige, and global reach (Ad'hani et al., 2022), and that young people who express pride in their heritage languages may still use Indonesian or English for most daily communication (Mukhamdanah et al., 2025). Among postgraduate students, favorable feelings toward local languages have been found to exceed their actual everyday use, a pattern described as non-congruence between attitude and practice (Aini & Waqqas, 2026). Statements that Kaili Ledo should be preserved thus indicate supportive attitudes, but evidence of maintenance must still be sought in daily practice, especially in parent-child communication and intergenerational language use.

Despite the growing body of research on Kaili, few studies have examined at the village level how English lexical items enter Kaili Ledo speech and how this process relates to domains of use, speaker attitudes, and the prospects of the dialect. This study therefore places contact with English within a set of driving factors, namely technology and the internet, social media, education, employment, peer groups, and prestige, which may encourage borrowing or code-mixing in particular domains. Whether these factors harm Kaili Ledo depends on whether foreign elements merely enrich the vocabulary for certain topics or also reduce the use of the regional language and its transmission across generations. Accordingly, the study seeks to describe the forms of foreign language intervention in the use of Kaili Ledo in Pombewe Village, to identify the communicative domains in which such intervention is most frequent, to analyze the factors that lead residents to use foreign language elements, and to describe community attitudes toward Kaili Ledo amid the growing presence of foreign languages. The analysis is guided by four operational indicators: the form of the foreign element (word, phrase, or expression); its source and domain of use; its pragmatic function, such as efficiency, naming a digital feature,

signaling group identity, or prestige; and the response of the interlocutor. Final classifications are determined from actual utterances and their contexts rather than from vocabulary lists alone

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a sociolinguistic approach, which was chosen because the object of study concerns the relationship between language and the social life of the community. The research was conducted in Pombewe Village, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. The site was selected because it is home to a community of Kaili Ledo speakers who are in regular contact with Indonesian and with foreign languages.

The data consist of community utterances, interview results, observation notes, questionnaire responses, and documentation of research activities. The data source is the community of Pombewe Village who use Kaili Ledo in their daily lives. Interview informants were selected to represent different social positions and generations, as shown in Table 1, while questionnaire respondents were distributed across five age groups, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Composition of Interview Informants

No.	Informant Group	Number
1	Community/customary leaders	2
2	Parents	3
3	Young people	3
4	Teacher/educator	1
5	Religious/community figure	1
	Total	10

Table 2. Questionnaire Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Number	Percentage
15–20 years	12	30%
21–30 years	10	25%
31–40 years	8	20%
41–50 years	6	15%
>50 years	4	10%
Total	40	100%

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, documentation, and the recording of naturally occurring utterances. The semi-structured format allowed informants to explain their own experiences of using Kaili Ledo, Indonesian, and foreign languages in everyday life. The interview guide is provided in Appendix 1. Data analysis followed four interrelated stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview data were transcribed and categorized according to the form of intervention and the domain of use, and were then compared with observation notes and questionnaire results to strengthen the credibility of the interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Forms of Intervention

Based on the analytical design applied to interview and observation data, the most readily identifiable form of foreign language intervention is the use of English vocabulary within Kaili Ledo or Indonesian utterances. Table 3 lists the items most frequently found, together with their meanings and domains of use.

Table 3. Examples of Foreign Vocabulary in Utterances

No.	English Item	Meaning (Indonesian equivalent)	Domain of Use
1	<i>online</i>	connected to a network (<i>dalam jaringan</i>)	technology
2	<i>meeting</i>	gathering, meeting (<i>pertemuan</i>)	work
3	<i>download</i>	to download (<i>mengunduh</i>)	technology
4	<i>upload</i>	to upload (<i>mengunggah</i>)	technology
5	<i>chat</i>	text conversation (<i>percakapan pesan</i>)	social media
6	<i>follow</i>	to follow (<i>mengikuti</i>)	social media
7	<i>like</i>	to like (<i>menyukai</i>)	social media
8	<i>share</i>	to share (<i>membagikan</i>)	social media
9	<i>update</i>	to update (<i>memperbarui</i>)	technology
10	<i>weekend</i>	weekend (<i>akhir pekan</i>)	peer interaction

The use of these items does not necessarily mean that speakers have abandoned Kaili Ledo. In many cases, the foreign words are used only for new concepts that speakers encounter mainly through technology and social media.

Interview Data

Informant 1 – Community leader

Researcher: Is Kaili Ledo still used by the people of Pombewe Village?

Informant: Yes, it is still used, especially by older people, in family activities, and in community events. Young people nowadays use Indonesian more often.

Researcher: Are foreign language words also used?

Informant: Yes. Young people usually use terms from their phones or social media, for example *online*, *chat*, *follow*, and others.

Researcher: In your opinion, what causes this?

Informant: Technology. They use their phones and social media every day, so those terms are carried over into their conversations.

Informant 2 – Parent

Researcher: Which language do you use when talking with your children?

Informant: At home it is usually mixed. Sometimes we use Kaili, sometimes Indonesian.

Researcher: Why not use Kaili all the time?

Informant: The children understand Indonesian more easily. When we use certain Kaili words, they sometimes ask what they mean.

Informant 3 – Young person

Researcher: Do you often use foreign words in conversation?

Informant: Yes, especially terms from social media and the internet.

Researcher: Could you give some examples?

Informant: Usually words like *follow*, *like*, *share*, *upload*, *download*, and *online*.

Researcher: Do you still use Kaili Ledo?

Informant: Yes. When I talk with my parents or older relatives, I usually use Kaili.

Informant 4 – Young person

Researcher: Why are English terms used so often?

Informant: Because those terms are already common in the apps. Sometimes it is quicker to say them than to look for the Indonesian word.

Informant 5 – Teacher

Researcher: How is Kaili used among students?

Informant: Students still know Kaili, but they do not use it as much as their parents' generation. At school and with friends, they mostly use Indonesian.

Researcher: Do foreign languages have an influence?

Informant: Yes, mainly through technology and social media.

Summary of Interview Themes

Table 4 summarizes the themes that emerged across the ten interviews, the number of informants who mentioned each theme, and the resulting tendency.

Table 4. Themes Emerging from the Interviews

No.	Theme	Informants Mentioning	Tendency
1	Influence of social media	8	High
2	Influence of technology	9	High
3	Use of Indonesian	10	Very high
4	Use of English terms	8	High
5	Kaili in the family	7	Moderate
6	Kaili in customary activities	9	High
7	Peer influence	7	Moderate
8	Prestige of foreign languages	6	Moderate

These data show that technology and social media are the factors most frequently mentioned by informants when they explain how foreign vocabulary enters everyday communication.

Questionnaire Results

Table 5 presents respondents' self-reported use of Kaili Ledo, Indonesian, and English terms in different settings, together with their views on the preservation of Kaili.

Table 5. Use of Kaili Ledo in Daily Life

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I still use Kaili Ledo at home	30 (75%)	10 (25%)
I use Kaili with my parents	34 (85%)	6 (15%)
I use Kaili with my peers	22 (55%)	18 (45%)
I use Indonesian more often at school/work	32 (80%)	8 (20%)
I use English terms in conversation	29 (72.5%)	11 (27.5%)
Social media influences the way I speak	31 (77.5%)	9 (22.5%)
Kaili needs to be preserved	38 (95%)	2 (5%)

Contributing Factors

Respondents were also asked to identify the factors that, in their view, encourage the use of foreign language elements. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Factors Contributing to Foreign Language Intervention

No.	Factor	Respondents	Percentage
1	Social media	31	77.5%
2	Technology/internet	34	85%
3	Education	23	57.5%
4	Peer environment	27	67.5%
5	Work	18	45%
6	Prestige of foreign languages	20	50%
7	Habitual use of digital applications	30	75%

Based on these illustrative data, technology and the internet constitute the most dominant factor, followed by social media and the habitual use of digital applications.

Discussion

Foreign language intervention in a multilingual community is a natural consequence of language contact, since speakers who command more than one language inevitably allow elements of one language to enter another. In Pombewe Village, this intervention appears above all at the lexical level. Items such as *online*, *meeting*, *download*, *upload*, *chat*, *follow*, *like*, *share*, *update*, and *weekend* are closely tied to digital life and to modern activities, and

their concentration in these domains can be explained by the need to name new concepts. Speakers interact daily with application interfaces and digital discourse in which English terms are standard, so using those terms is economical and conventional rather than a sign of rejecting Kaili Ledo. This pattern is consistent with findings that English loanwords enter Indonesian mainly through technology and social media (Indriani & Bram, 2023), that young users adopt such words for efficiency and social bonding (Stevani et al., 2026), and that code-mixing on social media occurs most often at the word level (Akbar et al., 2025). The statement of Informant 4, who explained that English terms are simply quicker to say than their Indonesian equivalents, illustrates this economy directly. Foreign language intervention in this study is therefore best understood as a symptom of language contact that may develop into language shift only if it persists and is accompanied by a reduction in the functions of Kaili Ledo.

The distribution of languages across domains is one of the most important findings of the study. Foreign elements appear mostly in the domains of social media, technology, education, work, and youth interaction, whereas Kaili Ledo retains strong functions in the family, in customary activities, in communication with parents, and in community events. Indonesian, meanwhile, dominates school and workplace communication, as reflected in the 80% of respondents who reported using it more often in these settings. Such a distribution is in line with the concept of language domains and mirrors the linguistic dualism observed in other Indonesian communities, where Indonesian prevails in formal contexts while regional languages persist in everyday interaction (Amalia et al., 2024). Kaili Ledo thus still carries identity and cultural functions, while Indonesian and English serve education, technology, work, and digital communication. Nevertheless, any claim about the strength or weakness of a given domain must be supported by systematic observation records that capture who speaks to whom, where, on what topic, and in which language, so that the domain profile rests on observed behavior rather than on self-report alone.

The domain pattern also reveals a generational dimension. Young people are the group most intensely exposed to foreign languages because they acquire English vocabulary not only through formal schooling but also through social media, online games, videos, music, applications, and the internet in general. The questionnaire figures indicate that Kaili Ledo is used with parents far more often (85%) than with peers (55%), which suggests that the dialect is becoming a language addressed upward to older generations rather than one shared horizontally among young speakers. The interview with the parent (Informant 2) points in the same direction: children understand Indonesian more easily and sometimes ask for the meaning of Kaili words, which prompts parents to mix languages at home. This finding resonates with evidence that weakening intergenerational transmission is the main threat to Kaili in Palu (Syamsuddin et al., 2025), that Kaili-speaking mothers increasingly favor Indonesian in early childhood (Al'adawiya et al., 2026), and that regional-speaking parents elsewhere in Indonesia now raise Indonesian-speaking children for economic and educational reasons (Kaban, 2024; Pramuniati et al., 2025). Young people, together with the parents who raise them, should therefore be the primary target of any revitalization effort.

The findings are also consistent with research on the language vitality of ethnic Kaili students, which links the use of Indonesian and foreign languages to prestige, function, information technology, and weakening positive attitudes toward Kaili (Yunidar et al., 2023). A notable point, however, is that the Pombewe community does not hold negative attitudes toward Kaili. Fully 95% of respondents in the illustrative data agreed that Kaili needs to be preserved, while 72.5% reported using English terms in conversation and 77.5% acknowledged that social media influences the way they speak. A person can regard Kaili as an important part of cultural identity and at the same time prefer Indonesian or English for certain communicative purposes. This gap between attitude and practice has been observed among young heritage-language speakers in Jayapura, who take pride in their languages yet rarely use them with peers or in digital messaging (Mukhamdanah et al., 2025), and among postgraduate students whose favorable views of local languages exceed their everyday use (Aini & Waqqas, 2026). Habit, convenience, the demands of school and work, and children's limited Kaili vocabulary may all explain why agreement in principle does not translate into consistent use. Positive attitudes toward Kaili Ledo therefore need

to be converted into actual practice rather than remaining statements that the language ought to be preserved, and the comparison of questionnaire answers with directly observed speech is an important direction for further analysis.

A careful reading of the data also requires a clear distinction between lexical effects and language shift. The entry of a number of English terms may indicate vocabulary adaptation, whereas language shift involves broader changes in language choice and in intergenerational transmission. In this respect, the presence of *download* or *follow* in a Kaili Ledo utterance does not by itself show that the community is moving away from its language. Stronger evidence of shift would come from comparisons across age groups, the frequency of each language at home, children's ability to understand and produce Kaili Ledo, and repeated observation within the same domains, which is why the analytical framework of this study ties lexical form to domain, function, and transmission. The sample utterances in Appendix 3 also show why linguistic verification is needed. Several of them contain Indonesian elements or items from other regional languages, such as Manado Malay or Bugis, rather than English, and therefore cannot all serve as direct evidence of foreign language intervention as defined in the title. Each example should be accompanied by its context, a speaker code, the speech situation, a transcription checked with native speakers, a free translation, and the reason for its classification, so that the Kaili Ledo forms, spelling, and meanings are accurate and each item can be reliably classified as borrowing, code-mixing, code-switching, or interference.

The functional distribution described above also suggests where preservation efforts can be most effective. Because the family remains the domain in which Kaili Ledo is used most consistently, increasing its use in parent-child communication is the most direct way to sustain transmission. Schools can complement this by integrating Kaili Ledo into local language and culture learning, building on the revitalization activities that have already been introduced in Palu through learning cards, dictionary boxes, and Ledo-based teaching materials (Syamsuddin & Budiman, 2024; Syamsuddin et al., 2025). Customary and community events, where Kaili Ledo is still strongly present, should continue to be conducted in the regional language so that young people encounter it in meaningful public settings. The same digital media that bring English into everyday speech can also be turned into a resource for revitalization: young people can be encouraged to produce Kaili Ledo content on TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, an approach that has been shown to support community-led preservation of Javanese (Anistya Ori & Susianti, 2024) and that sits alongside ritual and household revitalization in the case of Limola in South Sulawesi (Hakim et al., 2025). Technology-based tools for documentation and learning, including digital dictionaries and language applications, offer further possibilities for Kaili (Gazali et al., 2023), and the development of dictionaries, reading materials, and a mini glossary of Kaili Ledo terms for digital concepts could give speakers local alternatives without forcing them to abandon convenient English terms.

Theoretically, this study shows how language contact, domain-based language choice, language attitudes, and the maintenance of a regional language are interconnected in a single village community. The lexical intrusion of English is not an isolated phenomenon but is shaped by digital technology, by the prestige that young people attach to English (Ad'hani et al., 2022), and by the gradual weakening of Kaili in peer and household communication. Practically, the results can inform regional language literacy programs such as family conversations in Kaili Ledo, the documentation of local stories and expressions, and social media content that combines technology with the regional language without displacing its traditional domains. These interpretations, however, must be read in light of the status of the data. The source manuscript contains respondent tables, an interview summary, and interview excerpts that are explicitly labeled as examples or simulations. All figures, quotations, and informant identities must therefore be replaced or confirmed with original field data, and the number of respondents, the instruments, the dates of data collection, and the method of calculating percentages must be reported before the article is submitted for publication. The discussion presented here is an analytical development of the available design and sample data, not a claim that field data collection has been

completed, and this limitation should be stated transparently in the final manuscript.

CONCLUSIONS

Foreign language intervention in the use of the Kaili Ledo dialect in Pombewe Village occurs mainly through the entry of English vocabulary into community communication. The intervention is most closely associated with technology, social media, education, work, and youth interaction, and takes the form of lexical items such as online, chat, follow, upload, and download that name concepts encountered primarily in digital environments. The main factors driving this use are the development of technology and the internet, social media, the peer environment, education, employment, and the prestige of foreign languages, with young people being the most intensive users of foreign vocabulary because of their high level of interaction with digital media.

Kaili Ledo nevertheless continues to perform important functions in the family, in communication with parents, in customary activities, and in community life. This indicates that the dialect has not lost its functions, but that its domains of use are changing, particularly in peer interaction and in the transmission of the language to children. The strongly positive attitude of the community toward the preservation of Kaili Ledo is not yet fully matched by everyday practice, so the future of the dialect depends on turning this attitude into consistent use in the family and community, strengthening regional language learning, documenting vocabulary, developing teaching materials, and making use of digital media as a means of revitalization.

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