

## Tah, Jeh: The Pragmatic Functions of Cirebonese Discourse Particles as Identity Markers in WhatsApp Communication

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the pragmatic functions of the Cirebonese discourse particles tah and jeh in WhatsApp communication. These particles function not merely as grammatical markers but as indicators of the social and cultural identity of native Cirebon speakers. Employing a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, this study gathered responses from 15 participants representing diverse residential backgrounds and age groups (10–40 years and above). A corpus of naturally occurring WhatsApp conversations was also analysed to investigate the particles' pragmatic functions in authentic digital contexts. The findings reveal that tah and jeh fulfil three principal functions: (1) phatic particles that sustain social cohesion in digital interaction, (2) epistemic modality markers distinguishing uncertainty (tah) from affirmation (jeh), and (3) active markers of Cirebonese identity within digital communicative spaces. Mean Likert scores indicate strong consensus that these particles function as identity markers (M=4.4), are avoided in formal contexts (M=4.5), and are used more intensively in exchanges with fellow Cirebon speakers (M=3.9). The majority of respondents (12/15) identify tah as a marker of questioning or doubt, and jeh as a marker of affirmation. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on regional language maintenance in digital communication.*

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Cirebon language, WhatsApp, sociolinguistics, discourse particles, identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a social resource through which speakers construct relationships, express emotions, and negotiate identities. In sociolinguistic contexts, linguistic features often serve as markers of community membership, allowing speakers to signal affiliation with particular cultural and regional groups. Such identity construction becomes particularly evident through the use of discourse particles, which may appear semantically insignificant but carry important pragmatic and social meanings in everyday interaction (Zimmermann, 2011; Karàj, 2021).

The increasing prevalence of digital communication has significantly transformed how language is used and maintained. Messaging applications such as WhatsApp have become one of the primary platforms for interpersonal communication, enabling speakers to transfer spoken-language features into written interaction. Recent sociolinguistic research has further demonstrated that WhatsApp interactions reflect users' language styles, social identities, and interpersonal relationships, making the platform an important site for investigating contemporary language use (Crystal, 2011; Herring, 2007; Rahmawati & Djuharie, 2025).

Among the linguistic features that remain active in digital communication are discourse particles. Discourse particles are linguistic elements that contribute procedural rather than propositional meaning and assist interlocutors in interpreting utterances within specific interactional contexts. Previous studies have demonstrated that discourse particles may function as markers of speaker attitude, epistemic stance, interpersonal solidarity, and conversational management. Although they are often optional from a syntactic perspective, discourse particles play a crucial role in shaping pragmatic interpretation (Zimmermann, 2011; Karàj, 2021).

Within the Cirebonese linguistic community, the discourse particles *tah* and *jeh* constitute distinctive features of everyday communication. These particles commonly occur in informal interactions and are widely recognised by speakers as characteristic expressions of Cirebonese speech. Preliminary observations suggest that *tah* is frequently associated with confirmation-seeking, uncertainty, and interpersonal engagement, whereas *jeh* tends to function as a marker of emphasis and certainty. Beyond their pragmatic functions, these particles appear to carry social meanings that index local identity and community membership among Cirebonese speakers.

The social significance of discourse particles can be understood through the concept of phatic communion. Malinowski (1923) argues that language is not always employed to exchange information; rather, it often serves to establish and maintain social bonds between interlocutors. In digital environments, where non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and intonation are largely absent, discourse particles may perform important phatic functions by conveying interpersonal closeness and maintaining social cohesion.

Rather than being viewed merely as a technological medium, computer-mediated communication should be understood as a socially situated communicative practice in which language reflects speakers' identities, relationships, and community membership (Androutsopoulos, 2006). This perspective provides a relevant framework for examining the use of Cirebonese discourse particles in WhatsApp interactions.

This study aims to: (1) document the patterns and perceptions of *tah* and *jeh* usage in WhatsApp messages within the Cirebon community, (2) analyse the pragmatic functions of these particles in digital contexts, and (3) explore the role of these particles as sociolinguistic identity markers among their speakers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Discourse Particles

Discourse particles have attracted considerable scholarly attention within pragmatics and discourse analysis. Zimmermann (2011) defines discourse particles as linguistic elements that contribute procedural meaning and guide the interpretation of utterances within interactional contexts.

Research on discourse particles in Indonesian has shown that expressions such as *sih*, *kok*, *lho*, and *dong* carry important pragmatic functions despite their apparent optionality. Karàj (2021) argues that discourse particles contribute significantly to the interpretation of utterances in both spoken and written communication by signaling emphasis, evaluation, stance, and interactional intentions. These findings suggest that discourse particles are essential components of meaning-making processes in everyday communication.

### Phatic Communion

The concept of phatic communion was introduced by Malinowski (1923) to describe language used primarily for maintaining social relationships rather than transmitting information. According to this perspective, many linguistic expressions serve social rather than informational functions. Greetings, small talk, and conversational fillers are examples of language whose primary purpose is to establish solidarity and interpersonal connection.

Recent studies have extended the concept of phatic communion to digital communication environments. In online interactions, linguistic resources compensate for the absence of physical co-presence and non-verbal communication. Consequently, seemingly minor linguistic elements, including discourse particles, emojis, and informal expressions, often become crucial tools for maintaining interpersonal relationships and signaling social presence in computer-mediated communication.

### Discourse Particles in Cirebonese Language

Despite their frequent occurrence in everyday interaction, Cirebonese discourse particles have received limited scholarly attention. Among the most recognizable particles in Cirebonese speech are *tah* and *jeh*, both of which are widely used in informal conversations and digital communication.

According to Akbarudin Sucipto, Chairman of the Cirebon Language Institute (*Lembaga Bahasa Cirebon*), the particle *tah* is commonly used to express questioning, uncertainty, surprise, and requests for confirmation. In expressions such as *iya tah?* the particle functions as a marker of verification or confirmation-seeking, roughly equivalent to “really?” or “is that true?” in English. The particle may also serve to soften utterances and create a more conversational tone among interlocutors (Sucipto, as cited in Detik Jabar, 2023).

In contrast, the particle *jeh* is generally associated with emphasis, certainty, and affirmation. According to Sucipto, expressions such as *iya jeh* convey stronger commitment and confidence toward a proposition, functioning similarly to emphatic markers in other languages. Rather than seeking confirmation, *jeh* reinforces the speaker’s stance and signals assurance regarding the information being conveyed (Sucipto, as cited in Detik Jabar, 2023).

### Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated discourse particles and their pragmatic functions. Karàj (2021) examined Indonesian discourse particles such as *lho*, *kok*, *sih*, and *dong* in spoken and written communication and found that these particles play significant roles in expressing speaker attitudes and guiding interpretation. Similarly, Zimmermann (2011) emphasised that discourse particles contribute procedural meaning and facilitate interactional understanding across various linguistic contexts.

Research on digital communication has also highlighted the importance of linguistic markers in online interaction. Crystal (2011) argues that digital communication represents a hybrid form of language that combines characteristics of spoken and written discourse. Likewise, Herring (2007) demonstrates that

computer-mediated communication preserves many interactional features traditionally associated with spoken language, including discourse markers and pragmatic devices.

Leimgruber et al. (2021) investigated the use of discourse particles in the Corpus of Singapore English Messages (CoSEM). Their study demonstrated that discourse particles remain productive in electronic messaging and continue to perform important interactional functions despite the written nature of digital communication. However, their research focused on Colloquial Singapore English and examined sociolinguistic variation across gender and ethnicity rather than the pragmatic functions of regional discourse particles in Indonesian languages. Consequently, the use of Cirebonese discourse particles in WhatsApp communication remains largely unexplored.

### Research Gap

Although previous studies have examined discourse particles, digital communication, and linguistic identity, several gaps remain. First, existing discourse-particle research has predominantly focused on national languages or widely spoken linguistic varieties, leaving regional discourse particles underexplored. Second, studies on digital communication have generally emphasized language choice, code-switching, and identity performance without specifically examining the pragmatic functions of regional discourse particles. Third, while discourse particles have been investigated in both spoken and written communication, little attention has been given to naturally occurring WhatsApp interactions among speakers of regional languages.

More specifically, no previous study has systematically investigated the Cirebonese discourse particles *tah* and *jeh* within authentic WhatsApp communication while simultaneously examining their pragmatic functions and their role as markers of regional identity.

### METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), explanatory sequential mixed methods involve collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper explanations and contextual interpretations of the quantitative findings. This approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed not only to identify patterns of usage and perceptions regarding the Cirebonese discourse particles *tah* and *jeh*, but also to explore their pragmatic functions in naturally occurring digital interactions.

The participants of this study were native and non-native speakers of Cirebonese who were familiar with the use of *tah* and *jeh* in everyday communication. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. At the time of data collection, the survey gathered responses from 15 participants of different age groups and residential backgrounds. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions, frequency-of-use items, Likert-scale statements concerning identity and language attitudes, and several open-ended questions designed to capture participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the use of the particles. To complement the survey data, qualitative data were collected from naturally occurring WhatsApp conversations containing the discourse particles *tah* and *jeh*. The chat excerpts were obtained from participants' message histories and anonymized to protect personal identities. A corpus of screenshots and message transcripts was compiled, resulting in multiple occurrences of both particles in authentic communicative contexts. The inclusion of naturally occurring data enabled the study to examine the particles beyond self-reported perceptions and to investigate their actual pragmatic functions in digital interaction.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively using frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. Responses to the Likert-scale items were calculated to identify participants' perceptions regarding familiarity, identity, social solidarity, and formality associated with the use of *tah* and *jeh*. These descriptive statistics provided an overview of general patterns and tendencies among participants.

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis and pragmatic analysis. First, all occurrences of *tah* and *jeh* were identified and categorized according to their communicative functions. Following the framework of discourse particles proposed by Zimmermann (2011) and the concept of phatic communion developed by Malinowski (1923), the particles were examined in relation to confirmation-seeking, emphasis, interpersonal engagement, social solidarity, and identity marking. Recurring patterns were then grouped into broader thematic categories to explain how the particles function within WhatsApp communication. To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing questionnaire responses with naturally occurring WhatsApp data. The combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the pragmatic functions and sociolinguistic significance of *tah* and *jeh*. Furthermore, all personal information appearing in the screenshots and message transcripts was anonymized to maintain participant confidentiality and comply with ethical research standards.

This study employs a mixed-methods design with an explanatory sequential strategy. Quantitative data in the form of a Likert-scale survey were collected first to map patterns and perceptions of particle usage, subsequently supplemented by qualitative data in the form of open-ended respondent responses that illuminate the pragmatic functions and meanings in greater depth.

The survey instrument was distributed digitally via Google Forms between 18–25 April 2026, and succeeded in gathering responses from 15 active Cirebon-speaking participants. The instrument comprised 20 questions covering: (1) demographic and residential profile, (2) frequency of *tah/jeh* usage (Likert scale 1–5), (3) contexts of use, (4) perceptions of the function and difference between the two particles, (5) dimensions of identity and formality, and (6) open-ended questions regarding respondents' experiences and future projections.

All respondent identities were anonymised using codes (R01–R15) in accordance with research ethics guidelines. Quantitative data analysis was conducted by calculating mean Likert scores per dimension, while open-ended responses were analysed thematically using a qualitative content analysis approach.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Participant Profile

The study involved 15 respondents who identified themselves as users or speakers of Cirebonese. Participants represented diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of age, place of origin, and current residence. The majority of respondents belonged to the 10–20 age group, while others were distributed across the 20–40 and above-40 categories. Several participants currently resided outside Cirebon, including regions outside West Java, allowing the study to capture perspectives from both local residents and migrants (see Table 1). The demographic diversity of participants is important because language use is often influenced by social environment, age, and geographical mobility.

**Table 1:** Survey Respondent Profile (n = 15)

| Code | Age   | Origin                           | Current Domicile         | Tah | Jeh | Group          |
|------|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|-----|----------------|
| R01  | 10–20 | Grew up in Cirebon (moved early) | Outside Cirebon, W. Java | 3   | 3   | Friends/Alumni |
| R02  | 10–20 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Outside Cirebon, W. Java | 2   | 2   | Family/Work    |
| R03  | 20–40 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Cirebon (Regency)        | 2   | 2   | Family/Friends |

|             |       |                                  |                          |            |            |                  |
|-------------|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| R04         | 10–20 | Grew up in Cirebon (moved early) | Cirebon (Coastal City)   | 4          | 4          | Family/Alumni    |
| R05         | 10–20 | Non-Cirebon (migrant)            | Outside West Java        | 3          | 4          | Family/Friends   |
| R06         | 10–20 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Cirebon (Regency)        | 5          | 4          | Friends/Work     |
| R07         | 20–40 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Cirebon (N. Regency)     | 2          | 2          | Friends          |
| R08         | 20–40 | Grew up in Cirebon (moved early) | Cirebon (City)           | 3          | 2          | Personal/1-on-1  |
| R09         | 10–20 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Outside West Java        | 4          | 4          | Family/Alumni    |
| R10         | 20–40 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Cirebon (Regency)        | 3          | 4          | Friends/Family   |
| R11         | 10–20 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Outside Cirebon, W. Java | 4          | 2          | Friends/Alumni   |
| R12         | 20–40 | Grew up in Cirebon (moved early) | Cirebon (City)           | 3          | 2          | Personal         |
| R13         | 10–20 | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Outside West Java        | 5          | 5          | Family/Friends   |
| R14         | 40+   | Born and raised in Cirebon       | Cirebon (City)           | 4          | 4          | Family/Work      |
| R15         | 40+   | Non-Cirebon (migrant)            | Cirebon (City)           | 3          | 3          | Family/Community |
| <b>Mean</b> | —     | —                                | —                        | <b>3.3</b> | <b>3.1</b> | —                |

*Note: Tah/jeh frequency measured on a Likert scale of 1–5 (1=Very rarely, 5=Very frequently). R05 and R15 are non-Cirebon respondents (migrants). Ages above 40 are represented by R14 and R15.*

### Frequency of Use of Tah and Jeh

Survey results indicate that both discourse particles remain actively used in daily communication. The mean frequency of usage for *tah* stands at 3.3 and for *jeh* at 3.1 (on a scale of 1–5), indicating occasional to regular use. There is considerable individual variation: R06 and R13 report the highest frequency (score 5 = very frequently), while R02, R03, and R07 report low frequency (score 2 = rarely). This variation suggests that usage frequency is not determined solely by one's Cirebon background, but is also influenced by social networks, communicative context, and individual linguistic personality.

Notably, R05 and R15, the non-native Cirebon respondents, report relatively high frequency scores, indicating that *tah/jeh* may be adopted by non-native speakers who live or have lived within the Cirebon community, serving as a marker of cultural acculturation. The persistence of these particles in digital



interaction demonstrates the resilience of regional linguistic practices in computer-mediated communication (Crystal, 2011; Herring, 2007).

### Pragmatic Functions of Tah

Analysis of WhatsApp conversations revealed that *tah* performs several pragmatic functions. The most frequent function identified was confirmation-seeking. Examples such as “*ibu udah mau pulang tah?*”, “*gak jadi tah ka?*”, and “*kandangnya kebuka tah?*” demonstrate that speakers employ *tah* when requesting verification or confirmation from interlocutors. In these contexts, the particle signals uncertainty and invites a response from the listener (Zimmermann, 2011).

In addition to confirmation-seeking, *tah* functions as an interpersonal softener. Expressions such as “*harusnya bisa tah*” and “*ohh iya tah*” indicate that the particle reduces the directness of an utterance and creates a more conversational tone. A third function is its role as an attention marker: utterances such as “*sini tah*”, “*yu tah*”, and “*gas tah*” illustrate how *tah* strengthens invitations or directives while maintaining an informal and friendly atmosphere. These findings support Sucipto’s description of *tah* as a particle associated with questioning, confirmation, and interpersonal engagement (Sucipto, as cited in Detik Jabar, 2023).

### Pragmatic Functions of Jeh

The analysis identified *jeh* primarily as an emphatic discourse particle. Examples such as “*banjir jeh*”, “*enjel ikut jeh*”, and “*bisa jeh mba*” indicate that speakers employ the particle to strengthen statements and convey certainty. In these contexts, *jeh* does not seek information but reinforces the speaker’s commitment to the proposition being expressed. Furthermore, *jeh* frequently appears in contexts involving interpersonal interaction and solidarity. Expressions such as “*mba mila pagi jeh*” and “*kita pengen ning bima jeh*” suggest that the particle contributes to a relaxed and familiar communicative atmosphere, serving as an interactional resource that strengthens social relationships.

### Corpus Analysis: WhatsApp Occurrences

Table 2 presents a selection of authentic WhatsApp utterances containing *tah* and *jeh* collected from participants’ message histories, categorised by communicative function.

**Table 2: WhatsApp Corpus: Selected Utterances of Tah and Jeh with Pragmatic Functions**

| No. | Utterance (WhatsApp)            | Context / Function                                              | Particle   |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1   | <i>ibu udah mau pulang tah?</i> | Confirmation-seeking; requesting verification of departure time | <i>tah</i> |
| 2   | <i>gak jadi tah ka?</i>         | Confirmation; doubting whether a plan is cancelled              | <i>tah</i> |
| 3   | <i>kandangnya kebuka tah?</i>   | Verification of a physical state                                | <i>tah</i> |
| 4   | <i>harusnya bisa tah</i>        | Softener; mitigating assertiveness                              | <i>tah</i> |
| 5   | <i>ohh iya tah</i>              | Response particle; signals surprise and acceptance              | <i>tah</i> |

|    |                                    |                                                                   |            |
|----|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 6  | <i>sini tah / yu tah / gas tah</i> | Attention marker; reinforces friendly directive/invitation        | <i>tah</i> |
| 7  | <i>banjir jeh</i>                  | Emphatic assertion; expressing strong statement about a situation | <i>jeh</i> |
| 8  | <i>bisa jeh mba</i>                | Affirming capability with certainty                               | <i>jeh</i> |
| 9  | <i>enjel ikut jeh</i>              | Emphatic declaration; asserting participation confidently         | <i>jeh</i> |
| 10 | <i>mba mila pagi jeh</i>           | Phatic emphasis; strengthening social greeting                    | <i>jeh</i> |
| 11 | <i>kita pengen ning bima jeh</i>   | Expressive assertion; conveying desire with confidence            | <i>jeh</i> |
| 12 | <i>kenapa jeh emang nya</i>        | Rhetorical question with emphatic particle                        | <i>jeh</i> |

*Note: All utterances are anonymised. Italics indicate the particle-bearing utterance.*

### Phatic Functions and Social Solidarity

The findings reveal that both *tah* and *jeh* perform important phatic functions in digital communication. According to Malinowski (1923), phatic expressions are used primarily to establish and maintain social relationships rather than to exchange information. In the present study, both particles frequently appeared in informal conversations among friends, family members, and close acquaintances. Their presence often did not alter the propositional meaning of an utterance but instead contributed interpersonal meanings such as friendliness, solidarity, and social intimacy, compensating for the absence of non-verbal cues in digital communication (Huang & Nemoto, 2022).

### Perceptions of Identity, Intimacy, and Formality

Table 3 summarises the survey results on social perception dimensions of identity.

**Table 3: Respondent Perceptions of Tah/Jeh (Likert Scale 1–5, n = 15)**

| Statement                                                              | Mean (M) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| WhatsApp messages with tah/jeh feel more intimate                      | 3.4      |
| Can identify the sender as being from Cirebon when they use tah/jeh    | 4.4      |
| Tah and jeh are markers of Cirebon identity                            | 4.4      |
| Use tah/jeh more frequently when chatting with fellow Cirebon speakers | 3.9      |



|                                                                   |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Avoid tah/jeh in formal contexts (professional/academic)          | 4.5 |
| Use tah/jeh more frequently when feeling homesick/missing Cirebon | 3.5 |

Note: 1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree (except the intimacy item, which uses a frequency scale).

The data reveal several important findings. First, the dimensions of “can identify the sender as being from Cirebon” and “tah/jeh as identity markers” both record the highest mean scores (M=4.4), indicating strong consensus that these particles function as a linguistic badge of identity. Second, avoidance in formal contexts registers the highest score overall (M=4.5), reflecting a high degree of metalinguistic awareness among respondents. Third, the score for “use more frequently when feeling homesick” (M=3.5) confirms the presence of an affective nostalgia dimension in particle usage among Cirebon speakers living away from home.

### Perceived Distinction Between Tah and Jeh

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents’ perceptions regarding the functional distinction between *tah* and *jeh*.

Table 4: Distribution of Perceived Differences Between Tah and Jeh (n = 15)

| Perceived Difference                                   | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Tah for questioning/doubt, jeh for assertion/certainty | 12                 | 80%        |
| Tah is softer, jeh is stronger/more emphatic           | 2                  | 13.3%      |
| Both are the same; interchangeable                     | 1                  | 6.7%       |

Note: Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

Twelve of fifteen respondents (80%) perceive a clear functional distinction: *tah* for contexts of questioning or doubt, and *jeh* for assertion or certainty. This pattern is consistent with cross-linguistic analyses of discourse particles, which hold that discourse particles carry information about the speaker’s epistemic status (Zimmermann, 2011). Open-ended responses reinforce this finding: R04 states that “without *tah*, a sentence feels neutral and plain”; R06 notes it “doesn’t quite feel like a question without *tah*, as though something is missing.”

### Tah and Jeh as Markers of Cirebonese Identity

Survey responses indicate that participants strongly associate *tah* and *jeh* with Cirebonese identity. Many respondents reported that they could immediately recognize a fellow Cirebonese speaker through the use of these particles. The dimension of “using tah/jeh more frequently with fellow Cirebon speakers” records a mean of 3.9, notably higher than the general frequency of use (3.3), indicating a dynamic of in-group solidarity (Arfianingrum, 2020). Ninety percent of respondents (14/15) report that non-Cirebon speakers have at some point reacted to their use of *tah/jeh*: 50% report reactions of confusion or incomprehension, and 40% report reactions of curiosity or interest. These findings confirm that the particles carry differentiating power in cross-community communication, effectively marking their speakers as Cirebonese.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that *tah* and *jeh* are not merely grammatical residuals of spoken Cirebonese but active pragmatic tools in digital written communication. The phatic function of these particles, as theorised by Malinowski (1923), is particularly evident in the WhatsApp corpus: the particles appear repeatedly in informal exchanges among friends and family, contributing to social cohesion and interpersonal warmth without altering propositional content.

The epistemic distinction between the two particles *tah* encoding uncertainty and *jeh* encoding assertion, is broadly consistent with Zimmermann's (2011) framework, which holds that discourse particles mark the speaker's epistemic status in relation to a proposition. This distinction is further confirmed by the survey data, where 80% of respondents perceive *tah* as a marker of questioning or doubt and *jeh* as a marker of affirmation or certainty.

The high mean scores on identity-related dimensions (M=4.4) align with sociolinguistic research demonstrating that regional linguistic features function as symbolic markers of group membership and cultural belonging. The phenomenon of affective code-switching among diaspora respondents, with higher usage rates during moments of nostalgia or communication with Cirebon-based contacts, parallels findings from heritage language research on the emotional dimensions of language maintenance (Arfianingrum, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the discourse particles *tah* and *jeh* are not merely residual oral features that survive passively within digital text, but rather active pragmatic elements that fulfil at least three principal functions: (1) a phatic function, maintaining social cohesion and intimacy in digital conversation; (2) epistemic modality markers, with *tah* encoding uncertainty or questioning and *jeh* encoding conviction or assertion; and (3) sociolinguistic identity markers, functioning as a linguistic badge that signals membership in the Cirebon speech community (Malinowski, 1923; Zimmermann, 2011).

A salient finding is the strong respondent consensus that *tah/jeh* are identity markers (M=4.4) that are actively avoided in formal contexts (M=4.5) and used more intensively in exchanges with fellow Cirebon speakers (M=3.9). The shift from spoken to digital domains has not eroded the social functions of these particles; rather, it has adapted them to the new conventions of informal written communication. The phenomenon of affective code-switching among diaspora respondents, whereby the particles appear more frequently in moments of nostalgia, demonstrates that *tah* and *jeh* also function as an emotional bridge between speakers and their communities of origin, paralleling heritage language use in diaspora sociolinguistics (Arfianingrum, 2020).

Future research should expand the participant pool to include a broader age range and more non-native Cirebon speakers, and should employ multimodal analysis that captures both text and audio-visual dimensions of digital communication.

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