

SWITCHING LANGUAGES FOR POLITICAL FEAR, POWER AND ANGER IN DIGITALLY-SURVEILLANCED MULTILINGUAL FACEBOOK INTERACTION IN INDONESIA¹

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Abstract

This paper examines how multilingual members of FB communities in Indonesia express fear, power, and anger with Covid19 and the government undertaking of its outbreak. John J. Gumperz's (1982) and Dell Hymes' (2005) sociolinguistic theories on identities and choices of languages in multilingual contexts and Herring, Stein, and Virtanen's (2013) discourse theories on digitally-mediated intercultural communication is used as theoretical concepts and frameworks, building on FB as a site for intercultural contacts where language, culture, and political ideology are practised and selection of appropriate languages and forms is the main strategy for discursive safety. Data were collected by participant observations of FB interactions involving the Tadpoles (government supporters) and the Foxes (the oppositions) in Lombok, Indonesia. Twenty key players in each group were followed from January 2020 to August 2021. As the units of the analysis, words and sentences in the statuses and the comments of these players in in-group and out-group interactions were downloaded, transcribed, and translated into English. Analysis was done ethnographically by identifying contexts and contextualization cues in the translanguaging acts. The study shows that FB citizens, particularly the Tadpoles, used multiple linguistic competences in the online ideological battles as strategies to avoid possible legal consequences. English, Arabic, and local languages assumed to be inaccessible to the government officials and supporters were used as a means of covering disapprovals and discomforts with government policies. The study also shows how politically-marginalized speakers (the Foxes) make use of varied, multilingual linguistic competence as linguistic resources and symbolic capital to deconstruct and challenge hegemony of the government and its supporters (the Tadpoles).

Key words: code-switching, contextualization cue, identity, fear, power, anger

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas bagaimana anggota komunitas Facebook (FB) di Indonesia mengungkapkan rasa takut, rasa berkuasa dan rasa marah pada Covid19 dan upaya pemerintah mengatasinya. Teori sosiolinguistik John J. Gumperz (1982) dan Dell Hymes (2005) tentang jatidiri dan pilihan bahasa dalam konteks multibahasa serta teori wacana Tagg (2015) dan Herring, Stein, dan Virtanen (2013) tentang komunikasi antarbudaya secara digital dipergunakan sebagai kerangka teoretis and analitis dengan mengedepankan FB sebagai wadah kontak antarbudaya dimana bahasa, budaya, dan ideology politis dipraktikkan sehingga pemilihan bahasa dan bentuk kata yang tepat menjadi alat untuk menjaga keselamatan diri. Data dikumpulkan melalui pengamatan partisipatif dalam interaksi grup FB yang melibatkan kelompok yang terstigma The Tadpoles (pendukung pemerintah) dan The Foxes (oposisi) di Lombok, Indonesia. Dua puluh partisipan utama dalam masing-masing kelompok diikuti sejak bulan Januari 2020 sampai bulan Agustus

2021. Sebagai unit analisis, kata dan kalimat dalam kolom status dan komentar dalam interaksi dalam dan antarkelompok dari para pemain ini disalin-cetak, ditranskripsi, dan diterjemahkan kedalam bahasa Inggris. Analisis dilaksanakan secara etnografis dengan menentukan konteks dan penanda kontekstualisasi dalam interaksi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa netizen FB mempergunakan berbagai kompetensi linguistik sebagai strategi memenangkan konflik ideologi di dunia maya dan sebagai strategi menghindari potensi jeratan hukum. Bahasa Indonesia dipergunakan kedua kelompok sebagai alat untuk mengungkapkan rasa takut pada virus dan oleh pendukung pemerintah sebagai alat untuk mengungkapkan rasa marah dan memainkan peran lebih berkuasa pada pihak oposisi. Pada taraf tertentu, peran berkuasa dimainkan dengan berbahasa Inggris. Bahasa local yang diasumsikan tak dipahami oleh pejabat pemerintah dan para pendukungnya dipergunakan sebagai alat untuk membungkus ketidaksetujuan dan ketidaknyamanan dengan kebijakan pemerintah. Peneliti ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana penutur yang termarginalkan secara politis (*the Foxes*) mendayagunakan kompetensi linguistik multilingual dan bervariasi sebagai sumber dan modal linguistik mendekonstruksi dan menantang hegemony pemerintah dan para pendukungnya (*the Tadpoles*).

Kata kunci: alih kode, petanda kontekstualisasi, jatidiri, takut, kuasa, amarah.

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses how languages have been used in social media as a means of exercising power and expressing fear and anger toward public issues and policies. While fear and anger can be personally hidden from public view by keeping them to private opinions, expressing them textually and visually in visual media might cause legal consequences to the persons. Indonesian Constitution (Verse 28E Point 3) has legislated that every citizen is free to establish organization, to form gathering and to express opinions, but other laws like ITE Verse 27 Point 3 and Verse 28 Point 2 have discouraged them from exercising the rights to freedom of speech for fear of four main digital misconducts: (a) insulting persons, (b) destroying one's reputation, (c) hate speech and (d) inciting interethnic and inter-religion tension. Latest survey by a prominent Indonesian scholar and lawyer, Refly Harun, indicates that 63% of Indonesians are afraid of expressing themselves in public for fear of the legal trap from this legal act (Warta Ekonomi, 2022).

However, the fear does not really inhibit them from exercising freedom of speech on the social media. Personal insults, information downgrading particular individuals, hate speech and ethno-racial slurs are actually commonplace on the internet. Tynes, Reynolds, and Greenfield (2004) investigated the use of ethnic and racial slurs among young (13 to 17 years old) black, white and Latino Americans in monitored and unmonitored chat rooms and found that the majority of chat room discussion involve mentioning of ethnic and racial identities. They also found that the majority of valence is the discourse were neutral or positive, but unmonitored chat rooms produced significantly more negative remarks than monitored rooms. They concluded that the absence of monitor incites more prejudice and negative intergroup attitudes. Al-Natour (2021) studies 19 internet memes where non-indigenous social media and finds that racist stereotypes about Aboriginal Australians (e.g., about skin color) are commonly communicated and are used as a way of sustaining racist digital solidarity among non-Aboriginal Australians. Keum and Miller (2018) have succinctly argued that racism including ethnocentrism and other stereotypes remain to flourish frequently and pugnaciously on the

Internet due to “increased anonymity” and “digital freedom of speech”. The so-called anonymity when going online has led to racists to have more senses of invisibility, to gain more supports from familiar racist groups, and to open more opportunities to find like-minded people. They have in fact conceptualized a model outlining how netizens can express racist views more discernibly, frequently and openly in online than in offline interactions.

In Indonesian contexts, negative online attitudes will lead to legal consequences when visible to law enforcement agencies. A few cases can exemplify this assumption. On 26 January 2021, a Batak-born Hanura party politician (AN) was arrested for referring on twitter to a Papua-born Indonesian human rights commissioner (NP) as a “monkey”, which racially insulted the latter’s skin color and physical looks (*Media Indonesia*, 2021). This is by no means an isolated case. Two Manokwarians in early March were arrested for spreading in FB ethnical insult to Papuans (*Kompas*, 2022). SAFEnet (2020) reports 369 cases of violation of the law since its dispatch in 2012 to December 2020. Mailing list, blog, media online, SMS, change.org, and *Petisi online* [online petition] were the common sites of violation, but FB is the most common one.

In all cases above, the media and the perpetrators were involved in a national discourse and the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, was used. This language is accessible to all Indonesian readers and when there is a case of violation they have the options of reporting them to the Indonesian legal authorities. Thus, in order to avoid getting caught, internet users have to find ways of hiding the legally-sensitive messages. In doing so, they could use codes and languages inaccessible to the legal personnel and undetectable to their intelligent apparatuses. The use of numbers or alphanumeric letters might have done the job: for example, the use of *s3t4n* for *setan* [devil] or *@nj1n9* for *anjing* [dog] when referring to human referents would have carried legal consequences if the real expressions have been used. Keren and Baggen (1981) have experimentally shown that geometry and symmetry as well as assumed minimality and triangle inequality of numbers and alphanumeric symbols to letters have helped readers to associate them with the missing letters and, thus, they can reconstruct meanings based on these newly constructed assumptions. Nonetheless, the similarities are too clear that the users might still run the risk of getting legally caught. Thus, the use of the inaccessible languages above might be the best solutions.

While hiding messages with cuing symbols have been studied in various contexts (e.g., in child-adult play (Grosse, Scott-Phillips & Tomasello, 2013; Moore, Liebal & Tomasello, 2013), in network steganography (Jayaram, Ranganatha & Anupama, 2011; Mazurczyk, et al, 2016), and in bilingual children communication (Gampe, Wermelinger & Daum, 2019), but hiding messages in multimedia discourses have not been widely investigated. A number of studies have elaborated hiding essential business information from public view (e.g., Jayaram, Ranganatha & Anupama, 2011; Mazurczyk, et al, 2016; Wu, 2001), hiding messages for political fear, exercise of power and expression of anger towards government and its agencies have not been well explicated at least in the Indonesian contexts. This is the merit of the study. It will, first, identify unmarked language in Indonesian media social communication and, then, marked use of languages for the purposes of fear, power and anger exercises. Assuming that English and local languages will be dominant for these purposes, I will also explicate how the languages are used as a means of enacting and co-constructing the above discourse dimensions in digital interactions. But, let us first clarify the theoretical grounds on the relationship between

languages, identities and language choices in digital interethnic communication and, then, the epistemologies on how the relationship can be enunciated.

IDENTITIES AND LANGUAGE CHOICES

Studies in Tagg (2015) and Herring, Stein, and Virtanen (2013) have excellently proved that digital online communication is similar to face-to-face offline communication and, thus, all mechanisms governing language choices in offline interaction are also effective in online communication. Gumperz (1982) and Hymes (2005) have argued that language choice in offline communication is regulated by contextual and situational factors. Though negotiable among participants in discursive encounters, the language selected for interaction is determined by socio-cultural contexts (e.g. spatio-temporal settings) and situational factors (e.g., speaker-addressee identities, communicative ends, acts and keying, communication tools, norms and types of interaction).

The online communication in the Indonesian contexts will commonly require the use of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, and the selection of other languages will contextualize a new meaning being negotiated in the interaction. The choice of English, the most commonly used foreign language in the country, will be seen as irrelevant to the communication context but when it is selected, it is often associated with speaker's claim of superiority in education, profession, or other socio-economic backgrounds. The choice of a local ethnic language, on the contrary, will indicate speaker's preference to his/her ethnic identity and local traditions associated with it. To arrive at these conclusions, according to Gumperz (1982), participants must develop "a shared understanding" and behave normally as culturally expected according to interpersonal relations and interactive goals at hand so that interpretation can be framed correctly. To Hymes (2005), such a common interpretation can be established only if the participants share membership of a speech community which will enable them to be involved in a "language field" (i.e., speaker's whole repertoire of language varieties in the community), "speech field" (i.e., speaker's patterns of speaking), and "speech network" (i.e., whole web of settings where language and speech fields are enacted). Only through involvement in the speech network, the language fields, and the speech fields that the rules of communicative conduct and interpretation of speech and rules for the interpretation of language varieties therein can be mastered and thus the speech community can be developed (Hymes, 2005). In virtual communities, the network and the fields are constantly made by looking for online users, creating connections, and making friendship commitment (Tagg, 2015).

Perhaps, Hymes' (2005) speech dimensions most relevant to the current study are the situational factors. In mediated interaction like FB communication, the formality of the situation and the multilingual identities of the interactants will, once again, give raise to the use of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, and this has been the norm in public, interethnic, and written communications. However, the communicative ends that an FB communicant has will also affect the choice of language. Communicative goals which are uncritical to persons might be shared in the national language, but those with the potentials of bringing legal consequences to the FB status or comment makers will have to be expressed in languages inaccessible to government agencies or supporters. The only choice available for this is the use of a local language.

Gumperz (1982) has extended the notion of language to include contextual cues such as intonation. While the absence of these cues in offline communication might lead to misunderstanding, the absence of sounds and other speech features in digital communication might lead to even more miscommunication. Several communicative intentions might be marked visually with icons as cues for context in which the message should be interpreted, but digital communicants still need to follow what Gumperz (1982) called “pre-existing rules” for language use in online communicative situations. Online communicants must actively use language not only when misunderstandings occur but also when negotiating their relationship with the interlocutors, the statuses and with the comments that they make. Only through correct interpretation of the contextualization cues that communicative intents can be correctly comprehended.

For Singh, Lele and Martohardjono (2005), the pre-existing rules can also be affected by the history of intercultural encounters and discriminations within the community. They argue that in intercultural communication, communicants rarely interact as equals. Such inequality is never personal but it results from power imbalances in the community. In England, migrants of South Asian backgrounds have less demographic and political power than native Anglo-Saxons and they are expected to integrate into the host community and their dominant culture. Such asymmetrical power relations do not only appear in immigrant situations, but it also exists in multilingual countries like Indonesia. While the dominant Javanese can use their native language in public and other Indonesians could have access to it through the national media, the less dominant ethnic groups cannot use their language as such. When they do it, they do it for stigma or accept stigmatized responses. By the same token, favourable treatment or lack of legal consequences to negative comments made by government supporters might make them to freely express their thoughts in the national language. To a great extent, the use of nicknames has also contributed to widespread online antisocial behaviours such as *flaming* (aggressive communication), *trolling* (hostile communication at all social levels) and *cyber-bullying* (targeting one person with harmful intentions) (Tagg, 2015). On the contrary, less equal treatment to non-government supporters might have contained them from involving in such misconducts and when they do they have to find ways to avoid the consequences. One of the strategies in the study is through the use of native, local languages, as a strategy for defusing potential conflict (Tagg, 2015). This is a new dimension in the study of computer-mediated communication and epistemological parameters need to be clearly explicated.

FACEBOOK AS A SITE FOR MEDIATED MULTILINGUAL INTERACTION

Some studies have shown that computer-mediated communication including FB is indeed multi-ethnic and multi-lingual (Tagg, 2015; Herring, Stein, and Virtanen, 2013). Not only does it involve people of different linguistic background, but it also empowers the dominant languages to become more prevalent. In the first place, the historic invention of internet by North American and British scientists has favoured English language and typography as dominant. The political and economic status of some countries like China, France, German, Italia Japan, Korea and others have also given rise to the use of their languages on the internet. While endangered languages can progress if speakers use them in online interaction, they have to make use of English orthography and, thus, submit their languages to typographical imperialism. The dominant and minority languages being used online give us heteroglossic nature of the situation and this gives us the opportunity to explicate the linguistic inequities.

FB as multilingual interaction can also be seen from two contradictory sides: anonymity and self-promotion. Tagg (2015) defines anonymity as the use of nicknames rather than actual names and with the use of fewer social cues as to the identities of the account owners. Hiding one's self-identity is conflicting with self-promotion. Communicants in social media like FB sell their egocentric promotion of selves through selfies and self-absorption in internet for the purpose of creating and managing intended public images for themselves. Yet, anonymity inhibits them from the imageries. Tagg (2015) has shown that various linguistic resources (such as speech styles, registers, and textual features) have been used for this promotion. Of particular interest is online code-switching, that is, the practice of shifting languages during online interaction. Like in oral offline multilingual discourse, this shift in written online interaction depends on a number of factors (i.e., the participants involved, their relationship, social identities, educational background, topics being discussed, and the private or public nature of internet settings) and serves a number of similar purposes (i.e., contextualization of identities). Unlike oral offline communication, online communicants make use of numerous resources (e.g., texts, visuals, typography, orthography, and combination of them) and this multi-complex nature has led to a critical re-examination of code-switching in favor of translanguaging as a way of adequately illustrating the hybrid use of language resources in currently emerging multilingual and trans-local contexts of online communication. With these resources, online users can still maintain self-privacy while at the same time self-promoting.

Tagg (2015) has identified five dimensions essential to the study of online language use and identities: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality and partialness. Emergent social identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, age, political affiliation, etc.) are created in previous history of interaction and transported to the current one. People perform these macro-social identities and position themselves in them. These positions are indexed through the linguistic and non-linguistic resources that they choose in online communication. The choice of these resources is rationally calculated based on cost and benefits of the choice in relation to the contexts of and the demands in the interactions. Since the choice is beneficially contextual, online users must continually reposition themselves and others in the course of online interaction, drawing on linguistic and non-linguistic resources to index particularly intended social identities.

NETNOGRAPHY OF FACEBOOK COMMUNICATION

Hymes' (2005) and Gumperz's (1982) ethnography of communication has been a major methodological framework in the studies of offline communication (see Foley, 1997; Saville-Troike, 2003), but its principles have not been used in online interaction. Ethnographies of online business communication (see Karen & Baggen, 1981), business administration (Morals, Santos & Goncalves, 2020), online teaching and teachers (Kulavuz-Onal & Va'squez, 2013), and online communication (Georgakopoulou & Spilioti, 2016b; Herring, Stein & Virtanen, 2013, Tagg, 2015) have been labeled netnography of online communication (Kuzinets, 2010). Essential principles therein should be teased out to form a methodological framework of the current study.

A number of netnographic researchers have actually shown principled models for ethnography of digital communication. Kuzinets (2010) illustrates that netnography follows the traditional ethnographic procedure. They are: (a) research planning, (b) identifying research

questions and online communities for observation, (c) data collection, (e) interpretation, (f) ensuring ethical standards, and (g) research representation. Though pioneering in the field, Kuzinets' (2010) concept of netnography is applicable only to business marketing, but his ideas have been adopted in communication-related social media studies. Caliandro (2018), for example, argues that netnography starts with identification of an online community for observation and it must fulfill these criteria: (a) it has at least two members, (b) it has a platform for communication, (c) members are interactive to each other, and (d) membership sustains over time. Kulavuz-Onal and Va'squez (2013) have suggested the following key points for netnography: fieldwork, participant observation, participation in main events, digital archive of email communication, interviews with key informants, reflective observational fieldnotes, and screen shots of observation to complement fieldnotes. Wang and Liu (2021) call for more immersed observation, in-depth interviews, multiple texts, and triangulated methods of analysis so that netnographers can arrive at thick and locally deep description of the communities rather than big data and bird eye view of them. For these purposes, researchers should delve into not only the highly visible and frequently shared contextual data but also the metadata, scattered in several internet sites (Airoldi, 2018). These data are nowadays available so that netnographers can go deeper into private and public lives of individuals (Kaihko, 2020). These principles and others above are the methodological frameworks of the current study.

THE STUDY

The study is based on a corpus of FB interactions recorded from January 2020 to August 2021. The participants were recruited from two opposing groups: Tadpoles (government supporters) and Foxes (the opposition). Three online networks from each group were intensively observed. Those from Tadpoles are JoPeKu, JoUnRa, and JoMaPRI, while those from Foxes are PraMaSia, RePSUn, RePemPS². These groups were open for netizens with different political affiliation, which involved local admins and members (i.e., the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo language speakers) and they raised locally-relevant topics.

For comparison, groups with closed membership were also observed: Tadpoles (JoPro NTB) and Foxes (Taska NTB). Twenty key players from each group were randomly selected based on active participation in the FB debates but, for the current study, the focus was limited to Covid-19 related issues. They were closely monitored on the daily basis in participant and non-participant modes. Data were collected by using netnography of communication where FB interactions were screen-captured, digitally stored, and coded in Excel program for analysis. Netnographic data collection with smart applications (such as Atlas.ti and web crawler applications) has been attempted but protected sites like FB has always prevented other applications to retrieve information from them. Thus, data collection by screen shooting and manual copying and pasting the messages in Microsoft Excel files has been used for data collection. Although time-consuming, this was the only possible method. The data were then analyzed with content and ethnographic analyses through which the languages and the expressions of fear, power and anger were identified, classified, described and explained. For ethical and security reasons, all participants have been pseudo-named.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study is based on 52,946 instances of digital interactions involving the national, Indonesian language (26,857 instances, 50.7%), local languages (20,383 instances, 38.5%), English (4,728 instances, 8.93%), and other languages (978 instances, 1.85%). As shown in Table 1, 49% were used for exercises of power, 29% for expressions of fear, and 24% for expressions of anger.

Table 1. Frequency of Languages Used in Expressions of Fear, Power and Anger

Dimen- sion	Group	Languages								Total	
		Bahasa Indonesia		Local*		English		Others**			
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Fear	FOXES	3256	72.16***	6827	80.14***	682	49.96	172	51.96	10937	74.26***
	TADPOLES	1256	27.84	1692	19.86	683	50.04	159	48.04	3790	25.74
	Total	4512	30.64	8519	57.85***	1365	9.27	331	2.25	14727	27.82
Power	FOXES	991	4.51	367	68.22***	1046	35.85	165	50.61	2569	9.97
	TADPOLES	20992	95.49***	171	31.78	1872	64.15***	161	49.39	23196	90.03***
	Total	21983	85.32***	538	2.09	2918	11.33	326	1.27	25765	48.66
Anger	FOXES	101	27.90	7663	67.66***	221	49.66	162	50.47	8147	65.42***
	TADPOLES	261	72.10***	3663	32.34	224	50.34	159	49.53	4307	34.58
	Total	362	2.91	11326	90.94***	445	3.57	321	2.58	12454	23.52
	TOTAL	26857	50.73***	20383	38.50	4728	8.93	978	1.85	52946	

Note:

* Local Languages: Sasak, Samawa, and Bima languages

** Other Languages: Arabic, Chinese and Korean languages

*** Significantly different with its comparative variable ($p < .001$)

The study also shows that the Tadpoles significantly exercised power more (90%) than the Foxes (10%) while the latter produced more expressions of fear (74%) and anger (65%). With one-way ANOVA, we found that the difference is significant ($p < .001$).

With regard to the use of languages, we also found interesting patterns. Bahasa Indonesia was used in majority by the Tadpoles (the government supporters) in order to exercise power (96%) and anger (72%). While the Foxes, the non-government supporters, used the language more for expression of subordination and fear to the government's legal and political power (72%). Various local languages have been used in the corpus (Sasak, Bima, Samawa, and other languages) and they have been mainly used by the Foxes as a means of power exercises by commenting on and criticizing government policies (68%), and as a safe means of expressing anger (68%) by questioning or ridiculing what they have seen as inconsistent in the government health measures. Note that the expressions were so blatantly vulgar that supposedly the national language was used for these expressions, the netizens might have been accused of violating the law and become the subject to legal punishment.

Languages in Use

The study shows that FB citizens, particularly the Foxes, used multiple linguistic competences in the online ideological battles as strategies to avoid possible legal consequences. English,

Arabic, and local languages assumed to be inaccessible to the government officials and supporters were used as a means of covering disapprovals and discomforts with government policies. The study also shows how politically-marginalized speakers (the Foxes) make use of varied, multilingual linguistic competence as linguistic resources and symbolic capital to deconstruct and challenge the hegemony of the government and its supporters (the Tadpoles). Let us now examine how these linguistic resources were used both as a means of contextualizing legal and political fear and anger and as a means of exercising socio-political power.

Expressions of Fear

Data in Table 1 indicate that the majority (74%) of fear of legal consequences due to FB publishing comes from the Foxes and they express them mostly in the local language (80%) and in Indonesian language (72%). The majority of fear is, nonetheless, expressed in the local language (58%) and the Indonesian language (31%).

Although expressed in the local and the national languages, the nature of the fearful experiences is different. Local languages were used in fear of legal and political consequence. The languages are mostly used when criticizing government policies on control of public movement (i.e., PPKM), economic consequences of the public movement control (i.e., whether or not the government provides daily economic needs of the people), provision of health protective materials (i.e., masks), health supplement (i.e., medicine and vitamins), containment of infected patients (i.e. whether or not they are actually infected), vaccination urgency (i.e., whether or not it is essential), booster vaccination urgency (i.e., whether or not the booster dose is necessary), travel permits based on vaccination records and PCR or rapid tests, and the assumed benefits of the policies to businesses allegedly belonging to the policy-makers or their families. While some of this fear has valid bases, most of them, however, is based on false information. Take, for an instance, Extract 1 below.

Extract 1: Expression of Fear in Sasak Language



Heri (a 25 y.o. English teacher, a Fox) has just distributed a video of European doctors questioning the reliability of coronavirus and the validity of vaccination measures and, thus, criticizing the government policies. His friend (Noar, a 27 y.o. office worker, a Fox) jokingly reminded him of the consequences, typing “*Be careful, (you will be) detained later. Your children are still young, my darling*”. Heri realized the danger of what he has done and, rather

than criticizing the government policy, he would be ready to submit himself to the head of the local police (i.e. Mr. Narko). He said, “*If that what the government wants to do, I won’t fight back. I will take myself to Mr. Narko*”, expressing his fear of the national government and the local authorities and the socio-political consequences he might receive for such misconduct.

Though expressed jokingly, the severe fearful experience was real. Reminding and replying fellow netizens in the local language(s) were assumed to be an effective way of avoiding potential detection by government agencies and their smart technologies. The national language is mostly used, firstly, to share factual information about the virus, the symptoms, the dangers, the treatments, the current state of the virus nationally and locally and, secondly, to discourage others from spreading hoaxes or fearful news. Extract 2 is one example of these.

Extract 2: Expression of Fear in Indonesian language



Vina (a 35 y.o. mother, a Tadpole) and Yosi (a 23 y.o. professional, a Tadpole) were responding to news from a reputable national news agency shared by another Tadpole in the network. The news was about massive cases of viral infection to school children only after one school day after two years of school closure. The limit of the contact has raised doubts about the validity of the information therein. Just like other members of the network, Vina raised unanswered questions in the hoax news, worrying about the safety of her children at school: *It’s crazy that little children are infected. What is the symptom? No symptoms at all but positive? And the families are all positive?* Realizing that all this is not true, she looked at the case as a never ending health business of tracing contacts and then self-funded hotel isolation which is not good for the people but for health and hotel industries.

To Yosi, such news is a conspiracy between the news agency and the authorities to scare people by following law and order and paying expensive health checks for travels which are not medically beneficial for the people, but it is financially beneficial for authority-owned health business enterprises. Although the news is untrue, such belief is shared by many in the network, the Foxes and the Tadpoles alike.

Exercises of Power

In general, exercise of power was played by the government supporters, the Tadpoles, and this constituted almost all power exercises in the corpus (90%). Without fear of legal consequences, they could almost freely and explicitly wrote whatever they wanted both in the national language (96%) and in English (64%). The non-government supporters, on the contrary, exercised power in the local languages (i.e., Sasak, Sawawa, or Bima languages) (68%) which are neither accessible to national authorities nor to their AI instruments. Let us examine how these languages were used for power exercises.

Extract 3: Exercise of Power in Indonesian language



Power exercises by both parties are quite explicit as they can insult each other in derogatory words. The Foxes are more conservative with solo fighter or hit-and-run tactics. The Tadpoles, on the contrary, are more solid in this case and they will collaboratively attack a single-fighting Fox if they did not hide or run away from debates. As shown in Extract 3, three Tadpoles (i.e. Patih, Unggul, and John) were working together to attack Udhie Rustam, a single-fighting Fox, who posted on the network that the coronavirus was cursed from God due to evil deeds and bad morality of the national leaders. Though he never attributed the referents with ‘setan’ [devil], Patih accused him of saying so and, at the same time, metaphorically implying him and his fellow group members as dirty low level animals called “gerombolan pret” [Indonesian: herd of foxes]. Unggul extended the accusation by attributing the Foxes to the now-banned Islamic Defenders’ Front, Islamist hardliners, which are portrayed as crime-mongering religious group. John went further by racially insulting Udhie and his fellows for having drunk camel pee too much. The racial insult (i.e. *Kadrun* [Indonesian: desert lizard]) was

even added with a physical insult (i.e., *lucu* [Indonesian: funny], *menghibur* [Indonesian: lovable]) and intellectual insult (i.e., *goblok* [Indonesian: deadly unintelligent]).

Not only legally bookable, such insults are also culturally inappropriate. In face to face communication, it can lead to physical confrontations. In FB communication, however, the Tadpoles can say whatever they like without fear of legal punishment. When the Foxes make similar insults, the Tadpoles would remind them about arrest and punishment. The Foxes will usually become inactive or leave the interaction completely for the next day.

In response to the Tadpoles' severe insult, the Foxes usually use their native languages as a means of exercising power. Here, they could say dirty words to the Tadpoles without any fear of being legally detained although they could have been incarcerated if the words used are accessible to legal authorities. We can see numerous examples of these and one of which is presented in Extract 4.

Extract 4: Exercise of Power in a Local Language



In this extract, Miftah (24 y.o. teacher, a Fox) shared a video in which a national leader was promising an important economic benefit. Knowing that the leader was notorious for his inconsistency, Mas D, another Fox, was in doubt with the credibility of this economic promise. But rather than attributing the lie to the speaker, he referred to the lying actor to the news sharer (Miftah) expecting him not lie again, as usual, at this time. He wrote, *Ain(a) to?imu cowa* [Bima: I expect you do not lie this time]. Avoiding the Indonesian word for 'bohong' [Indonesian: lie] or 'dusta' [Indonesian: big lie], which is detectable with the AI tracking system, Miftah instead switched to *cowa* [Bima: lie] when saying that lie has been the essential character of the person named *PakDe* [Javanese: uncle].

With this word, potential insult therein is undetectable although the use of *PakDe* has made the referent more obvious to public eye. To a Tadpole like Moh S, the so-called *PakDe* is a man of good nature and only that poor work ethic and reputation of his ministerial cabinet has ruined his reputation. In the Fox group, soft comments from a Tadpole, either in Bahasa

Indonesia or a local language, is quite common and they will use the native language only to remind fellow ethnic groups in the Foxes of potential legal dangers.

Interestingly, power exercises were also executed in English by both groups. Strong expressions for disagreement like *bullshit*, *fake news*, *hoax*, *fucksin* for *vaksin/vaccine*, *fundemic*, or *plan-demic* were in English. Attribution of the virus with particular ethnic groups like *Miss Corona*, *Madame Corona*, or *Wuhan virus* was also in English. However, English is mostly used by educated members of the groups to remind others of the danger of fake news and the educational, economic, and health risks facing the nation due to the pandemic situation. Extract 5 is a case in point.

Extract 5: Exercise of Power in English



In Extract 5, Wong Wangi (35 y.o., politician, a Fox) and Bob Curucili (42 y.o., businessman, a Tadpole) were responding to questionable news on an online news agency about unsubstantiated new cases of infection. This news was viral and attacked by both the Foxes and Tadpoles. To a Fox like Wong Wangi (WW), such news was intended as an advertisement to promote more vaccination, anti-gen and PCR tests and sale of masks as well as hand sanitizers as a government's way to obtain money from people. If this message has been expressed in the national language, it will imply that WW is accusing the news agency of spreading bad news for financial gain and this can be considered a bookable offence.

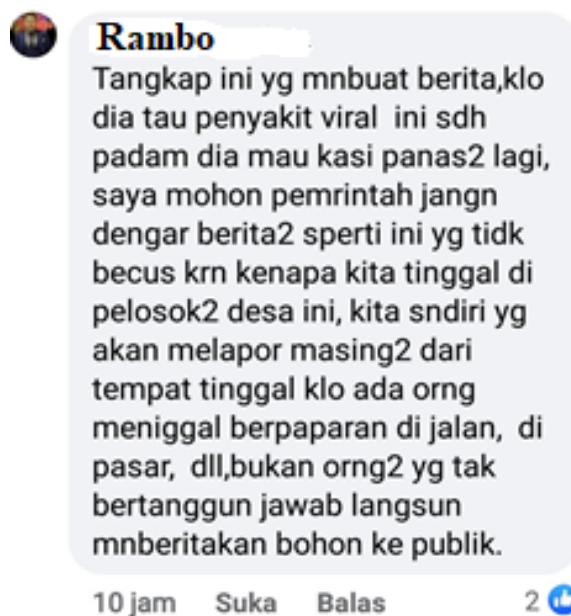
To a Tadpole like BC, the joking nature of the accusation was understood and he also produced in the national language a joking insult to WW and the Foxes in general as those who believed in an Islamic cleric (Ustadz Abdus) Somad who was falsely accused of attributing coronavirus as God-sent creature to protect Uyghur community from the Chinese authorities.

Expressions of Anger

Expressions of anger in the corpus were largely produced by the Foxes (91%) and they did them dominantly in the local languages (68%). The Tadpoles also expressed anger and they mostly did them in the Indonesian language (72%). Nevertheless, there is no significant different in the expressions of anger in English.

Expressions of anger by both the Foxes and the Tadpoles were mostly related with the loss of job and education opportunities due to the community closure. When supporting to the government as in Extract 6, the language is the national language and the status or comments were meant for public consumption. But when the status and comments were against the government position as in Extract 7, the language used was the local language.

Extract 6: Expression of Anger in Indonesian language



In Extract 6, Rambo (a Tadpole) was angry with the fake news and the fellow netizens about the case of coronavirus-related deaths after the virus was no longer contagious. He said the news was false and expected the group not to distribute it anymore as it might instigate a new public worry. He reported that he lived in a village where the case was reported to have happened. In case of coronavirus incidents, he expected that only those who really knew the incident are responsible to report it. He also begged other members of the group to not share news that they knew nothing about.

In Extract 7, anger was addressed by the Foxes to the president and the government. In the first place, the virus and all data about it were constructed as unreal and made-up for the benefits of those in power. It is in the context that the comment made by SJF “lawan” [fight] should be understood. For Junaedi Juned (JJ), only the president (i.e., Jokowi) and his minister (i.e., Luhut, but written as “luhud”) really took care (‘runguq’ [take care]) of the case, using the positive meaning of ‘care-taking’ in a pejorative sense, that is, taking care of something for personal benefits. As there was no reported case after the recent mass gathering in the international MotoGP race, the recent rise in the reported cases was constructed as a political game made by a grandfather (*papuk* [grandfather]) who reported to have collected 100 million data of people supporting a third term for the then-president. It is clear that the referent here is Luhut Binsar Panjaitan, the coordinating minister of investment, who is considered as the right hand of the president, a strong figure in the Indonesian politics who was also called *Opung* in the Batak language [*opung* = grandfather]. Nonetheless, clearly explicating the name was seen as socio-politically dangerous to the commenter.

Extract 7: Expression of Anger in Local language

The same strategy was implemented by Irfan Ipenk when he wrote *Nd(e)k bae nd(e)k ne pelot sak pinak kasus* [Why don't they themselves die those who create the cases?] which pragmatically means "May God kill those who wrongfully create the cases with their own hands". This is in itself interesting to scrutinize. In the first place, it might be understood as a reminder that cases should have not been made up if the authorities believed in the after life. Secondly, the expression is made as a prayer that the case makers die [*pelot* = violent death] of the virus or the policies that they have made up. The dubiousness of the claim is prepared as a strategy in case of future detainment due to the comment.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how members of Indonesian FB communities with opposing political standpoints express fear, power, and anger with Covid-19 and the government undertaking of its outbreak. The study has shown that fear of the virus, particularly by the Foxes, is constructed in the national language while fear to the government and its agencies is created in local languages. Fear expressed in local languages constitutes the majority of data. The study has also found that government supporters, the Tadpoles, exercise power and anger over non-government supporters in the national language. This constitutes the majority of data although this group also uses English as a means of power exercises. Non-government supporters, however, discussed virus-related government policies in local languages as a means of expressing anger and exercising power over the government and its supporters. In conclusion,

languages as linguistic resources in communities have here been selected as strategic means of exercising political standpoints. This indicates that those with socio-political power and anger can openly exercise power in mutually accessible language(s) without fear of being reprimanded, while politically-marginalized multilingual individuals have to secretly exercise power and anger by making use of multilingual competences as linguistic resources and symbolic capital for discursively decomposing and contesting the socio-political hegemony. The use of local languages might have been prompted by legal and socio-political fear, but, it is in its essence a symbolic exercise of power and anger as well.

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² All names of groups and individuals have been changed or reasons of ethics and individual privacy and security.