

## THE LANGUAGE OF ONLINE *OJEK* DRIVERS: A SOCIO-SEMANTICS STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study describes the language use of online ojek (taxi bike) drivers through the socio-semantics study. This study involves a duality of sociology and semantics. It was conducted under an observed phenomenon of the emergence of unique vocabulary in the society. New meanings have been found integrated with the existing words as well as new words and meanings. This sort of language development is, in fact, not easily understood by society. Such development is usually better understood by younger fellows who interact more often with technology than their older counterparts, making such products of language development are not well delivered to all people. The data, the language use of online ojek drivers, were collected naturally by becoming a participant. One of the researchers was a verified online ojek driver in Jember, making him a competent data source. The data were analyzed using the match and switch technique to investigate any emerging differences in the social elements of the interlocutor. The study found a number of vocabulary which characterize the online ojek drivers. The vocabulary includes acronyms, coined terms, and coined words. These forms have different lexical meanings from the intended meanings. Meanwhile, the coining of new words characterizes the slang or classified to only the community of online ojek drivers. The three varieties of language use of the online ojek drivers indicates a phenomenon of a developing language along with the emergence of a social community. A community is a means for developing the language which will identify them as a community. The development of meanings are indicated by two phenomena. First, adding meaning to existing words, named as the process of polysemy. Second, the meaning develop along with adding of words in bahasa Indonesian vocabulary. While vocabulary develops along with its meaning, Indonesian also has the potential to develop its vocabulary and meanings as more social communities are emerging in the society.*

**Keywords:** Indonesian, ojek, qualitative, socio-semantics

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian's vocabulary has developed along with the increasing number of communities and social groups. Every community and social group commonly has language identity which characterizes it. For instance, a research community will maintain their formal and scientific variety; a teenage social group tends to speak informally and has their own slangs; even a community of online *ojek* drivers owns a set of slangs and jargons to maintain their exclusivity among other communities. Slang is a language variety which enriches uses of vocabulary with different meanings which, most likely, are not understood well by people outside their communities or other groups. On the other hand, the jargon language comprises a set of particular words used by a social group, but not confidential (Chaer & Agustina, 2004). The confidentiality of the language use differs the slang from jargon. Therefore, the language variety used by the online ojek drivers community may be categorized as slang or jargon.

How language develops shows its dynamic and arbitrary characteristics. In regards with this phenomenon, Bloomfield posited that language was once an arbitrary symbolic system, used by certain groups of societies as a means for interaction (Sumarsono, 2007). Considering such capability of language, it is almost certain that language will keep developing along with human life advancement as users of language.

A previous study has previously revealed language variety from an online ojek driver community Sastratmaja (2018). He found that slangs or jargons identified from the community were temporary and more commonly used or spoken by younger fellows. However, he added that it is not impossible that the jargons or slangs are also understood and used by older drivers, since the community consists of varied ranges of age, teenagers, adults, and elderly.

A preliminary observation has been conducted for the purpose of this study. From this observation, it revealed a set of language varieties categorized as slang, used by a community of online ojek drivers, one of which is the use of the word 'tuyul'. Lexically the word 'tuyul' in Indonesian means a spirit which takes a form of a bald-headed kid that is obedient to its owner, likes to steal money and sorts (2020). Unlike its lexical meaning, the word 'tuyul' is used to refer to a fake location. A fake location is intentionally set in a driver's map to allow one's account to receive more orders like a takeaway food. The phenomenon of differing meanings in a word used by the community indicates that the language variety of this social community may result in the development of Indonesian language.

Another phenomenon uncovered from the online ojek driver community is the use of the word 'tupo'. The word 'tupo' is an acronym from 'tutup poin' or *closing point*. This acronym is used to mean that a driver has reached a final point of today's target, therefore deserves a bonus. The meaning as it appears in the community does not differ from its original meaning. The use of such an acronym, however, is a term assumed to be initiated by the community. Based on the data revealed from the preliminary observation, it is assumed that vocabulary and meaning may develop in a community or a social group.

The preliminary findings indicate the existence of language variety used among the community of online ojek drivers. The variety depicts the enlargement of Indonesian vocabulary in a social group. In order to obtain the expected and appropriate analysis, two fundamental theories are used in the present study, namely semantics and sociolinguistics. Semantics studies meanings (Djajasudarma, 1993); (Leech, 2003); (Parera, 2004); (Ullmann & Sumarsono, Pengantar 2007), while sociolinguistics focuses on the study of language variety and social groups (Sumarsono & Partana, 2002). Here forth the two different theories will be written as one term, that is socio-semantics.

Based on the above mentioned urgency and reasoning, the present study analysed the use of language variety in a community of online ojek drivers from the view of socio-semantics. The study, therefore, is expected to result in an exploration of the phenomenon of the use of vocabulary, both existing or coined, among the community as slangs which have differing meanings from their lexical meanings. The findings are expected to become media for developing meanings in Indonesian vocabulary.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative study which is intended to collect natural data. In order to ensure the trustworthiness and naturality of the data, one of the researchers takes the role as an online ojek driver. All linguistic data presented in the study, therefore, have been used by the researcher and its community naturally. The study was ended once the data was saturated, where the data were recurring consistently.

The data for collecting the data field notes and getting involved (speaking, listening, involved) techniques. The former means that the researcher took notes on every linguistic data used by the community of online ojek drivers. While the latter means that the researcher was actively involved in conversation with members of the community while waiting for incoming orders.

The data were analyzed using descriptive, identity, and distributional methods. The descriptive method of data analysis was done by presenting detailed description of the use of language variety by the community of online ojek drivers. The identity method refers to that when the researchers looked up for similar words but used in different contexts to evaluate its meaning. Finally, the distributional method is done by substituting, omitting, and mutating linguistic data. This method was an additional to the identity method when the method is thought to be inadequate for analyzing the linguistic data.

The data were displayed by selecting data used as models or samples from the language variety used by the community of online ojek drivers. The data display belongs to the data reduction process. The selected data would be explored in detailed in order to describe it thoroughly.

The study would be conducted until the data were saturated as it is a part of the process of data validity testing, which is to lengthen the research period. The length of the study period was not to be determined in months, but the data saturation would mark its end.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study has found several forms of slang as the language variety used by online ojek drivers. These findings will be described in isolation below, under its phenomenon category.

### 1. Words Use

The study reveals words which are used with different meanings from the phenomenon among the community of online ojek drivers. These have partly impacted the meanings in Indonesian vocabulary. The words referred are discussed in the following.

#### a) *Gacor*

The word 'gacor' lexically means to tweet in every time and place (related to birds), according to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring (2020). Meanwhile, this word is used among the online ojek drivers to refer to the situation where a driver receives a lot of orders in a day. Orders in this social group are

indicated by notification sounds from drivers' mobile applications. These two meanings, lexical and contextual meanings, are clearly different. Such a difference indicates the use of the word as slang among the online ojek drivers in the community.

The semantic formation, however, shows a point of similarity, where the lexical meaning refers to 'gacor' as the tweeting sounds from birds while in the community it comes from the ringing notification sounds coming from their orders.

Table 1 shows the result of analysis of meaning components found in the development of meaning of the word 'gacor' used by this particular social community.

Table 1. Analysis of Meaning Components of *Gacor*

Field-level Meaning	Gacor (as common word)	Gacor (used among online ojek drivers)
Birds	+	-
Noisy	+	+
Cry	+	+

As seen from the analysis of meaning components in Table 1, Gacor as a common word refers to the cry of birds which make some noise; which is favorable to bird owners. Equal to such pleasure, the word gacor as used among online ojek drivers community indicates a similar situation where they receive continuous orders indicated by the tweeting notification of the application in their phones.

The linkage in meanings from the analysis above represents the development of meaning occurring within a social community. This development is straightforward because the meaning component refers to the general concept of the word investigated.

**b) Nembak**

The word 'nembak' is an informal language variety. Its standard form is 'menembak' which means to shoot using a gun. Lexically, the word 'menembak' in an Indonesian dictionary means 1) to release a bullet ... from a fire gun ... and 2) to intend, direct ... (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring, 2020). However, the word has a different meaning among the community, that is to fake an order.

Unlike the previous data, the word 'gacor' in the data has a similarity seen from the 'medan makna' analysis. This data reveals a novel meaning which is classified as a jargon, since this word is easily understood by speakers beyond the community of online ojek drivers.

The word 'nembak' is commonly used to refer to an activity which does not follow the applicable procedure. For example, in the context of 'nembak SIM' or driver's license, the word will mean to get a driver's license without following the procedure, such as passing the test, instead the license is obtained by bribing the officers. In this context, however, the meaning is similar, where an online ojek driver will fake an order so that he or she could reach his or her daily target.

Unlike the preceding word identified in the study, the analysis of meaning components of the word *nembak* is bewildering. It is quite tricky to find a linkage between the word *nembak* used as a common word and that used in the community.

Table 2. Analysis of Meaning Components of *Nembak*

Field-level Meaning	Nembak (as common word)	Nembak (used among online ojek drivers)
Weapon	+	-
To direct	+	-
To intend	+	-
To fake	-	+
Target	+	+

In Table 2, one meaning component which equates the two meanings is the meaning of target. Every word of shoot or 'tembak' [IND] used as a common word and used within the community of online ojek drivers indicates an exact target. However, other meaning components in it as a common word and as a word used within the community are opposed to each other.

Based on this finding, the use of words by members of the online ojek drivers community may refer to synonyms or a developed word. The development of meaning may be a result of varieties of language. Words can take forms as jargons or slang words. Jargons are usually easier to trace the meanings, while slangs have uniqueness and differences in the search of meanings. Slangs are commonly influenced by desires of certain social communities to form such secret language codes.

**c) Gaguk**

The use of the word 'gaguk' is presumed to be originated from the word 'gagu'. Lexically, the word 'gagu' means unable to talk (because one's speech organ is impaired); mute (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring, 2020). In this data, the word gagu is used to mean low or minimum orders.

Similar to the previous data 'gacor', this data will mean low orders because no notification sound from the mobile application that indicates an order. The absence of the sound is similar in meaning with the lexical meaning of 'gagu'.

The use of words with extended meaning can be found in the data of the word 'mlipir' and 'ambet'. The former originated in Javanese language which means to pull over. While among the community of online ojek drivers, the word 'mlipir' is used when a driver is waiting for orders while slowly riding his or her vehicle on the side of the road. The latter, ambet, comes from Madurese vocabulary, that means burdened. In the community, this word is used to mean low orders causing burdens financially. Therefore, it is seen that the word ambet in Madurese language is similar to how it is used in the community.

Based on the data presented, the use of words as slangs or jargons among online ojek drivers are indicated by the difference with the lexical meaning. Yet, when explored deeper, the meaning in the context is partly similar to that of the lexical. The data above have proved the arbitrariness of language in a normal situation and not breaking any conventional principles.

This is therefore concluded that lema used as a language variety is that of Indonesian language which then develops in meaning. The developing lema and meanings in Indonesia are two indicators of Indonesian's richness. In the book of term formation (2007), it has been stated that the richness of vocabulary and terminology of a language may indicate the advancing civilization of the nation. Vocabulary and terms are meant to reveal science and technology as well as arts.

The phenomenon of meaning development found in the study corroborates the concept of language functions. One of the language functions which follows this context is the interpersonal function. Using language, users can express themselves as an individual and/or as a group. Halliday and Hasan (1985), Halliday (1994), and Thomson (2004) probe that a text (both spoken and written) may comprise three metafunctions, such as ideational (consisting of experiential and logical), interpersonal, and textual. The interpersonal metafunction of a text reflects the meaning of interpersonal as a result of social realities occurring in participant to participant relationships. Moreover, interpersonal meaning is made of interactional (meaning which expresses personal interaction) and transactional (meaning which expresses a transaction of information and/or things/services). (Wiratno & Santosa, 2014).

**2. Use of Acronyms**

Acronyms are frequently found in teenage speakers. Previous studies found that forming an acronym is an integral element of an informal language (Arisanti, 2018); (Zein & Wagiati, 2018). The use of acronyms in communication among online ojek drivers indicate the language variety spoken may belong to the informal or slang language. The following data are acronyms which have been found among the online ojek drivers in the community.

**a) Vermuk**

'Vermuk' is an acronym for 'verifikasi muka' or face verification. This acronym is usually used when a driver is about to log in his/her mobile app to start working. Face verification is used as a security control of the account where it is capable of syncing his or her personal data. The feature was developed in order to avoid dishonesty among drivers as well as to maintain security of customers.

This acronym is used in the community to mean exactly like its lexical meaning. The word face means the front upper part of one's body, from forehead to chin, or from one ear to the other. While the word verification is to check or confirm the validity of data (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Daring, 2020). Based on the findings of the study, it is known that the acronym is used with the same meanings as their lexical meanings. The description of 'vermuk' in online ojek is found through Google search



Figure 1. 'Vermurk' in Online Ojek (Anshori, 2020)

As seen from the picture, the use of the acronym is understood well.

### b) *Ofik*

The word 'ofik' is a combination of two words; 'orderan' (orders) and 'fiktif' (fictitious). This acronym is used to mean a fake order made by a customer, who disables his/her account or switches off his/her phone once a driver received the order. The word 'ofik' is usually found when a driver receives food delivery orders.

The data which represents the use of 'ofik' shows a similar characteristic to that of 'vermurk'. The meaning of this acronym is the same as its formers' lexical meanings, namely 'orders' and 'fictitious'. The order is fictitious because its details, like customer's account is untraceable.

Based on further data search, the use of this acronym is the same as the meanings of its formers. It shows that the acronym used in the language variety is a jargon because its meaning is not confidential. Its peculiarity lies on its formers.

Based on the data described, the use of acronyms can become an alternative to emphasize language productivity. A lot of acronyms have been created and used by different communities across nations. As seen from sociolinguistics viewpoint, productivity in the form of acronyms can be so called slangs or jargons. Such language productivity can enter the daily informal language variety and the secret language variety. The daily informal language variety referred to in this study can be symbolized by the use of *cak* in semantics, especially the lexical semantics implemented in dictionary making. While the secret language variety may be identified if certain new words are only used by a group which exclusive themselves as a closed social group.

### 3. New Word

This category is proposed because the study found data of the use of a word which does not belong to either Indonesian or local language. The study identified a word 'ngebles'. This word means a driver receives a lot of orders on that day. This word is assumed to consist of a prefix /nge-/ and stem /bles/. Further observed in KBBI, the word did not match any entry. Moreover, it is not found in either Javanese or Madurese language as both of these local languages are mostly used by online ojek drivers in the community. Therefore, it is concluded that this word is a new word used by the community of online ojek drivers.

Based on the findings of this study, the development of vocabulary and meaning as the characteristics of the language variety spoken by online ojek drivers is influenced by the nature of humans as social beings. This social factor is a reality of human behavior which is very likely to continue (Raho, 2016). Meanwhile, social reality found in the society is the division of social classes, which Raho (2016) supports that social reality takes form as social class.

Moreover, Maunah (2015) explains that social class is a social reality that has been classified by different social states. The social states include wealth, occupation, and education. This study further found that the development of meaning is influenced by occupation. Maunah (2015) adds that occupation is one of the best indicators for discovering how people live, or in other words it is the best indicator to reveal people's social class. By having the same occupation, every member identifies themselves in order to unveil similarities, therefore, actualize themselves in language codes.

In linguistics, a language code is acceptable if it has been commonly used by a certain part of society or language users (Sakri, 1993). While in the context of language variety, the secret code is prevalent as jargon and argot as the identity of a certain community.

Briefly, the use of words, acronyms, and creation of new words can take forms as new lema and development of existing lema. The development of meaning in lema occurs because there are demands

and needs of the language users. Suwandi (2011) proposes 12 contributing factors to changes in meaning of a language, among others; social factors, psychology, needs of new words, influence of foreign languages, and abbreviation. The concept of change in this study is the meaning expansion of a word or a term.

## CONCLUSION

Language variety found in the community of online ojek drivers comprises the use of words with different meanings, acronyms with no change in meanings, and new words. The data of the new word is very few. Seen from the category, the forming of new words belongs to the slang and jargon category. The forming of acronym is a jargon, while extended meaning of a word is caused by the dynamic and arbitrary characteristics of language as well as the development of social community. Of the three forms of language used, there are two interesting findings in this study, namely the development of meaning and the development of vocabulary. In other words, a language will develop along with the development of social groups who speak or use the language.

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