

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAHASA INDONESIA IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF ADOLESCENT'S SLANG

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini berkenaan dengan bahasa slang remaja Indonesia yang lazim digunakan oleh anak-anak muda sebagai lambang keakraban pergaulan mereka. Bahasa pergaulan yang selama ini dipandang sebagai ancaman terhadap keberadaan bahasa Indonesia baku ternyata memiliki sejumlah fenomena kebahasaan yang menarik, baik dilihat dari segi bentuk dan pembentukannya, ejaan, maupun asal usulnya. Dengan pengungkapan kekhasan-kekhasan itu, diharapkan pandangan-pandangan negatif semacam itu sedikit demi sedikit dapat dihilangkan karena kehadirannya justru akan memberikan kontribusi bagi perkembangan bahasa Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *slang, perkembangan, dan remaja*

ABSTRACT

This article deals with Indonesian slang that is commonly used by youngsters as a symbol of their intimate friendship. This colloquial variation, which is often regarded as a threat to the existence of standard Indonesian is in fact very rich with interesting linguistic features, especially in terms of its forms, formation processes, spellings, and sources. The discovery of its uniqueness will hopefully vanish all negative views about the slang because its presence will actually give contribution for the development of Bahasa Indonesia.

Key Words: *slang, development, and adolescent*

INTRODUCTION

The word “development” in terms of language planning generally refers to intentional efforts carried out by the government of a country in order to influence the development of language usage within the country. As a consequence, the activities are usually concerned with language codification at all linguistic levels, such as phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. In order to promote the use of standard forms, the societies must be provided with many kinds of guiding manuals, such as dictionaries, referential grammar, terminology and spelling manual book. As far as the development of Indonesian is concerned, the Indonesian government has so far published *The Great Indonesian Dictionary* (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), *Indonesian Reformed Spelling Manual* (Pedoman Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan), *Standard Indonesian Grammar* (Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia), and various terminology manuals. Especially, in relation to the spelling system, Indonesian has changed its spelling system for several times, beginning from van Ophuysen, Soewandi, and The Reformed Spelling system which is still used until today. Discussions of intentional efforts in planning the use of the language has been done by many linguists, especially those who are interested in language engineering issues, such as Moeliono (1982), Khaidir Anwar (1990), and Samuel (2008). Accordingly, in this brief paper I will investigate the development of Bahasa Indonesia which is not interfered by the government

language policy because there is also a view that language use can not be planned, and any language variation is as good as another. This opinion may be true only for some language variations which can be developed and planned deliberately by the government. Other variations will develop freely, and no one can stop or regulate their developments.

The government's awareness of the difficulties in influencing the colloquial variations used within the community is shown by the change of the name of the institution which is in charge of the language development. *Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa* (The Centre of Language Development) has been changed into *Pusat Bahasa* (Language Centre) (Kaswanti Purwo, 2000). This change implies that the government will no more strongly force the direction of language use in the community. Therefore, the activities to inhibit the development of certain linguistic variations, especially those which are considered as having low prestige, can hardly be found nowadays. This has led me to investigate the use of one language variation that is commonly used by Indonesian youngsters to communicate with one another, especially in informal situations, to fulfill their communicative needs. In many respects, the use of the variation clearly reflects the multicultural situation of the Indonesian community. Even though the variation is socially regarded as a variation used by uneducated and low status speakers, it is rich in linguistic features which linguists need to investigate formally and semantically. More specifically, the linguistic variation I would like to discuss is Indonesian adolescent slang broadly known as "Bahasa Gaul Remaja" (the language of friendship among adolescents). The use of slang in the community should not be viewed as a threat to the existence of the standard language. On the contrary, its presence actually enriches the vocabulary and other grammatical elements of Bahasa Indonesia. The use of slang seems to symbolize solidarity and intimacy of the speakers with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Bahasa Indonesia differentiates between *perkembangan* (state) and *pengembangan* (action), both of which mean 'development' in English. However, in this paper I use the term *development* to refer more to a dynamic state rather than to an action.

Because of the broad area of the topic, the discussion focuses on the forms, formation processes, spellings and sources of the slang. All the data presented here are obtained from various slang dictionaries including *Kamus Istilah Gaul dan SMS* (Dictionary of Friendship and SMS Terms) compiled by Livia Natalia (2007), *Kamus Bahasa Gaul* (Dictionary of Friendship Language) by Debby Sahertian (2008), and *Bahasa Baku Vs Bahasa Gaul* (Standard Language versus Friendship Language) by Indari Mastuti (2008). The data are classified and analyzed based on those four aspects. The data are presented together with their more (formal) Indonesian equivalents.

THE FORM OF INDONESIAN ADOLESCENT SLANG

There are various forms of linguistic expressions used by adolescents in creating their slang. They can be classified into three types, namely, common forms, abbreviations, and acronyms.

Common form slang is negatively defined as slang expressions which do not belong to abbreviations and acronyms. In other words, this type includes all slang expressions which do not undergo shortening or abbreviating processes. The common expressions can further be differentiated into words, phrases, and sentences.

Slang words morphologically can take three forms: base words, complex words, and compounds. Base words are linguistic units that are made up of single morphemes, such as those in (1), (2), and (3). Complex words are all kinds of words that are constructed by morphemes and

affixes, such as those in (4), (5), and (6), and reduplication as shown in (7), (8), and (9). Meanwhile, compounds consist of two base forms whose combination creates new meaning. The new meaning sometimes cannot be traced from its parts, such as those in (10), (11), and (12). All the slang expressions are shown in bold.

- (1) **Bagong** > besar ‘big’
- (2) **batang** > kemaluan laki-laki ‘pennis’
- (3) **Alam** > dukun ‘witch doctor’
- (4) **nyemok** > merokok ‘smoking’
- (5) **ngerumpi** > bergosip ‘gossiping’
- (6) **ngemeng** > banyak cakap ‘talkative’
- (7) **sorry borry** > maafkan saya ‘I am sorry’
- (8) **slowslow** > pelan-pelan ‘slowly’
- (9) **enyek-enyek** > orang yang menjijikkan ‘disgusting person’
- (10) **blue blood** > darah biru ‘nobleman’
- (11) **enceng gondok** > jengkel ‘annoyed’
- (12) **down load** > suka sekali ‘very fond of’

Slang phrases are all expressions that consist of two or more words which are not predicative, such as those in (13), (14), (15), (16), and (17). Finally, any linguistic unit that has a characteristic of a clause, either simple or complex, is called a slang sentence, such as those in (18), (19), (20).

- (13) **brondong jagung** > anak muda ‘youngster’
- (14) **bule depok** > pribumi berwajah bule ‘native with albino face’
- (15) **mi telur ganjen** > Meteor Garden (title of Taiwan film) ‘flirtatious egg noodle’
- (16) **kolang kaling dalam gelas** > memanggil-manggil tidak jelas ‘to call unclearly’ \diamond
‘palm seeds in the glass’
- (17) **Meaning of the maksud** > sesuatu yang tidak jelas ‘something unclear’
- (18) **I don’t donk** > Saya tidak mengerti ‘I do not understand’
- (19) **Meneketehe** > Mana kutahu ‘I don’t know’
- (20) **Slow but suwe** > Lambat tapi lama ‘Slow but long’

A number of slang expressions are created through an abbreviating process. The creation is done by shortening in which each word is represented by its initial letter, and the slang created are often phonologically identical with other Indonesian words, as shown by (21) to (25) below:

- (21) **BLBH** > bukit, lembah, bukit, hot (payudara) ‘hill, valley, hill, hot (breast)’
- (22) **BOS** > bekas orang susah ‘formerly a poor person’
- (23) **BF** > best friend ‘teman baik’
blue film ‘pornographic movie’
- (24) **MARS** > mahasiswa alim rajin sembahyang ‘a good and religious student’
- (25) **MKG** > Mall Kelapa Gading ‘Kelapa Gading Mall’
> Mari kita gabung ‘Let us join together’

Acronyms are abbreviations that can be pronounced as common words. The short forms are created through a syllabic combination process. The rules of combinations are often very loose and complicated. In (26) the combination is between the initial and final syllables, in (27) and (28) between and among the initials, but in (29), and (30) each syllable does not necessarily represent word but can also be part of a word or a word group. In (29) *sa* represents *saya yang*, *te* represents *kate kok*, *kam* for *kamu yang*, and *bing* for *bingung*. In (30) *nar*, *ko*, and *ba* represent *nasi goreng*, *karo*, and *bakwan* respectively in which *ko* is not the syllabic

representation of *karo* but its initial and final sound.

- (26) **duren** > duda keren ‘a handsome widower’,
- (27) **gimrong** > gigi mrongos ‘bucktoothed’
- (28) **hadija** > hati-hati di jalan ‘be careful on the way’
- (29) **sate kambing** > saya yang kate kok kamu yang bingung ‘I am short, but why are you so much concerned about it’
- (30) **narkoba** > nasi goreng karo bakwan ‘fried rice with corn fritter’

SLANG FORMATION

This section describes the various linguistic processes found in the formation of slang expressions in Bahasa Indonesia. A careful investigation shows that there are several processes commonly involved in slang formation, i.e., substitution, addition, deletion, permutation, and reduplication. A slang expression may be created through two or more formation processes simultaneously.

Vowels and consonants of common words might be changed to create slang expressions. The newly created words are usually used in informal and intimate interactions. Examples (31) to (40) below are slang expressions created by sound change or phonological substitution. Vowel substitution occurs in (31) to (35), while consonant substitution occurs in (36) to (40).

- (31) **syelen** > sialan ‘bastard, bad luck’
- (32) **binar-binar** > benar-benar ‘serious, really’
- (33) **ble’e** > bloon > ‘stupid’
- (34) **bogel** > bugil ‘naked’
- (35) **ngemeng-ngemeng** > ngomong-ngomong ‘by the way’
- (36) **enyak** > enak ‘delicious’
- (37) **kopek** > gopek ‘five hundred’
- (38) **suve vu** > sumpeh lu ‘I swear’
- (39) **jasjus** > jayus, melucu tapi tidak lucu ‘joking but not funny’
- (40) **kangkung** > kakus, WC ‘toilet’

In the following (41), (42), and (43), vowels change into diphthongs.

- (41) **sotoy** > sok tahu ‘pretend to know’
- (42) **lebay** > lebih ‘more, exaggeration’
- (43) **aso** > asyik ‘passionate’

The Jakarta youngsters often add *ok* in creating their slang expressions. The sound *ok* is inserted to certain words with deleted final sound(s), as shown in (44) to (47) below:

- (44) **bokap** > bap(ak): (bap + ok) > bokap ‘father, daddy’
- (45) **Cokin** > Cin(a): (cin + ok) > cokin ‘Chinese’
- (46) **gokil** > gil(a): (gil + ok) > gokil ‘crazy’
- (47) **mokat** > mat(i): (mat + ok) > mokat ‘dead’

Sometimes the addition is not regular because it is associated with other referents that are very difficult to predict and identify. Consider the addition of *ton*, *enyer*, and *tohot* in (48) to (50) below:

- (48) **hamilton** > hamil ‘pregnant’
- (49) **kulenyer** > kul ‘cool’
- (50) **ontohot** > (blo)’on (tohot) ‘stupid’

Deletion is regarded as the most usual process in the formation of colloquial or casual words. The shortening process is intended to yield expressions that are easier to pronounce.

Deletion can occur in the beginning as shown in (51) to (54), the middle in (55), and end of the expressions in (56) to (62). The omitted elements can be a sound, a group of sounds, or a syllable.

(51) **eyang kung** > eyang kakung (kakek) 'grand father'

(52) **eyang ti** > eyang putri (nenek) 'grand mother'

(53) **oon** > bloon 'stupid'

(54) **misae** > permisi 'excuse me'

(55) **Wnet** > warung internet 'internet stall'

(56) **bro** > brother

(57) **borju** > borjuis

(58) **ker** > kerja 'work'

(59) **ketty** > ketiak 'armpit'

(60) **kul** > kuliah 'study in the tertiary level'

In permutation process, phonological units are permuted in various of ways. Therefore, the pronunciation of common words might be totally reversed, as shown in (61) to (64).

(61) **elub-elub** > bule-bule 'albinos'

(62) **hacep tengab** > pecah banget 'I can not bear anymore'

(63) **oges** > sego 'rice'

(64) **ogeb** > bego 'stupid'

The process can also be a single sound permutation or metathesis, as shown in (65) to (69) or a syllabic transposition, as in (70).

(65) **Amrosi** > I am sorry 'forgive me'

(66) **Yipe** > piye 'how'

(67) **nyomet** > monyet 'monkey'

(68) **pepsi** > pipis 'to urinate'

(69) **Pace deh** > cape deh 'It is really exhausted'

(70) **yoi** > iyo 'yes'

Slang expressions might be created by reduplicating the final syllables of common words as usually done by children in enriching their vocabulary. This phenomenon is generally found in the earlier stage of child first language acquisition. Indonesian adolescents often imitate children's behavior in creating their slang. Consider (71) to (73) below:

(71) **ninin** > dingin 'cold'

(72) **nunun** > bingung 'confused'

(73) **nanak** > celana 'trousers, pants'

SLANG SPELLING

Another characteristic of slang expressions is their spelling which is markedly different from the standard spelling. This spelling violations are intended to create strange, unique, funny, and dashing expressions. The spelling of slangs borrowed from English and other foreign languages are often modified into Indonesian to elicit humorous effects. See (74) to (86) below:

(74) **betmen** > berak terus mencret 'defecate and diarrhea' <> Batman

(75) **bondon** > jangan dibatasi 'do not bind, do not limit' <> bound don't

(76) **siyok** > terkejut 'shocked'

(77) **ilopu** > saya cinta kamu 'I love you'

(78) **kiyut** > mungil, keren 'cute'

(79) **kul** > keren 'cool'

- (80) **masteng** > mas tengik, cowok kampungan ‘stinky fellow’, village boy <> mustang
- (81) **so wat** > lalu bagaimana ‘so what’
- (82) **tenggo** > bel langsung pulang ‘go as the work time bell rang’ <> tango
- (83) **terano** > tetek rada nongol ‘big breast’ <> Terrano ‘Japanese car brand’
- (84) **skul** > sekolah ‘school’
- (85) **Wats Ap** > ‘ada apa’ <> ‘whats Up’
- (86) **merit** > kawin ‘married’

Meanwhile, the spelling of those from Bahasa Indonesia or local languages is modified to be similar to English spelling or other foreign expressions. Consider (87) to (103) below:

- (87) **Amrosy** > Saya minta maaf ‘I am sorry’
- (88) **nelly** > nenek lincah ‘energetic granny’
- (89) **nykmat** > nikmat ‘pleasant’
- (90) **syellen** > sialan ‘bastard, bad luck’
- (91) **betz** > banget ‘to much’
- (92) **parkits** > parkir timur Senayan ‘East side Senayan parking area’
- (93) **Bucheri** > bule ngecet sendiri ‘self dyeing albino’
- (94) **ketty** > ketiak ‘armpit’
- (95) **makachi** > terima kasih ‘thank you’
- (96) **dech** > deh ‘interjection’
- (97) **dashar** > the way always be’
- (98) **bazzi** > ‘spoiled’
- (99) **xetex** > ketek ‘armpit’
- (100) **qualat** > kualat ‘accursed’
- (101) **oracle** > orakel, ora kelar-kelar > ‘will never be clear’
- (102) **botiks** > botak sekali ‘totally bald’
- (103) **merindink** > merinding ‘feel eerie’

SOURCES OF SLANG

This section describes the sources of Indonesian slang. The discussion focuses on languages from which the slang expressions are borrowed. This is a complicated problem because there are so many languages which interact with Bahasa Indonesia, and nearly all languages show significant contribution to enriching the Indonesian slang vocabulary. For ease of description, the contributing languages will be divided into national language, regional languages, and foreign languages.

Bahasa Indonesia as the national language does not only have a standard variation, but a colloquial one as well that is used by its speakers to communicate with others as a symbol of intimacy. Consider (104) to (107) below:

- (104) **nggak cuman ngebahas** > tidak hanya membahas ‘does not only discuss’
- (105) **Ayo, ngaku!** > Ayo mengaku ‘please confess’
- (106) **Kita-kita udah nggak demen pake bahasa baku** > Kita sudah tidak senang memakai bahasa baku ‘We do not like to use a standard language any more’
- (107) **Pake bahasa baku yang jadi identik sama enyak-enyak dan babe-babe tapi lebih asyik pake bahasa gaul yang bikin kita jadi “gaul abis”** > Memakai bahasa baku menjadi identik dengan bapak-bapak dan ibu-ibu, tetapi lebih asyik memakai bahas gaul yang benar-benar membuat kita ‘Using standard language is identical to fathers and mothers (old generation), but it is more passionate to use

slang that make us truly “gaul”.

Nowadays bahasa Indonesia is used widely over the Indonesian archipelago. As a consequence, the national language has various mutually intelligible variations that are commonly known as regional dialects such as Jakarta, Ambon, Medan, and Manado dialects. Of these dialects, the Jakarta dialect plays the most prominent role in influencing the slang as shown by the large amount of its slang expressions found in Indonesian slang. Examples (108) to (114) below are from the Jakarta dialect.

- (108) **bolot** > tuli ‘deaf’
- (109) **engkong** > ayah ‘father’
- (110) **bloon** > bodoh ‘stupid’
- (111) **bogel** > bugil ‘naked’
- (112) **ngebanyol** > melucu ‘joking’
- (113) **buruan** > cepat ‘hurry up’
- (114) **kece** > bagus sekali ‘very good’

Regional languages are used by various ethnic groups that inhabit the archipelago. Each group has its own language(s) as a means of intra-ethnic communication. There are at least 700 local languages in Indonesia, and more than half of them are found in West Papua. A careful investigation shows that only several big local languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and Batak have an influence on the Indonesian slang.

Several Javanese expressions, either common words or acronyms can be found in Indonesian slang as shown in (115) to (120) below:

- (115) **bablas** > hilang ‘gone’
- (116) **basuki** > bajingan asu kirik ‘bastard’
- (117) **bojo** > bohai jomblo ‘alone without girl or boy friend’
- (118) **bude sugeng** > bujur (pantat) gede susu ageng ‘big buttock and breast’
- (119) **mumet** > pusing ‘spinning, dizzy’
- (120) **kelepek-kelepek** > terpesona sampai lupa ‘spellbound and unaware’

East Javanese dialect is also found, as can be seen in *tuwek* (tua) ‘old’. Through total reversal, this word is changed into *kewut*. Sundanese words found in slang vocabulary can be seen in (121) to (124) below:

- (121) **bujur** > pantat ‘buttock’
- (122) **abi** > saya ‘I’
- (123) **ngabuburit** > jalan-jalan sambil menunggu bedug magrib di bulan puasa ‘take a walk in fasting month while waiting for sunset prayer time’
- (124) **beunget** > muka, wajah ‘face’

Other local languages found in the data collection are Madurese, Cong > kamu ‘you’ and Batak hepeng > uang ‘money’.

For various sociopolitical and economic purposes, a country must establish a mutual relationship with another country. As result, one country will have an influence on another and vice versa. The artifacts of certain cultures will be found in others. This can be clearly seen in language use. The existence of foreign vocabularies in bahasa Indonesia is essentially a reflection of the dominance of those foreign languages in influencing the national language. With regards to Indonesian slang, the influence of English and Chinese is considered very dominant, whereas the influence of Arabic, Dutch, Latin, Hindi, and Sanskrit is less dominant.

English constitutes the most influential foreign language that enriches the slang expressions. Some Indonesian idioms are literally translated into English, and the result are the

funny expressions in (125) to (132) below:

- (125) **blue blood** > darah biru, bangsawan ‘nobleman’
- (126) **crocodile tears** > air mata buaya
- (127) **different river** > lain kali ‘other time’
- (128) **don’t talk as delicious as your belly button** > jangan berbicara seenak udelmu
‘Do not talk as you wish’
- (129) **Emphazise** > dipaksa, ditekan ‘to be forced’
- (130) **enter wind** > masuk angin ‘air sickness’
- (131) **hot sick** > sakit panas ‘fever’
- (132) **Oh my God dragon** > Astaga naga ‘Oh my God’

The influence of Chinese is shown by the use of address forms, calculation, food, etc., as shown in (133) to (137) below:

- (133) **kopek** > go pek, lima ratus ‘five hundred’
- (134) **cici koko** > enci dan kohan, kakak perempuan dan kakak laki-laki ‘older brother and older sister’
- (135) **xie2** > terima kasih ‘thank you’
- (136) **angpaw** > uang sumbangan untuk pernikahan ‘gift of money for wedding and new year’
- (137) **hociho** > hopeng cia hopeng, teman makan teman > ‘disloyal friend’
- (138) **kwetiau** > gue pengen tau, saya ingin tahu ‘I want to know’ << rice noodle

Arabic, Dutch, Latin, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Japanese make a small contribution to the Indonsian slang. From the data collection I found two words each from Arabic as shown in (139) and (140), from Dutch in (141) and (142), and from Latin in (143) and (144), and only one each from Hindi in (145) and from Sanskrits in (146). Finally, there is also a Javanese word with a Latin spelling (147).

- (139) **ente** > kamu ‘you’
- (140) **yahud** > bagus sekali ‘very good’
- (141) **ike** > saya ‘I’
- (142) **verboden** > larangan ‘traffic prohibition’
- (143) **amigos** ‘agak minggir selokan’
- (144) **Angelo** > antar jemput lonte
- (145) **nehi** > tidak ‘no’
- (146) **Barata Yudha** > ribut, berantem ‘fight, quarrel’ <> family fight
- (147) **Mendez** > menthel ndeso ‘flirtatious girl’

CONCLUSION

It is obviously true that slang expressions merely appear in casual or informal speech situations among speakers of lower social and economic status. However, their position in the language research cannot be neglected because they contain a lot of linguistic phenomena that call for linguistic descriptions. The linguistic processes which occur in the slang formation can explain various social problems happening in the speakers’ community. As far as the borrowing processes are concerned, Indonesian slang creation clearly describes the users’ community which is multicultural and mutually interact with the local, regional, and even global communities. These facts will hopefully make all the parties involved in the development of bahasa Indonesia realize that the slang existence will not endanger the standard variation, but enrich its phonological, grammatical, and lexical elements. In other words, the use of slang will provide

contribution to the development of the national language.

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