



LANGUAGE VARIATIONS USED BY TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS AS LANGUAGE IDENTITY IN DENPASAR, BALI

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Abstract

This study seeks to delineate the type of linguistic variations employed by transgender individuals in Jl. Bungtomo, Denpasar, Bali. This study relied on field observation, as well as interviews and recording techniques. The findings indicates that transgender language in Denpasar, Bali, can be classified as singular subjects, interrogative words, demonstrative pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The phenomenon of language employed by transgender individuals as a variant to express desires within their social context. Additionally, they used code language to address it to interact with their social gender. On the other hand, they felt comfortable with their transvestite relationship in daily communication rather than standard language. They also considered that their variation of language is their own language that other people will not understand what is being said by them. This language was not born in the safe space of an intergovernmental association, but it was used in the dark area of transvestite prostitution. According to them, this jargon can only be used by native speakers of the language. There are two conditions for encouraging the birth of this language. First, they sold themselves and were afraid of being harassed by their consumers. Second, before the pornography law existed, they realized that their sexuality was deviant.

Keywords: *Language Identity, Language Variations, Transgender Individuals*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan jenis-jenis variasi bahasa yang digunakan oleh individu waria di Jl. Bungtomo Denpasar, Bali. Penelitian ini menggunakan observasi lapangan yang didukung oleh wawancara dan teknik perekaman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa transgender di Denpasar, Bali, dapat dikategorikan menjadi subjek tunggal, kata tanya, kata ganti penunjuk, kata benda, kata kerja, kata sifat, dan kata keterangan. Fenomena bahasa yang digunakan oleh individu waria sebagai variasi bahasa mereka untuk menyampaikan keinginan dalam komunitas sosial mereka. Mereka juga menyebutnya sebagai bahasa kode untuk berkomunikasi dengan gender sosial mereka. Di sisi lain, mereka merasa nyaman dengan hubungan mereka dalam komunikasi sehari-hari daripada bahasa standar umumnya. Mereka juga menganggap bahwa variasi bahasa mereka adalah bahasa mereka sendiri sehingga orang lain tidak akan mengerti apa yang dikatakan oleh mereka. Bahasa ini tidak lahir di ruang aman asosiasi antar pemerintah, tetapi digunakan di area gelap prostitusi waria. Menurut mereka, jargon ini hanya dapat digunakan oleh penutur asli bahasa tersebut. Ada dua kondisi yang mendorong lahirnya bahasa ini. Pertama, mereka menjual diri dan takut dilecehkan oleh konsumen. Kedua, sebelum undang-undang pornografi berlaku, mereka menyadari bahwa seksualitas mereka menyimpang.

Kata Kunci: *Variasi Bahasa, Individu Waria, Identitas Bahasa*





INTRODUCTION

In essence, language cannot be separated from human life because it is an integral part of human identity. Therefore, they need to interact with each other in their social life. In this case, the main interaction is a language. Communication needs increasingly complex over time in human culture, so that language is the system of human communication in the highest position. It means that speakers and hearers can understand each other. The primary aspect of language is sound, which creates meaning and function (Martin, 1993). As social humans, they cannot live without other people around. Otherwise, speakers need hearers to make communication. The purpose of communication with other people is to declare a desire and create a social relationship. Every language has a system of communication with different variations used by the speakers (Behavioral et al., 2015).

As a medium of communication, language can serve various purposes that such as ensuring that every community has a social communication. There is no society without language, and there is no language without society (Suparno, 2002). Due to the existence of diverse societies and the use of language in diverse societies, there are variations or varieties of language. In other words, this variety of languages exists because of a heterogeneous society with various kinds of activities.

Language is used as a system of communication that gives reflections, conditions, and the human culture of the language speakers (Bawa, 2004). Language also has meaning, functions, and variations. The variations of speech form are used to create function and meaning to deliver a certain intention that is affected by the surroundings of the speakers. Language variation is divided into two views. The social diversity of the language's speaker and the variety of its functions are the first causes of linguistic variance. Second, there was already enough variance in language to serve as a system of social interaction.

Language variation can be classified based on social diversity and the function of activity in society. This variation is used by certain circles that are very limited and unknown to others outside (Chaer, Abdul dan Agustina, 2004). One of the language variations that we know is social variation or *sociolect*. This variation is caused by sociological differences. This variety covers all of the speaker's personal issues, including age, education, sex, work, nobility, socioeconomic status, and so forth. *Akrolek, Basilek, Vulgar, Slang, Kolokial, Jargon, Argot, and Ken* are some of the linguistic variants that are contingent on social class and rank. Slang language is one of the dialects of the language that transgender persons use (Holmes, 2008).

Transgender individuals are one of the communities whose existence is not doubted in society, and they are one of the contributors to the use of the largest variety of languages. The new languages they create are unique and difficult to understand by society in general. Transgender individuals are included in LGBT (*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender*) (Hancock & Garabedian, 2013). Biologically, transgender person is a man but looks and behaves like a woman. They can create a confidential language that is exclusive to their members, which can only be understood by them. It is done as an effort to separate from other social groups.

One of the other communities that uses a variation of language is transgender community in Jl. Bungtomo Denpasar, Bali. It has a different meaning from standard language, so its variation is hard to understand by other people who are not part of their community. In addition, other people will not understand the meaning of language utterances, so the phenomenon of language is interesting to analyze as a medium of instruction.



METHOD

The method is a way that must be reached by a researcher to find justifications and rejections of hypotheses, as well as the discovery of the principles for applying its language use (Sudaryanto, 1993). This research is descriptive qualitative because it is synchronous. This research tries to characterize the nature, context, and phenomena of language usage during the time the study was undertaken. The data analyzed regarding the problems revealed above, which are described in cognitive domains that are explained by language reality, so it can be described what happened and why it happened. This research is also supported by primary data, which serves as the main data source for analyzing resources. Therefore, the primary data resource of this study is oral data that was obtained immediately after speaking by the informant. The primary data are obtained through interviews, recording techniques, and field observations. The data were gathered using the listening and elicitation method. The researcher engaged in active listening and wrote down the variations of language employed by transgender individuals in their surrounding community. In social research, the listening method is the same as the observation method. Operationally, this method is supported by a recording technique and writing down reactions and the level of hearing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Waria is an acronym of *wanita-pria*. Biologically, they tend to have male genitals but look and behave like a woman. *Waria* also tend to the gay (*homosexual*). It means that he shows an emotional sex “man likes man” (Sumarsono, 2008). The transgender community is a community that has its own language. In a language opinion entitled “*BAHASA YANG MELINDUNGI*,” stated that transgender language was born as subconscious or a kind of survival of the fittest (Solihin, 2005). There are many communities or groups in social life, both formal and informal (Pateda, 1981). They have their own language to communicate with other members. For instance, transgender language is used to strengthen the familiarity for others, so what is discussed in the internal community is unknown to parties of external community.

At first glance, it may be challenging to ascertain the implications of educators’ discussions regarding transgender issues, as well as if trans persons, opinions, or experiences are included.

Transgender is frequently associated with sexuality-related concepts such as homophobia, heteronormativity, and same-gender partnerships (Check, 2012; Garvey, 2017; Luhmann, 1998; Zacko and Smith 2010). Transgender is also positioned about terms that reference gender identity, including transphobia, cisnormativity, name and/or pronoun changes, or access to sex-segregated spaces (Brockenbrough, 2016; Malmquist et al., 2013; Staley and Leonardi, 2016). In this sense, queer is used more expansively to describe a multitude of sexual and gender identities, embodiments, and material realities (Kean, 2020).

Because the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) movement is so prevalent, transgender subjects are frequently included in classes or units on sexual orientation, although the T is frequently ignored or obliterated (Bartholomaeus and Riggs, 2017; Catalano, 2015). The collapse of trans within queer has been criticized by trans theorists and trans studies scholars (Elliot, 2010; Love, 2014; Namaste, 2000; Prosser, 1998; Salamon, 2010). They contend that sexuality and gender identity are too commonly confused (Webster, 2019).

The term “transgender” is used to refer to someone who has undergone a transition, is non-binary (not precisely male or female), or does not fit the expectations of their gender (Girshick, 2021). Although there are many processes involved in a transgender person’s





transition, they can be largely divided into two categories: medical and social. Living as one's true gender or identity full-time is known as social transition, whilst taking hormones and/or undergoing surgery to change one's gender identification is known as medical transition. With numerous terminology used to denote a wide range of identities, language use in the transgender community is a delicate topic.

Transgender is used as an umbrella term to encompass everyone who has transitioned in some way, is non-binary (neither strictly male nor female identified), or does not conform to gender typical expectations (Girshick, 2021). For a transgender person transitioning, there are many steps involved, but these can be broken down broadly into two main categories: social and medical. Social transition consists of living full-time as one's correct gender or identity, whilst medically transitioning involves taking hormones and/or having surgery about being transgender. The use of language in the transgender community is a sensitive issue, with many different terms used to describe many different identities. The data on transgender language is provided as follows:

(1) Context: A transgender person who asked to be paid for eating by a friend

S1: *Makassar yuk. Ekā lapangan terbang nih* (let's eat, I'm starving)

S2: *Akika lagi bokek sangat nih. Maklum tanggal tuwir. Bayangkari oh Ndul.* (I do not have any money. You know it's the end of the month. Pay me, please, Ndul).

S1: *Bayangkari apose?* (What do I pay?)

S2: *Maklum tanggal tuwir sepoi polerong Ndul.* (You know at the end of the month we get no customer Ndul).

From the utterance above, some variation forms of transgender language have else meanings than official language, those are 'Makassar', 'Ekā', 'Lapangan terbang', 'Akika', 'Tanggal tuwir', 'Bayangkari', 'Apose', 'Sepoi', 'Polerong', and 'Ndul'. Makassar is the name of the Capital of Indonesia. It is an adverb, but it is used as a language variation by transgender people in Bali. Makassar has the meaning of eating, so it has a different portion with the standard language because Makassar is an adverb to be a verb to express an action. Ekā is a subject of a person (singular). Lapangan terbang means an airport that usually park off the plane, but here it is used as a language variation to modify their language. Airport is a noun, but it has else form as a verb with the meaning of starving. Akika is the same as Ekā, which has the meaning of a singular subject. Tanggal tuwir is an adverb that expresses clarification, so that it has meaning at the end of the month. Bayangkari, in Indonesian, has the meaning of the police wives' union organization, which is an extra-structural body of the police. It is used as transgender slang language, but it has a different meaning from the source of language because now it is being verb to refer to action, command, and also requesting. Apese/Apose means to function as a question and address someone. Sepoi means to function as an adjective, while Polerong means customers, and it functions as a noun. In addition, Ndul has no meaning in the Indonesian dictionary, but they create this variation as a familiar greeting of each community.

(2) Context: A transgender person would like to borrow a friend's dress

S1: *Ndul, katanya Ye beli BEjong di Pasar Kreneng. Pinjam Ndul, pengen pake BEjong anyar.* (Ndul, I heard that you bought a new dress. Lend me please, as I want to try wearing it Ndul).

S2: *Jangan, Ines masih baru. Akika belinya Maharani.* (No, that is still new as I bought it for a high price).

S1: *Idih, pelit.* (You are stingy).

S2: *Sicangi.* (Your mouth).





From the utterance above, it can be stated that *BEjong* is a language variation used by transgender people in Bali with the meaning “buy” and its portion as a verb. While *Ye* refers to the second-person singular subject, and *Akika* is the same as *Ekə*, which has the meaning of a singular subject. On the other hand, *Ines* is a demonstrative with the meaning “that”. In addition, *Maharani* is an adjective that describes a noun with the meaning expensive. Meanwhile, *Sicangi* is a noun with the meaning of mouth.

(3) Context: A transgender person asked her friend to go to a doctor

S1: *Ndul sudah beberapa hari ini Ye Sakinah, yuk Ekə antar Ye ke dokter.* (Ndul for days you got sick, let's go to the doctor)

S2: *Ndak Ndul. Ekə hanya sakit pertiwi. Ambarawa Ekə obat Promag saja Ndul. Ekə takut santika, di luar juga Ramayana nanti Ekə dikira sakit Aida Rosana.* (No Ndul, I just got a stomachache. Just bring me Promag Ndul, I'm afraid to have an injection and also out of the crowd, there people think of me as if I have HIV.)

From the speech above, it can be stated that *Ndul* has no meaning in the Indonesian dictionary, but they create this variation as a familiar greeting of each community. *Ye* refers to the second-person singular subject, and *Akika* is the same as *Ekə*, which has the meaning of singular subject. Meanwhile, the word *Sakinah* linguistically has the meaning of peace, calm, serene, and safe, which is usually found in married speech, but it has a different meaning in its source; in their language, it refers to an adjective with the meaning of being sick. Meanwhile, *Pertiwi* in the Indonesian dictionary means ‘*bumi/tanah tumpah darah*’, but here it has a different meaning from its source. *Pertiwi* in transgender language refers to a noun, and it means stomach. In addition, *Ambarawa* is also used as slang to communicate with individuals. In its original meaning, *Ambarawa* refers to a district, a place, and also the name of a hero or figure. However, in daily communication, it is used by transgender people to convey a different meaning. It refers to the verb with the meaning of ‘bring’. On the other hand, the word *Santika* is also different from the official meaning. Thus, it has the meaning of injection that refers to a verb/noun. *Ramayana* is the name of a department store, but it is also their language to communicate with their social environment. *Ramayana* is a noun, but this portion changed to be an adjective with the meaning ‘crowded’. Besides, *Aida Rosana* is also using their code language. When we find *Aida Rosana*, of course, we tend to the name of a woman. Therefore, people who were not part of their community were confused about getting meaning. *Aida Rosana* means HIV disease, so it is hard to understand for people who are not in their community.

(4) Context: A transgender person mocks her friend for looking ugly and not pretty

S1: *Mengapa Anjani tinta kelihatan centong malam ini? Dendong dong!* (Why don't you look pretty tonight? You should put on some makeup!)

S2: *Idih, ines sudah cantika. Pecong Ekə brendi bagaskara, tintring pecong Ye jelong* (I already look pretty. My boyfriend is handsome and younger than yours)

S1: *Ekə lebai centong daripada Ye makanya polerong Ekə banyak. Pecong Ekə Buleleng, Ndul.* (I'm prettier than you, that's why many people like me. My boyfriend is a foreigner, Ndul).

S2: *Buleleng harem, baunya amis.* (Foreigners aren't that nice; they sometimes have a strange smell).

S1: *Jangan bicara begitu, melong tau.* (Don't say things like that, it's embarrassing).

S2: *Ekə hanya bercanda.* (I am just kidding).

From the speech above, it can be stated that the language used in the conversation above reflects the variety of *waria* language, a distinctive linguistic variation employed by the



waria community as a means of self-expression and a marker of social identity. The conversation demonstrates an expressive, humorous, and subtly sarcastic communication style that reflects familiarity and solidarity among the speakers. Expressions such as “*Mengapa Anjani tinta kelihatan centong malam ini? Dendong dong!*” illustrate a dramatic and teasing speaking style, while the use of words like *brendi* and *Buleleng* indicates lexical innovation and the blending of colloquial language within *waria* speech as *Buleleng* means the name of place or district in Bali. Furthermore, utterances like “*Ekā lebai centong daripada Ye makanya polerong Ekā banyak. Pecong Ekā Buleleng, Ndul!*” represent a form of playful rivalry, not intended as an insult but rather as a sign of social closeness. The use of humor, hyperbole, and informal language shows that the primary function of language in this context is not merely to convey information, but also to build intimacy and create entertainment. Thus, *waria* language in this conversation serves as a symbol of group identity that emphasizes elegance, self-confidence, and social solidarity, while also showcasing the community’s unique linguistic creativity.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the transgender language used in Denpasar, Bali, can be divided into nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, demonstrative pronouns, singular subjects, and question words. The phenomenon of transgender people’s language usage in Bali’s Jl. Bungtomo Denpasar. They also called it code language in their variation language. It is employed to interact with their social gender’s environment. However, they were more at ease with their transvestite relationship in everyday conversation than in formal discourse. They believed that other people would not be able to understand them when they spoke in their own language. This terminology originated in the murky world of transvestite prostitution rather than in the secure setting of an intergovernmental organization. They claim that only native speakers of the language are permitted to use this jargon. The vocabulary is not Indonesian when the language is used in talks with people who are not speakers. To promote the emergence of this language, two prerequisites must be met. First, they sold themselves and feared harassment from their customers. Second, they recognized that their sexuality was abnormal before the pornography law was passed.

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