LANGUAGE VARIATION: AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE VARIETIES USED BY EFL STUDENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT

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A B S T R A K

Language variation defined as a language use according the users, which differs based on the topic being discussed, the relationship between the speaker, the interlocutor, as well as the media of communication. This research focus on language variation used by the EFL students on social media. This research aimed to investigate the variation of language on social media specifically on Instagram and Facebook used by the EFL students. The design of this research was a descriptive qualitative method. The data collection was gained from observation, and documentation. The validity of the data used in this study was triangulation of sources, methods, and theory. The data analysis was gained by using Miles and Huberman theories. The result showed that there are some language variation used by the students on social media in term of dialect, colloquial language, gender, code, slang, code switching, and code mixing. The students are commonly applying a variety of unexpected language variations in the forms of acronyms, familiar phrases, and the use of local languages (sumbawanese) combined with the national language, English, even Arabic. Some might use English creatively, while others may struggle with grammar or vocabulary, leading to unique forms of expression that blend their English skills with local linguistic patterns. In addition, the EFL students use a wide range of languages on social media platforms especially Facebook and Instagram. Thus, the occurrence of language diversity is not only caused by non homogeneous speakers but also caused by the wide range of social interactions the speaker engage in.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most crucial aspects of life (Downes, 1998). It serves an essential purpose in all communities, enabling individuals to communicate with one another and convey their wants. Suyanto (2011) defines language as a set of sounds or signs created by human verbal tools that have meaning (Utami et al., 2022). Without the

ability to communicate, our lives could be considered worthless; communication allows individuals to adapt easily to their environments (Emanuel, 2007). Languages are homogeneous and must be distinct from others. The language of a community strongly integrates sociolects, which help identify socioeconomic and educational levels, age, gender, class, and occupation (Honko, 1998, cited in Benlakdar, 2020; Nurchalistiani & Didik, 2021). It also encompasses culture and beliefs within the community (Refa & Siriporn, 2021). When it comes to language as a means of communication, it is undeniably linked to sociolinguistics, a field of linguistics that explores how people use language.

Language variation is one of the subjects covered in sociolinguistics (Fishman, 2001). Language variation results from the interaction of language and social characteristics such as age, gender, education, social status, social occasion, etc. (Barber & Stainton, 2010). The differences in language variety may be found in vocabulary, morphology, and syntactic structure (Chaika, 2008). Based on this, Sunahrowi (2007) contends that various factors can influence linguistic variances in an exciting social life. As a result, the researcher would like to investigate the variation of language used in social media by students of the English study program. This research focused on analyzing language diversity on two social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram. Facebook is one of the most well-known social networking platforms; it is globally available and has a large user base that is constantly growing. Meanwhile, Instagram currently has 800 million daily users (Kircaburun, 2020). Due to its wide usage among young adults and teenagers, Instagram is the fastest-growing SMS (Wagner, 2015). Both platforms have emerged as standout venues for individuals to connect and communicate with others worldwide. Students can use post updates to complete various activities, including sharing information and details about their everyday lives.

Language is a dynamic tool that evolves continuously, adapting to the needs and practices of its speakers. In modern times, social media has emerged as a critical domain where language is actively used and modified. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have become central in shaping how people, especially younger generations, communicate. These platforms provide a space where language is not only a means of interaction but also a way to construct identity, express emotions, and engage in cultural practices. The language used on social media often reflects a blend of formal and informal styles, incorporating slang, abbreviations, emoticons, and multimedia elements such as images, videos, and memes. This phenomenon makes social media a fertile ground for studying language variation, especially among EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

students, who often use these platforms to practice and enhance their language skills. Herwanis et al. (2003) highlights how digital tools are transforming English language learning, providing new opportunities for enhancing accessibility and engagement through interactive platforms and multimedia content. It underscores the significant role of these tools in modern education, allowing learners to practice language skills in real-world contexts and fostering motivation.

Moreover, social media interactions provide a unique lens through which one can observe how language use varies depending on context, audience, and purpose. For instance, a student's post might differ in tone, vocabulary, and structure when addressing peers versus when engaging with a wider audience. Such variations highlight the complex interplay between language and social factors, underscoring the importance of context in linguistic choices. By examining these variations, the study aims to shed light on the sociolinguistic dynamics that influence language use on digital platforms, contributing to a deeper understanding of how language functions in contemporary digital communication environments. Through this research, the researcher seeks to provide insights into the linguistic strategies employed by EFL students on Facebook and Instagram, offering a nuanced understanding of digital sociolinguistic practices.

The researcher analyzed many posts or news that students post on social media. There are various stories or post updates, including business promotions, religious speeches, motivational messages, expressions of unforgettable moments, announcements, invitations, online game IDs, posts by those who are arguing, and even sarcastic remarks. As they publish such content on Facebook and Instagram, other members leave comments on these posts, and interaction begins. This interaction piques the researcher's interest in studying the variations in language use more deeply and understanding how these variations are employed. This research aims to analyze the sociolinguistic theory of language variation to determine the language variations used in social media, specifically in the context of Facebook and Instagram posts by students. Based on these considerations, this study was proposed to reveal and analyze the language variations used and how EFL students utilize these variations on social media.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The main data of this study was the written status uploaded by EFL students on social media: Facebook and Instagram. Since social media users come from a variety of backgrounds, including those

related to culture, geography, social background, gender, age, and so on, these different backgrounds demonstrate language variation. Two instruments were used in collecting the data, namely: observation and documentation in gathering information.

The researchers then cited and captured students' posts representing language variation, classifying the types of language variations including slang, code switching & mixing, gender, colloquial language, formal & informal context, dialect to describe how the language was used. Documentation represents the final technique of data collection. A documentation approach is gathering numerous documents, whether papers, drawings, or colossal works of art, to support inquiry (Sugiyono, 2016). The data is analyzed using Miles and Huberman theories (2014). It included collecting, reducing, classifying, and drawing conclusions from data. The validity of the data used in this study was triangulation of sources, methods, and theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The result of this study revealed six variations of language according to Miles and Huberman's theories, namely: language variation in terms of dialect, colloquial language, formal and informal context, gender, code, and slang. These variations provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how EFL students adapt their language use across different social media platforms. Each variation highlights a distinct aspect of sociolinguistic behavior: dialect reflects regional influences, colloquial language captures informal communication norms, and the distinction between formal and informal contexts reveals how students switch language registers based on the situation. Gender-based variation explores how linguistic choices can differ between male and female users, while code-switching and slang offer insights into the dynamic and creative aspects of language use in digital environments. The intepretation of the data analysis will be drawn as following description.

1. Dialect

This variety of languages is done by a small group of speakers who live in a certain location, area, or region. Since this dialect is based on a specific region, locality, or area, it is also known as the areal dialect, regional dialect, or geographic dialect. This variety of languages is done by a small group of speakers who live in a certain location, area, or region. Since this dialect is based on a specific region, locality, or area, it is also known as the areal dialect, regional dialect, or geographic dialect. These dialects emerge

from the unique cultural, historical, and social influences present within a specific geographic area, leading to distinct linguistic features that set them apart from other varieties of the same language.

> Data transcription: "*Ala we sai nongka to, Bakatoan lako aku. Ta nya baeng tana samawa. Samawa Intan Bulaeng, No tu dapat pang gili len, Na sarusak ke kateman*"
> ("*We have arrived here, this is my place. This place is very good. This is Samawa Intan Bulaeng. If there are any shortcomings, please let me know*.")

The data shown that the characteristic of the language and dialect applied on Instagram on the posting. The dialect spoken is a *samawa totok* informs people that Sumbawa is a lovely place with a culture that cannot be found anywhere else. However, there are a few words that have the same meaning. As an example, "noo" and "na" are spoken with a slight pause. "no" and "na" means "no" or do not". The language and dialect used are informal, unofficial, or regional languages. This analysis can be intepreted that pronunciation, vocabulary, and even grammar can vary significantly from one region to another, reflecting the local identity and heritage of the speakers. Regional dialects serve as powerful markers of group identity, often carrying deep connections to local traditions and community pride.

2. Colloquial Language

Sumarsana and Partana (in Laili: 2012), colloquial is unofficially and non-formal language. Colloquial language is also known as daily speech and it has specific characteristics. The characteristic attributes of this language are uses fewer linguistic components in sentences, including letters and syllables. The goal of decreasing the application of linguistic language is to bring communication simpler, less complicated, personal and casual. Abbreviation, is one of the example of colloquial. By shortening words or phrases, abbreviations streamline communication, making it quicker and more efficient, particularly in fast-paced digital interactions. For instance, phrases like "LOL" for "laugh out loud" or "BRB" for "be right back" are commonly used in text messaging and social media to convey meaning with minimal effort.Researcher found the data on colloquial language as follow:

> Data transcription: "*Hbd to you, Doa sendiri aja kan udah besar pokonya WYATB!*"
> (*Happy birthday to you, Just pray by yourself, you're already grown up anyway, wish you all the best*).

Abbreviation is like blend language, most typically produced by taking the first

letters of multi-word groupings. WYATB and HBD are frequently seen on social media, particularly Facebook and Instagram. "HBD" stands for Happy Birthday, whereas "WYATB" stands for Wish you all the best. When someone has a birthday, the terms "HBD" and "WYATB" are frequently used. This reduction in linguistic complexity not only saves time but also fosters a sense of intimacy and informality among communicators.

Abbreviations can create a shared linguistic code among users, reinforcing group identity and in-group solidarity. Furthermore, these colloquial forms of language are adaptive and evolve rapidly, reflecting the dynamic nature of digital communication. In essence, the use of abbreviations exemplifies the broader trend of linguistic simplification aimed at making communication more accessible and relatable in today's fast-paced, digitally connected world. This trend reflects a shift in communication norms, where efficiency and ease of use often take precedence over formal language structures.

3. Formal & Informal Context

Data transcription: "*Saya, Ayunin Magfira, Prodi Bahasa Inggris. Alasan saya masuk BEM adalah ingin menjadi mahasiswa yang berorganisasi dan berjiwa social. Saya siap menjadi Kabinet reformasi. Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa STKIP Paracendikia NW Sumbawa @kabinet_reformasi*

(I am Ayunin Magfira, an English Language major. The reason I joined the Student Executive Board is that I want to be an organized and socially conscious student. I am ready to be part of the reform cabinet. Student Executive Body of STKIP Paracendikia NW Sumbawa @reform_cabinet)

Language variation in the data is based on how the author used in a formal setting. According to the data, the author want to be member of a campus organisation called BEM. She talked about her motivation for choosing to join. Along with her written content, she included a photo in twibbone format. In a formal situation, she utilize language that appears academic, precise, clearly, to the point, and without unnecessary words.

Data transcription:"*Relaxing on the beach, I'll paint my life with the most beautiful colors*"

The transcription data is considered to be a variation of language. This is supported by her Facebook post, included visuals of beach waves and big coconut trees, showing that she is enjoying her beach vacation and is anxious to do more fantastic things thereafter. In formal contexts, the language tends to be more standardized, avoiding

colloquialisms, slang, and other informal expressions that might be common in everyday speech or digital communication. The choice of words is usually more sophisticated, aiming for clarity, precision, and professionalism.

In informal contexts, the language used is less formal and more relaxed. This often means a greater reliance on colloquial expressions, slang, and even humor to create a conversational tone. The sentence structures in informal language are typically shorter and more straightforward, allowing for a quicker exchange of ideas. Contractions like "can't" instead of "cannot," and abbreviations such as "BTW" for "by the way," are commonly used to reflect the ease and familiarity of the interaction.

4. Gender

<u>Data transcription</u> : *"Tuhan jika dia tidak bahagia, bunuhlah pacarnya!" ("God, if he is not happy, kill his girlfriend")*

<u>Data transcription:</u> *"We sinyal balong ate, aji mara leng apa-apa kuni ku tear ke batu"(We signaled to the boat, then looked for anything to place on the rock")*

From the data above, the respondents convey their dissatisfaction with subtle allusions to a few things, such as an unpleasant internet connection that caused him emotions, then he later put as a Facebook status. The data shown about the feeling; he wishes that someone would die if a girl that he loves does not feel happy as expected.

From the data above, the respondents convey their dissatisfaction with subtle allusions to a few things, such as an unpleasant internet connection that caused him frustration, which he later posted as a Facebook status. The data reveals deep-seated emotions; he expressed a wish that someone would die if the girl he loves remains unhappy, highlighting the intensity of his feelings.

<u>Data transcription</u> : *"My best partner is them □"*

<u>Data transcription</u> : *" Ketika usaha dan pengorbanan di uji, sabar dan selalu sabar. Semua hal terjadi pasti ada alasannya"(When effort and sacrifice are tested, be patient and always be patient. Everything that happens surely has a reason).*

Fro the data above, the respondent put the caption, it was followed by other random picture uploads with her colleagues. They appear to have a very deep closeness to one other based on the photographs and caption that states, "My best partner." Data transcription were all posted by women. Regardless of what they were going through, they all published some uplifting and inspirational sentences about their life.

Nevertheless, the message is meant to serve as a personal reminder or to inspire anyone who reads or sees it. Kim Norris (1995), there are differences in the ways men and women communicate. A man and a woman are fundamentally two separate beings, whether emotionally or not. Men are emotionally more than women. Men are more direct and to-the-point, while women tend to provide a lot more information.

5. Code mixing and code switching

Data transcription: "*We all grow at different rates. And cause everything's gonna be okay. La Haula wa la quwwata illa billahil 'aliyyil azhimi.*

The transcription above shown a code mixing of two-language combination. It found that the users of this Instagram account update their status in two languages: English and Arabic. The transcription is an example of outer code-mixing, which occurs when speakers insert a foreign language element (such as English or Arabic) in a word when speaking in either their native or second language.

Data transcription: "*Kali ini Jejak Anak Negeri Trans7 berkelana memanah ikan dan gurita di pantai sandro pole yang terkenal dengan tempat snorkling dan terumbu karang yang sangat indah, kami juga mengenalkan makanan khas Sumbawa dengan memasak gurita bumbu siram taliwang dan menu wajib bagi masyarakat sumbawa yaitu sepat di pantai @ailemak_sumbawa. Thank you TRANS7 for entrusting me, this is one of the valuable experiences for me.*"

The transciption showed that the resopndent switches from Indonesian to English after describing what she did on the beach before. The switch occurred as a result of something she directly stated, especially her heartfelt gratitude to the team who allowed her to take part in the event, so it became an unforgettable and meaningful moment for her. Finally, there is External Code-Switching. It happens when the author transfer from Indonesian to English. This also has a significant purpose that occurs deliberately.

6. Slang word

Data transcription : "*Thank you bestai for today's story*"

Data transcription : "*Harus jual ginjal dulu buat beli Iphone 14 Pro Max, jiwa-jiwa missqueen ku meronta-ronta wkwkwk*"(*I have to sell a kidney first to buy an iPhone 14 Pro Max; my poor soul is writhing in agony)*

The data above describe the word "*Bestai*" is a twisted version of the word bestie, referring to "Best-Friend." As the goal of slang is to make conversation and discussion more interesting and enjoyable. Finally, this is supported by the posted posts, showing

her enjoying the sunset on the beach with her colleagues. In data, the word Missqueen is used as a joke on "Poor." The condition of being poor in concern is someone that does not have sufficient financial resources or possessions. This was illustrated by uploading a photo of the iPhone 14 Pro Max, along with a price and a statement in which he stated that it seems he will have to sell one of his most important parts in order to get the phone. At the end of the sentences, he also adds the word *wkwkwkwk*, which means laughing (laugh at something funny and foolish).

Discussion

Based on the result finding about the language variation of EFL students on social media, it can be discussed that students are commonly applying a variety of unexpected language variations, including as language expressions in the forms of acronyms, familiar phrases, as also as the use of local languages (sumbawanese) combined and blended with the national language, English, even Arabic. In addition, the variation of language used by the the EFL students play a significant role in this diversity. The different regions of the students bring unique phonological, syntactical, and lexical features to their English usage. The diversity of language influence how students construct sentences or pronounce words, creating a tapestry of accents and language patterns. Thus, the EFL students most likely communicate by incorporating local idioms and expressions into students' English making their communication more relatable within their social circles.

The study in sociolinguistics (Munawaroh,2023) highlight how these variations are not random but are closely tied to social identity and group membership. The study suggests that individuals adjust their language use to converge with or diverge from their interlocutors, thereby negotiating their social identities in various contexts. This linguistic behavior is supported by theories of (Al-Mutairi, 2020) that state EFL students, however, were related to their beliefs and their views of English as a lingua franca and of non-standard English as legitimate.

Language variations used by English students on social media platforms reflect their desire to express emotions and share their experiences. The choice of language variation is heavily influenced by the context in which the communication takes place, including the surrounding environment and the situation at hand. This indicates that the language students use on platforms like Instagram and Facebook varies depending on the context and purpose—whether to convey information, build connections, or achieve specific communicative goals. Often, students use language on these platforms to show

empathy and sympathy, engaging in conversations that foster emotional connections with others.

CONCLUSION

The use of language variations in social media by English students in order to express their feelings and what is happening. Essentially, the setting of a language variation is determined by the environment and condition at the time the communication process occurs. All of this suggests that the variations used varied dependent on context and also their intended use, whether as a simply information way or for different purposes. Students' language on social media platforms in Instagram and Facebook is mostly intended to demonstrate feelings of empathy and sympathy with others. However, some are in the position of taunting someone or simply telling and informing them of what is going on. Thus, it is expected that students prefer to be expressive and creative when communicating on Instagram and Facebook.

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