

THE REALIZATION OF CHRONOLECTAL LANGUAGE VARIATION IN YOUTUBE BASED DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital communication has intensified the emergence of language variation, particularly across generational boundaries. This study aims to examine the realization of chronolectal language variation in YouTube-based digital communication. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the data were collected from user-generated comments on selected YouTube videos representing diverse age groups of language users. The analysis focuses on identifying linguistic features that reflect generational differences, including lexical choices, abbreviations, slang expressions, orthographic patterns, and pragmatic markers commonly used in digital interaction. The findings reveal that YouTube serves as a dynamic space where chronolectal variation is clearly manifested, especially in the contrast between younger and older users' language practices. Younger users tend to employ innovative, abbreviated, and trend-driven expressions, while older users prefer more conventional and standardized language forms. These findings indicate that chronolectal variation in digital media is not merely a stylistic preference but reflects broader sociocultural and temporal influences on language use. This study contributes to digital sociolinguistics by highlighting YouTube as a significant site for observing generational language variation in contemporary digital communication.

Keywords: chronolectal variation, language variation, YouTube, digital communication, sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to human communication practices, particularly in the use of language in virtual spaces. Social media functions not only as a medium for entertainment and information dissemination but also as a space for social interaction that enables the negotiation of meaning and the construction of linguistic identity (Herring, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2015). In this context, the language used by speakers is dynamic and reflects the social, cultural, and generational backgrounds of digital media users.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language variation is viewed as a phenomenon that is inseparable from the social factors of its speakers. One such form of variation is chronolectal variation, which refers to language variation that arises due to differences in speakers' age or generation (Chambers, 2003; Holmes, 2013). Generational differences often give rise to distinctive linguistic features at the lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic levels. In digital societies, chronolectal variation becomes increasingly visible through the use of digital slang, abbreviations, stylistic choices, and adaptation to online communication conventions.

Video-based social media platforms such as YouTube provide a unique communicative space by integrating oral, written, and visual modes simultaneously. YouTube enables users from diverse age groups to interact through video content and comment sections, thereby creating multimodal and cross-generational communication practices (Kress, 2010; Burgess & Green, 2018). Within this space, age-related differences among speakers continue to be articulated through language choices, even as conventional social boundaries become more fluid.

A number of previous studies have examined language use on social media from the perspective of digital sociolinguistics, including research on slang, code-switching, and digital registers (Crystal, 2011; Tagliamonte, 2016). However, studies that specifically position chronolectal variation as the primary focus of analysis—particularly in the context of YouTube-based digital communication—remain relatively limited. Yet, research on chronolectal variation is essential for understanding how language represents generational identity and how language change unfolds and is negotiated in digital spaces (Eckert, 2012).

Based on this background, this study aims to describe and analyze the realization of chronolectal language variation in YouTube-based digital communication practices. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of digital sociolinguistics, particularly in understanding the relationship between language, age, and digital media, as well as to provide empirical insights into the dynamics of intergenerational language use in virtual communication spaces.

METHOD



This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in sociolinguistic inquiry, particularly the theory of chronolectal language variation. This approach was selected because the research aims to provide an in-depth description of the forms of language variation used by speakers from different age groups in digital communication, rather than to test statistical hypotheses.

Data Sources and Data

The data sources for this study were drawn from the YouTube platform, specifically video content and comment sections that display interactions among speakers from different age backgrounds. The research data consist of linguistic units that realize chronolectal variation, including words, phrases, clauses, and utterances that emerge in YouTube-based digital communication practices.

The selection of channels and videos was conducted purposively by considering content popularity, levels of user interaction, and the diversity of participants involved in the digital communication. The identification of speakers' age groups was carried out based on linguistic indicators, contextual cues, and available user profile information, insofar as this could be done ethically.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using observation and note-taking techniques supported by digital documentation. The researchers observed YouTube video content and comment sections, then recorded linguistic data that exhibited characteristics of chronolectal variation. The collected data were subsequently transcribed and classified according to the categories of language variation under investigation.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted through several stages: data reduction, which involved selecting linguistic data relevant to the research focus; data classification, which involved grouping forms of chronolectal variation based on emerging linguistic characteristics; data interpretation, which involved interpreting the meanings and functions of chronolectal variation within the context of digital communication; and conclusion drawing, which involved formulating general patterns of the realization of chronolectal language variation in YouTube-based digital communication practices.

Data Validity

Data validity was ensured through persistent observation and referential adequacy by comparing the research findings with relevant theories and previous studies. In addition, analytical consistency was maintained through repeated readings of the data to ensure accuracy in interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data derived from the YouTube video transcript entitled *Mencari Upah di Ramadhan*, uploaded on March 20, 2024, indicates that digital communication practices do not represent a single type of language variation. Instead, they reveal an interweaving of multiple lectal variations, including social variation, idiolect, chronolectal variation, and geographical variation. This finding reinforces the view that digital communication constitutes a complex and heterogeneous linguistic space in which social and temporal factors interact simultaneously (Androutsopoulos, 2015).

The primary focus of this discussion is the realization of **chronolectal variation**, which is clearly manifested in utterances such as “*sembari nunggu buka puasa boleh gak nyemil kuaci*” and “*udah mau buka puasa ini Bos Lee, Allahuakbar.*” These utterances contain explicit temporal markers that link the interaction to a specific time phase, namely the period preceding iftar during Ramadan. Lexical items such as *nunggu* (waiting), *udah* (already), and *mau* (about to) function as aspectual markers that emphasize temporal proximity to the anticipated event of breaking the fast.

From the perspective of narrative sociolinguistics, Labov (2011) asserts that conversational structures are inherently bound to temporal dimensions that connect present experience with forthcoming events. In this context, the temporal markers do not merely organize the chronological sequence of discourse but also construct collective expectations toward iftar as a socially anticipated moment. Consequently, chronolectal variation is realized through lexical choices that reflect speakers’ contextual temporal awareness.

Furthermore, the realization of chronolectal variation in this dataset cannot be separated from its social and cultural dimensions. The time of breaking the fast functions as a shared temporal framework collectively understood by all participants. This observation aligns with Eckert’s (2012) argument that language variation does not simply reflect biological age or chronological time but rather indexes speakers’ engagement in specific social practices. In this case, Ramadan as a religious context shapes a shared temporal consciousness that is subsequently realized in linguistic practice.

The use of religious expressions such as “*Allahuakbar*” in utterances produced shortly before iftar further demonstrates that chronolectal variation intersects with cultural and religious identity. Language here not only marks time chronologically but also represents social values and norms embedded within the speech community. This phenomenon indicates that, in YouTube-based digital communication, chronolectal variation serves a dual function: as a temporal marker and as a means of reinforcing social solidarity and collective identity.

These findings support the argument that chronolectal variation in digital communication is neither neutral nor mechanical but is instead imbued with social meaning. In digital spaces such as YouTube, time is understood not merely as a chronological sequence but as a social construct negotiated through language. Thus, the realization of chronolectal variation in this dataset demonstrates that digital communication practices continue to reflect conventional sociolinguistic patterns, even though they occur within a virtual and multimodal medium.

Data from the YouTube video transcript entitled *Penjudi di Ramadhan* reveal digital communication practices that are more complex and dramatic than those observed in the previous dataset. The interactions depict activities related to online gaming, internet quota issues, and social conflict surrounding gambling practices during Ramadan. Across these interactions, lectal variation—particularly chronolectal variation—emerges prominently and intertwines with social, moral, and cultural dimensions.

The realization of chronolectal variation is evident through the use of temporal markers referring to specific phases of Ramadan, such as “*nunggu azan*,” “*habis buka puasa*,” “*bulan puasa ini*,” and “*Ramadan-Ramadan pun masih aja berjudi*.” These expressions do not simply indicate chronological order but emphasize that the entire sequence of discourse unfolds within a socially sacred and meaningful temporal framework for the speech community.

Drawing on Labov (2011), temporal dimensions in oral narratives function to connect events with the social expectations that accompany them. In this dataset, Ramadan time serves as a primary reference point shaping moral evaluations of the characters’ actions. Condemnatory utterances such as “*bulan puasa main judi kalian ya gak ada otak*” illustrate that chronolectal variation functions not only as a temporal marker but also as a means of legitimizing social values and norms.

Moreover, chronolectal variation in this dataset is closely related to generational communication practices in digital spaces. Lexical items such as *mabar*, *winstreak*, *reset season*, and *event Ramadan* represent gaming-related vocabulary associated with younger digital generations. These expressions are then juxtaposed with religious temporal markers such as *azan*, *buka puasa*, and *Ramadhan*. This intersection demonstrates that chronolectal variation in digital communication does not operate independently but interacts with social variation and idiolect, reflecting the identities of digital-native speakers (Tagliamonte, 2016; Androutsopoulos, 2015).

Notably, time in this dataset is conceptualized not merely as chronological order but also as a moral and social boundary. Statements such as “*kami kerjakan habis buka puasa*” indicate temporal negotiation between pragmatic needs and religious norms. This finding resonates with Eckert’s (2012) view that language variation reflects speakers’ involvement in social practices rather than biological age alone.

When compared with *Mencari Upah di Ramadhan*, chronolectal variation in *Penjudi di Ramadhan* displays a stronger evaluative intensity. In the former, temporal markers primarily function to build an atmosphere of waiting and social solidarity before iftar. In contrast, in the latter, Ramadan-related temporal markers serve as a basis for criticism, conflict, and moral judgment. This contrast demonstrates that chronolectal variation is contextual and flexible, depending on communicative goals and interactional settings.

Overall, the discussion of these two datasets indicates that chronolectal variation in YouTube-based digital communication cannot be understood merely as a marker of temporal difference or age. Instead, chronolectal variation functions as an active social practice through which speakers construct solidarity, negotiate norms, and represent collective identity within a shared social time frame. These findings extend digital sociolinguistic research by positioning chronolectal variation as a crucial analytical component in the study of video-based social media communication.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that chronolectal variation in YouTube-based digital communication practices functions not only as a marker of temporal sequence or speakers’ age differences, but as an active and meaningful social practice. Analysis of two Ramadan-themed videos reveals that temporal markers such as *nunggu*, *udah*, *mau*, *habis buka puasa*, and *bulan puasa* are employed by

speakers to construct a collectively shared temporal framework. Within this context, chronolectal variation plays a role in shaping social solidarity, organizing conversational flow, and representing religious values embedded within digital speech communities.

Comparative analysis across the datasets indicates that the functions of chronolectal variation are contextual and flexible. In the video *Mencari Upah di Ramadhan*, chronolectal variation is used to create a sense of togetherness and anticipation prior to iftar. In contrast, in *Penjudi di Ramadhan*, chronolectal variation functions as an evaluative mechanism that reinforces social and moral norms, particularly in criticizing gambling practices during Ramadan. These findings confirm that, in digital communication, time is understood not only chronologically but also as a social construct imbued with values and ideology.

The novelty of this study lies in positioning chronolectal variation as a discursive mechanism within digital sociolinguistics, rather than merely as an age- or time-based category of language variation. By utilizing YouTube-based digital communication data that are multimodal and cross-generational, this study extends chronolectal research into online communication practices and demonstrates its relationship with social identity, cultural norms, and moral evaluation. Accordingly, this study contributes to the advancement of digital sociolinguistics by offering a new perspective on time as a source of social meaning in language interaction on social media.

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