

Language variation of sticker usage among students on whatsapp

Hesty Hasyim¹, Gusnawaty², Ikhwan M. Said³

University of Hasanuddin^{1,2,3}

¹Email: hasyimh22f@student.unhas.ac.id

²Email: gusnawaty@unhas.ac.id

³Email: ikhwan.said@unhas.ac.id

Abstract - In the era of digital communication, WhatsApp stickers have become a commonly used tool for conveying subtle expressions. This study investigates language variations in WhatsApp stickers among students. This qualitative research focuses on linguistic features in WhatsApp stickers used by students. Data were obtained from linguistic student groups, particularly those in the first and second semesters of 2023. Findings reveal diverse language variations across lexical, grammatical, orthographic, code-switching, and semantic features. The stickers showcase non-formal language, emphasizing innovative linguistic strategies and a high level of language proficiency. The use of stickers is characterized by interactive communication within WhatsApp groups, offering a visual alternative on small smartphone screens. In addition to serving as a form of self-expression, stickers also play a strategic role in fostering emotional connections and achieving specific communicative goals.

Keywords: language variation; linguistic features; sticker; whatsapp

1. Introduction

Language function serves as the foundation for effective communication between individuals. It acts as a vital tool, facilitating the unity of communication among people. In the contemporary landscape, the modes of communication have diversified significantly. Smartphone applications, notably WhatsApp, have revolutionized communication, introducing a plethora of features to cater to various needs. Among these features, the utilization of WhatsApp stickers has gained immense popularity. The widespread use of these stickers is attributed to their ability to convey nuanced expressions effectively, bridging the gap between the sender and the recipient. This trend underscores the pivotal role of digital communication in fostering meaningful interactions and reflects the evolving nature of how individuals connect and express themselves in the digital age. The development and widespread adoption of such digital communication tools are instrumental in shaping the dynamics of interpersonal communication and strengthening the fabric of social interactions in the contemporary world.

There are some researchers are related with this research. The first one is the research of Sampietro (2019), titled *Emoji and Rapport Management in Spanish WhatsApp Chats*. This research is focused of the emoji function in corpus of WhatsApp chats written in Spanish. The research found that the function of emoji as upgraders or downgrades (illocutionary domain), emoji help to manage the conversation (discourse domain), and emoji as a stylistic choice (stylistic domain).

The second research is by Said and Husain (2023) titled *Use of Emojis and Stickers for Online Interaction Facilitation: A Gender-Based Semiotic Discourse Analysis*. This research focused to investigate the main function of emojis and stickers in enhancing positive online interactions and seeks to understand how the usage of these elements benefits both genders while considering potential variations in interpretations. The research found that emojis and stickers play a significant role in conveying emotions, enhancing message clarity, and positively influencing the mood during conversations. Emojis and stickers function as a universal language and play a vital role in navigating interpersonal relationships and facilitating message understanding in online communication.

This research, try to identify language variations based linguistic features of WhatsApp stickers used by linguistic students at Hasanuddin university in 2023 using model of Biber and Conrad's (2009) theory. This research adopted the model of genre, register and analysis to found the situational features, linguistic features and the purpose of sticker message.

2. Method






This research is a qualitative descriptive study that emphasizes discourse analysis to understand and describe language variations in terms of linguistic features in the use of WhatsApp text-based stickers by students interacting in WhatsApp groups. The data source for this research is the use of WhatsApp stickers in text form by students, particularly Linguistics students at Hasanuddin University in 2023. Data were obtained from the chat history of Linguistics student groups in 2023. The WhatsApp groups consist of two groups, those are the first semester class (Februari-Juni period) with 26 participants, and the second semester class (September-December period) with 14 participants. This research focuses on the use of WhatsApp stickers that contain text.







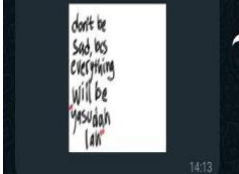


Data collection was done by observing and taking screenshots of WhatsApp stickers containing text in both WhatsApp groups. The collected data will be analyzed using Biber and Conrad's theory about register, genre and style to analysis of the situational features, linguistic features, and the purpose of WhatsApp Sticker message. Subsequently, the data were transcribed, and categorized based on the features, then analyzed to get conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

This section is about the result of representation analysis of linguistic features, situational features, and the purpose of sticker text in WhatsApp messages.

A. Linguistic features

Feature	Type	Standard form	Online Form
Lexical features	Diction	Susah untuk dibayangkan	
	Lengthening words with additional consonant or vowels	Meledak	
	Word spelling	Wajarkah begitu?	
	- Word spelling - Sound substitution	Siap	
Grammatical Features	Grammatical structure of local language	Kalau sudah begini rasanya saya ingin wisuda	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grammatical structure of local language - Word spelling 	Saya istigfar saja	
	Grammatical error	Beliau ini sakit jiwa	
Orthographic features	Capitalization	Intinya jangan gemetar	
	Capitalization	Salam sehat tetap semangat selalu bersyukur	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Punctuation - Words spelling 	Pura-pura tidak baca	
Code-switching or code mixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilingual (English and Javanese language) Abbreviation	Panjenengan Laughing My Ass Off Pisan = Anda lucu sekali	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilingual (English and Indonesian language) - Abbreviation 	Do not be sad because everything will be okay	
Semantic features	Puns	Maju terus pantang mundur	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduplication - Capitalization - Punctuation 	Beliau ini bukan sembarang orang	

Almost all stickers contain language with non-formal or non-standard categories. Non-standard language employs innovative ways to fulfill communication objectives and demonstrate

proficient mastery of language (Allazzawie, 2022). In this research data illustrated through various language variations with lexical features, grammatical features, orthographic features, code mixing or code switching, and semantic features such as puns.

In terms of lexical features, data is represented in various forms of text on stickers. For example, in the use of diction in the sentence '*susah untuk dibayangkan*' mean as difficult to imagine. The word '*bayangkan*' is a play on the word '*bayangkan*' in the Indonesian language. Additionally, there is the elongation of words by adding consonant letters in other stickers, such as the word '*meledak*' becoming '*MMeledakkk*.' Letter addition is also demonstrated in the sticker '*siyap*,' marked by the addition of 'y' to the standard form of the word '*siap*.' In addition to letter addition, word spelling with the removal of letters is also identified in a sticker asking '*wajar kh bgtu?*' mean as Is it reasonable like this?. The omission of letters in words is a language variation commonly found in messaging for the purpose of abbreviation or quick response, and it is also observed in the writing of sentences on stickers.

In the next feature, grammatical, stickers are identified with grammatical errors, as seen in the sticker with the sentence '*sakit jiwa ni beliau*,' which should be '*beliau ini sakit jiwa*' mean as he/she is mentally ill. Additionally, there are several stickers that use grammar structures from the local language, such as the sentence '*saya kalau begini mauma wisuda kurasa*' and the sticker with the sentence '*sa istigfar saja saya*,' which are sentence structures from the eastern part of Indonesia, particularly Sulawesi. The use of grammatical structures that do not conform to correct language structure is influenced by the local grammatical features used by WhatsApp users (senders and receivers) who are part of the society of Sulawesi.

In orthographic features, stickers are characterized by un-capitalization. Many stickers do not observe proper capitalization in their writing. Examples include stickers with sentences like '*INTINYA JANGAN GEMETAR*' mean as basically, don't tremble and greetings like '*SEHAT tetap SEMANGAT selalu BERSYUKUR*' mean as stay healthy, always stay spirited, be grateful. In addition to variations in capitalization, there are also variations in punctuation usage and capitalization, as seen in the sticker with the sentence '*PURA PURA GA BACA*' mean as pretending not to read. The sentences on WhatsApp stickers do not consistently adhere to proper and correct capitalization.

In the data, features of code-switching and code-mixing were also found, involving the use of two languages. For example, in the sticker with the sentence '*PANJENENGAN LMAO PISAN*,' where LMAO is an acronym for Laughing My Ass OFF, and '*panjenengan*' and '*pisan*' are in Javanese. The meaning of this sticker is essentially expressing that something is very funny. There are also stickers that use bilingual elements (English and Indonesian), such as '*don't be sad bcs everything will be yasudahlah*'. Here, '*bcs*' is an abbreviation for 'because.'

The last feature is semantic. In the data, puns were found in addition to the previously mentioned puns '*bayangkan*' becoming '*bayamkan*.' Another example is the sentence '*madu terus pantang mundur*,' where the word '*madu*' is a pun on '*maju*'. The standard form of the sentence is '*maju terus pantang mundur*' which is an expression of encouragement. This sticker demonstrates the use of diction as a play on words. In addition to puns, semantic features also show word reduplication in a sticker with the sentence '*BELIAU INI BUKAN SEMBARANG BELIAU*.' Semantically, the second occurrence of '*beliau*' refers to the meaning of a person. This sticker illustrates language variation through the use of terms with repetition. The sticker is also marked by capitalization or the use of uppercase letters in all sentences with incorrect punctuation.

The linguistic features discussed above collectively reveal the existence of language variations encompassing aspects such as word spelling, abbreviation, the utilization of local grammatical structures, puns embedded in sentence semantics, and the presence of bilingualism on stickers. The choice of communication style is contingent upon an individual's unique set of abilities, characteristics, motivations, preferences, attitudes, and interests when employing and engaging with language (Allazzawie, 2022). Nearly every choice of wording observed in these stickers reflects colloquial language prevalent in Indonesia, with a specific emphasis on Sulawesi. This linguistic diversity adds a layer of cultural richness and context to the stickers, illustrating the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language usage in this particular region.

B. Situational Context and Purpose of Stiker Text

All the stickers used in this research share a similar situational context. The stickers cover various topics depending on their usage context. Both the sender and receiver of the messages are participants in the linguistic groups of the year 2023. The register is conveyed by individuals who are

known or easily identified. Generally, sticker recipients on WhatsApp can be individuals or groups through WhatsApp groups.

Communication between the sender and receiver of stickers is quite interactive as it involves direct communication despite being in different locations, yet they have a platform for direct communication. The situational factors of texting include limitations and the complexity of text messages due to the small smartphone screen, making it ineffective for reading or typing long messages (Allazawie, 2022). This creates a condition where the sticker feature on WhatsApp provides space for use as an alternative to chatting because there is no need to type again. The sender and receiver of stickers are fellow users or members of a WhatsApp group. There is a personal relationship among group participants, allowing them to respond to each other even though they may have different backgrounds.

WhatsApp stickers are visual elements that can be used to convey emotions, reactions, or messages in a more expressive manner. Interacting using stickers is enjoyable because it provides users with satisfaction in communicating according to their communication goals and topics (Alhumaid et al., 2022). WhatsApp stickers are often used to convey light-hearted humor, making conversations more familiar. Sadia and Husain (2023) mentioned that WhatsApp stickers allow users to emphasize and convey small details about the emotions they want to express. This creates social engagement in conversations, allowing users to respond casually. WhatsApp stickers are also frequently used to convey light-hearted humor and make conversations more intimate, fostering dynamic responses from users.

The purpose of using WhatsApp stickers here is to channel emotions and depict the sender's mood to the receiver within a WhatsApp group. Their use is intended to foster emotional connections among group members (Said & Husain, 2023). Additionally, it demonstrates time efficiency by saving the time typically spent typing messages manually, as WhatsApp stickers can instantly convey the sender's message intent.

Said and Husain (2023) state that the use of stickers has two main purposes: strategic and functional. Strategic goals relate to a user's efforts to represent themselves and maintain social status, involving adaptability in communicating with others to uphold social relationships. Meanwhile, functional goals pertain to the specific aims of sticker users when communicating online, such as using stickers to create an impression of politeness. Thus, the use of stickers serves not only as a means of self-expression but also as a tool to achieve specific communicative goals in online interactions.

4. Conclusion

The linguistic analysis undertaken in this research unveils a nuanced array of language variations manifested in the realm of WhatsApp stickers. These variations are characterized by the utilization of non-formal or non-standard language, showcasing innovative linguistic strategies aimed at attaining communication objectives and demonstrating a high degree of language proficiency (Allazawie, 2022). The research delineates these variations across lexical, grammatical, orthographic, code-switching/code-mixing, and semantic features, encompassing the utilization of puns.

Lexically, stickers manifest diverse textual forms, encompassing puns, abbreviations, and linguistic innovations. Grammatically, stickers display errors and incorporate local language structures, notably from Sulawesi. Orthographically, the presence of capitalization and punctuation variations reflects a communicative style characterized by informality and relaxation. Code-switching and code-mixing introduce a layer of linguistic complexity through the integration of two languages. Semantically, the incorporation of puns and word reduplication contributes to the expressive nature inherent in stickers.

These linguistic features underscore the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language use, embodying colloquial expressions prevalent in Indonesia, particularly in Sulawesi. The cultural richness infused into the stickers emphasizes the pivotal role of context and cultural background.

Furthermore, the situational context surrounding the utilization of stickers is characterized by interactive communication within WhatsApp groups. Participants in linguistic groups of the year 2023 actively engage in direct communication, with stickers serving as a visually expressive alternative to conventional text-based communication. The constraints posed by small smartphone screens further underscore the preference for sticker usage, facilitating efficient and effective communication.

The purpose behind utilizing WhatsApp stickers transcends mere self-expression; it emerges as a strategic tool for cultivating emotional connections and attaining specific communicative objectives. Stickers assume a strategic role in representing individuals, upholding social status, and

conveying nuanced emotions and details within the sphere of online interactions. The research illuminates the versatility of stickers in conveying humor, emotions, and cultivating an intimate communication ambiance.

This study provides valuable insights into the linguistic and situational dimensions of WhatsApp sticker use, shedding light on the adaptability and expressive potential of this visual communication medium. Future research is expected to shed further light on the systematic functions of sentence-shaped WhatsApp sticker usage.

References

- Alazzawie, A. (2022). The Linguistic and Situational Features of WhatsApp Messages Among High School and University Canadian Students. *SAGE Open*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221082124>
- Allhumaid, K., Alnazzawi, N., Akour, I., Khasoneh, O., Alfaisal, R., & Salloum, S. (2022). An Integrated Models for the Usage and Acceptance of Stickers in WhatsApp through SEM-ANN Approach. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, Vol 6 (4), 1261-1272. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.6.008>
- Atmanegara, L., K., Sukri, M., & Burhanuddin. (2022). Variasi Bahasa Whatsapp Mahasiswa Magister Bahasa Indonesia Universitas Mataram 2021. *JIME: Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education*, 8(2), 1639-1652. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jime.v8i2.3281/http://ejournal.mandalanursa.org/index.php/JIME>
- Barron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an Online and Mobile World*. New York: Oxford University
- Biber, D., & Conrad, S. (2009). Register, genre, and style. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckert, P. (2019). The limits of meaning: Social indexicality, variation, and the cline of interiority. *Language*, 95(4), 751–776. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.2019.0072>
- Hasan, F., & Muhayyang, M. (2018). The Linguistic Features Uniqueness of the Students' Written Discourse in Online Learning.
- Hunadah, Siti. (2023). Analysis of Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Features on Language Use in Whats App Chat Groups: English. *JELP: Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 2(2), 86-94. <https://doi.org/10.58518/jelp.v2i2.1799>
- Junus, F. G. (2015). Variasi Bahasa dalam Sosial Media: Sebuah Konstruksi Identitas. *International Conference on Language, Society and Culture*, 1, 366-372
- Kato, S., Kato, Y., & Ozawa, Y. (2018). Perceived Usefulness of Emoticons, Emojis, and Stickers in Text Messaging. *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning*, 8(3), 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.4018/ijcbpl.2018070102>
- McKiernan, T., (2016). *Characterising Conversation on WhatsApp: speech-like, or not? Back-channelling, adjective intensification and personal reference*, unpublished dissertation, Manchester: The University of Manchester.
- Pérez-Sabater, C. (2018). Emoticons in Relational Writing Practices on WhatsApp: Some Reflections on Gender. *Analyzing Digital Discourse*, 163–189. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_6
- Sabater, C. (2015). Discovering language variation in WhatsApp text interactions, *Onomázein*, 31 (8), 113-126
- Sadia, H., & Hussain, M. S. (2023). Use of Emojis and Stickers for Online Interaction Facilitation: A Gender-Based Semiotic Discourse Analysis. *Global Digital & Print Media Review*, VI(II), 109-128. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023\(VI-II\).09](https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023(VI-II).09)
- Sampietro, A. (2019). Emoji and rapport management in Spanish WhatsApp chats. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 143, 109-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.02.009>
- Zappavigna, M., & Logi, L. (2021). Emoji in social media discourse about working from home. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 44, 100543. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100543>