

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Indonesia is a diverse country. Its diversity is a result of the expansive and heterogeneous geographical conditions, which consequently contribute to the varied sociocultural conditions, making Indonesia one of the largest countries with a multicultural society (Duryat et al., 2021). The multiculturalism is reflected in Indonesia being home to over 1,128 ethnic groups (Raharja, 2017). Each ethnic group has its own customs and practices, including speaking its own language (Forshee, 2006). More than 700 languages are spoken across Indonesia, making it the second most linguistically diverse country in the world (Aji et al., 2022). The nine most commonly spoken are Batak, Balinese, Bugis, Banjar, Madura, Malay, Minangkabau, Sundanese, and Javanese (Abdullah et al., 2014). The linguistic diversity is further enriched by the variations of more than 1,100 dialects (Frederick & Worden, 2011). Such linguistic diversity reflects the multiculturalism of Indonesia, particularly its multilingualism.

While multilingualism is a standout quality for Indonesia, a unifying language is essential. The necessity is a result of Indonesia's cultural value placed on embracing diversity while striving for unity, as represented in the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*," which translates to "Unity in Diversity" (Baihaki,

2017). At its core, it is a manifestation of the third principle of the *Pancasila* ideology, “*Persatuan Indonesia*” which translates to “Unity of Indonesia” (Permana & Mursidi, 2020). The groundwork was laid with the 1928 Youth Pledge known as *Sumpah Pemuda*, which vowed Bahasa Indonesia as the language of unity (Antari, 2019). The pledge reflects how Bahasa Indonesia serves as the country’s national language, as the role of the linguistic concept is to symbolize unity (Ridwan, 2018). The role facilitates the linguistically diverse population to communicate effectively, fostering a sense of unity through having a shared national identity (Astawa, 2022). In the year 1945, Bahasa Indonesia was officially declared as the state language, as outlined in Chapter XV, Article 36A of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The status of Bahasa Indonesia was further solidified as both the national and state language through Law No. 24 of 2009 on the National Flag, Language, Emblem, and Anthem, and was later reinforced by Presidential Regulation No. 63 of 2019 on the Use of Bahasa Indonesia (Utama, 2020). The acknowledgment of Bahasa Indonesia as both the national and state language reflects its essential role as a unifying language, facilitating effective communication among the diverse population.

The role of Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language is further enhanced through the implementation of the high-context communication style. A common language serves as a unifying force within a country by providing a communicative space where cultural values naturally emerge over time, particularly in formal

settings (Белов & Кропачев, 2020). The culture of Indonesia is deeply rooted in the value of mutual cooperation known as "*gotong royong*" (Pasteruk, 2020). Again, at its core, it is a manifestation of the third principle of Pancasila, "Unity of Indonesia" (Permana & Mursidi, 2020). The value of mutual cooperation illustrates the collectivist culture of Indonesia (Gupta & Sukanto, 2020). Collectivist cultures are closely linked to the high-context communication style (Nishimura et al., 2008). As a matter of fact, the cultural values of Indonesia, including the value of unity, are presented through the high-context communication style (Saputri & Saraswati, 2017). Such a style is expressed through indirect communication supported by subtleties like non-verbal cues and shared understandings (Hall & Hall, 1990). In this manner, the need to express explicit details is reduced, as individuals can interpret the "unspoken" based on their knowledge of the shared understandings (Gupta & Sukanto, 2020). Accordingly, the possibility of face-threatening acts is also reduced (David et al., 2016). Owing to the nature of indirectness, this style prevents conflicts that arise from misunderstandings more effectively than the low-context communication style (Qing, 2008). As a result, this communication style aligns with Indonesia's cultural value of unity, as it is regarded as a way of showing politeness while striving to maintain social harmony (Zhang, 2019). As an illustration, a study reveals that in order to avoid conflicts and maintain good relationships, university students in Indonesia prefer to use a high-context communication style that is indirect and complex when evaluating a speaker's impromptu speech, prefacing

criticisms with compliments (Arifin et al., 2013). Altogether, the role of Bahasa Indonesia as a unifying language is further enhanced through the implementation of the high-context communication style, which reflects the country's cultural value of unity.

The shift to digital communication presents challenges to Indonesia, where the high-context communication style further enhances the essential role of Bahasa Indonesia in preserving the country's cultural value of unity. Subtleties like non-verbal cues and shared understandings, which support indirect communication in the high-context communication style, are optimally facilitated in face-to-face communication (Jokinen, 2009). On the other hand, digital communication presents limitations on the use of these elements, resulting in an absence of subtleties (Severskaya, 2019). The lack of physical presence in digital communication limits the use of body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, which are essential for expressing these subtleties (Quintes & Ullrich, 2019). In addition, the global nature of digital communication brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, resulting in gaps in shared understanding (Vangen, 2017). Yet, subtleties are essential in the high-context communication style (Salleh, 2005). These limitations highlight the suitability of the low-context communication style in digital communication, as it relies on direct communication that is easier to understand without relying on subtleties (Usunier & Roulin, 2010). In consequence, communication patterns in the digital world are

reshaped, presenting challenges to the existing ones (Anista, 2023). The growing suitability of the low-context communication style highlights how the shift to digital communication presents challenges to the high-context communication style, which further enhances the essential role of Bahasa Indonesia in preserving the country's cultural value of unity.

The challenge is further exacerbated by the common use of explicit expressions in the low-context communication style of digital communication. As digital communication presents limitations on the use of subtleties, individuals are compelled to compensate for the absence by using explicit expressions (Chung, 2013). As a result, swear words and other explicit forms of expression become more commonly used (Jay, 2018). In essence, swear words are used to explicitly express intense emotions (Candra & Megandari, 2019). The role of swear words in compensating for the absence is illustrated by the prominent use of swear words in the videos of many popular YouTube content creators, including those who are Indonesian (Ahdiyat, 2020). To better illustrate the situation, an Indonesian YouTube content creator named Reza Oktovian is recognized not only for his gaming skills but also for the audience's criticism regarding his frequent use of swear words in his videos (Tampubolon, 2018). Likewise, a comedy-focused YouTube channel named Majelis Lucu Indonesia is well-known for its use of swear words in humor throughout its videos (Shalekhah et al., 2020). A similar pattern can be seen in the videos of another Indonesian YouTube content creator

named Keanu Angelo, whose audience accepts his use of swear words in humor as a form of entertainment (Mulyana et al., 2023). While the use of explicit expressions like swear words compensates for the absence of subtleties in digital communication, it contradicts the country's cultural value of unity.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

While the use of swear words compensates for the absence of subtleties in digital communication, it contradicts the cultural values of Indonesia. The culture of Indonesia places immense value on unity, as a manifestation of its national motto and the third principle of its ideology (Constitution of Indonesia, 1945). To preserve this value, the high-context communication style is implemented in Bahasa Indonesia (Saputri & Saraswati, 2017). Such a style is expressed through indirect communication supported by subtleties like non-verbal cues and shared understandings (Hall & Hall, 1990). In this manner, the need to express explicit details and the possibility of face-threatening acts are reduced, as individuals can interpret the “unspoken” based on their knowledge of the shared understandings (Gupta & Sukanto, 2020; David et al., 2016). That way, conflicts that arise from misunderstandings are prevented, thereby maintaining social harmony through the practice of politeness (Qing, 2008; Zhang, 2019). This contradicts the use of swear words, which by nature are offensive (Fägersten, 2007). By nature, swear words are generally offensive due to their use in expressing intense emotions like resentment, anger, and contempt (Candra & Megandari, 2019; Afrilya et al., 2021).

In Bahasa Indonesia, most swear words are derived from taboo references, including animals, inferior objects, body parts, supernatural entities, kinship terms, unpleasant circumstances, sexual activities, and indecent professions. For instance, animals like "*anjing*" (dog) and "*bangsat*" (bed bug) carry an offensive nature as they are used to offend others. Similarly, inferior objects like "*tai*" (feces) are used to humiliate others, while terms associated with sexual activities are used to express the immorality of others (Wiyana, 2004). Since swear words are derived from taboo references, the influence is more powerful than non-swear words, resulting in interpersonal consequences like emotional pain, including causing shock and disturbance to others (Vingerhoets et al., 2013). This contradiction presents a research problem, highlighting the need for further study into why many Indonesian YouTube content creators continue to use swear words in their videos.

The contradiction is further exacerbated by YouTube's role as a digital mass media platform. YouTube is a video-sharing platform that facilitates its users to upload videos for other users to watch and interact with (Burgess & Green, 2009). Through this facilitation, YouTube has become one of the most popular platforms in the digital world (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017). Its popularity is reflected in a total of 2.5 billion global users (We Are Social, 2023). With billions of users worldwide, YouTube facilitates one-to-many communication by enabling videos to reach its massive base of users (Lillie, 2008). This extensive reach fulfills the defining characteristic of mass media, which lies in its ability to leverage

technology to broadcast messages to a massive audience (McQuail, 2010). As such, YouTube serves the role of providing information, knowledge, education, and entertainment that holds the power to influence its audience (Azis, 2021; Vito & Meilinda, 2019). In this context, the influence can be better understood through the Hypodermic Needle Theory, which explains how mass media holds the power to inject messages directly into the minds of its audience, thereby shaping societal values and norms (Lasswell, 1927). This makes mass media a powerful tool of social control, capable of influencing thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors on a massive scale (Moemeka, 1988). To better illustrate the influential power, exposure to YouTube is closely linked with behavioral changes, particularly in youth, which influences their lifestyle choices, personality styles, and communication practices (Abdullah et al., 2021). In consequence, exposure to specific behaviors on YouTube can influence the audience to follow such behaviors (Ahern et al., 2015). The influence is particularly powerful in Indonesia, which ranks fourth globally among countries with the most YouTube users, with over 139 million users (Statista, 2023). As a result, the use of swear words in the videos of many popular Indonesian YouTube content creators further exacerbates the contradiction through its power to influence such use to a massive audience.

Considering the cruciality of the problem, exploring a prominent subject like Gofar Hilman contributes to the broader phenomena. Gofar Hilman's YouTube channel reaches a massive audience, with over 1.36 million subscribers

and 428 million accumulated views across 1,450 videos (Social Blade, 2024). This massive reach positions him as a macro influencer, placing him in a prominent position within the hierarchy of influencers (Şenyapar, 2024). His YouTube videos are particularly popular among youth, especially the series titled “*Ngobam*” or “*Ngobrol Bareng Musisi*,” which translates to “Chatting with Musicians,” where he interviews popular Indonesian musicians (Arizka et al., 2020). His popularity among youth further highlights his prominence as a subject of study, especially considering that exposure to YouTube is closely linked to behavioral changes in youth (Abdullah et al., 2021). This results in the possibility of specific behaviors, including the use of swear words, to be followed by his youth audience (Ahern et al., 2015). In addition to his significance, his audience perceives him as a pleasant and entertaining YouTube content creator (Ananta, 2023). This perception is noteworthy in the context of his YouTube videos, which include the use of swear words, given that Indonesian youth typically have a negative perception of the use of such words (Khusna, 2022). What makes this even more interesting is how the massive reach of macro influencers, including Gofar Hilman, enables them to influence a massive audience, making them desirable for brand collaborations and marketing campaigns (Daniel, 2020). This is especially evident in his YouTube videos, which often present brand collaborations despite his use of swear words. Considering his massive reach of audience, popularity among youth, and history of brand collaborations on YouTube, exploring Gofar Hilman’s perspective on his use of swear words in his videos adds valuable insights to the broader phenomena.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

To guide the research in exploring Gofar Hilman's perspective on his use of swear words in his videos and to add valuable insights into the broader phenomena, the specific problem that this study aims to address is articulated as follows: "Why does Gofar Hilman use swear words in his YouTube videos?"

1.4 Purpose of the Study

To add valuable insight into the broader phenomena by exploring Gofar Hilman's perspective on his use of swear words in his videos, the specific objective this study aims to provide is exploring Gofar Hilman's perspective on the use of swear words in his YouTube videos. Through an in-depth exploration of his perspective, the findings provide a deeper understanding of why he uses such words in his YouTube videos.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Considering the cruciality of the problems, conducting this study is essential due to its potential to add valuable insights into the broader phenomena, thereby enriching the overall field of knowledge. Studying a prominent subject like Gofar Hilman adds valuable insights into the broader phenomena of swear word usage among many popular Indonesian YouTube content creators by providing his perspective on such use despite the exacerbated contradiction. The substance of

this study lies in both academic and practical purposes. Academically, it fills in the gaps in existing studies by providing Gofar Hilman's perspective, adding valuable insights into the broader phenomena. Practically, it deepens the problem's understanding of relevant groups, leading to necessary improvements within the field.

1.5.1 Academic Purposes

This study serves its academic purpose by filling in the gaps in existing studies regarding the use of swear words on YouTube and the Self-presentation Theory. While existing studies have explored these topics, certain areas remain open for further exploration. To begin illustrating the gaps, one study explored Gofar Hilman's language use in his YouTube videos, focusing primarily on the use of 52 slang words and leaving the use of swear words remain open for further exploration (Amelia, 2020). This study fills in that gap by focusing primarily on the use of swear words in his YouTube videos. To further illustrate these gaps, a study shows that YouTube content creators tend to present themselves in a positive and idealized manner (Bakr, 2023). On the contrary, this study provides a unique perspective on how Gofar Hilman uses swear words, which are closely linked to negative perceptions, as a self-presentation tool on YouTube. While an existing study in a series of his YouTube videos "*Sekut FM*" has addressed Gofar Hilman's self-presentation, it does so from the audience's point of view, focusing on how they perceive

his self-presentation (Saputro, 2021). Instead, this study explores the intent behind his use of swear words in his YouTube videos as a self-presentation tool. Ultimately, this study serves its academic purpose by exploring these aspects to fill in the gaps by providing Gofar Hilman's perspective on the use of swear words in his YouTube videos as a self-presentation tool, thereby adding valuable insights into the broader phenomena.

1.5.2 Practical Purposes

This study serves its practical purpose by addressing community needs that leads to social improvements, deepening the overall understanding of relevant groups. By studying Gofar Hilman's use of swear words in his YouTube videos, this study not only adds valuable insights by filling in the gaps in existing studies but also adds valuable insights for YouTube content creators as well as the audience. Understanding how the use of swear words serves as a self-presentation tool can inform YouTube content creators about the potential influence of such use on audience perception. Furthermore, this study can guide discussions within the community about the appropriateness and impact of such use in digital communication, providing a deeper understanding of the problem for relevant groups. Ultimately, the insights resulted from this research can lead to constructive dialogue and initiatives aimed at improving the social fabric of the relevant groups' community.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five consecutive chapters, following a flow as outlined below:

1) Chapter 1: Introduction

This study commences with an opening chapter that presents an overall view of the context that serves as the groundwork for the entire study. It begins by uncovering the circumstances surrounding the research topic to understand the value of the general problem that prompted the study. This is followed by a section that narrows the focus to specific problems by highlighting the gaps between ideals and reality. The chapter proceeds to clearly articulate the problems derived from the gaps, followed by a list of objectives that the study seeks to obtain. It then concludes by presenting the potential contributions to the field, highlighting the value of the study.

2) Chapter 2: Literature Review

Building upon the groundwork of the study, the second chapter presents a review of existing research and scholarly works relevant to the research problems. The first section of the chapter involves evaluating, summarizing, and synthesizing literature to present a context of where the current study fits in the field. This is followed by a theoretical framework that presents a structure of the

relationship between these theories and the problems being studied. The chapter concludes by highlighting areas in existing research and scholarly works that require further exploration, particularly those addressed in the study's problems.

3) Chapter 3: Methodology

As the framework is set in the previous chapters, the third chapter begins with identifying the nature of the research to select a suitable research approach. This serves as the cornerstone for the study's research design. The selection of the research design is done with the consideration of the unit of analysis being studied. The chapter proceeds to present the methods used to collect the necessary data, followed by an outline of how the data is interpreted into valuable information. The chapter then outlines the applied tests to ensure the information is valid. Finally, it concludes by discussing the limitations of the research that are derived from the chosen research approach and design, as well as other challenges that influence the study's outcomes.

4) Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

After the necessary data are collected using the methods mentioned in the third chapter, the research findings are presented and further discussed in the fourth chapter. It begins by organizing the research findings according to the research questions. The chapter then interprets these findings, discussing their value to the theoretical framework outlined in the second chapter. This section

highlights how the research findings align with or challenge existing literature, providing information on the value of the research findings for the field.

5) Chapter 5: Conclusion and Suggestions

This study concludes with a final chapter that synthesizes the valuable information gained from the research, highlighting how the objectives were met and what contributions it makes to the field. The chapter then presents the limitations encountered during the study, offering suggestions for future research to explore unanswered questions and expand upon the current findings. Ultimately, the chapter outlines the value of the study while supporting further investigation into related aspects in the field.