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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL LEVEL LANGUAGE USE & SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

As language usually shapes people's socio-economics status, people has become opinionated that what education degree/level an individual has can be seen by the way they communicate. This paper explores whether it is also true for higher education people use less standardized language when speaking in daily life and if social media helps low-educated individuals to speak as formal as higheducated ones. This paper employed a mixed-method approach with participants from the same level of education: undergraduate students. Findings indicate that indeed people with higher education level usually has distinctive style of communication compared to those with lower education yet it depends on the context of addition situation. In the to communication style, the proability of social media helping to form formal communication for lower educated individual is possible as they expose

people to all kinds of information, including language. This research is expected to contribute to raising awareness about the relationship of education and communication style.

Keywords: Communication Style, Higher-Educated Individuals, Lower-Educated iIndividuals, Social media, Sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of communication which humans use to convey ideas, feelings and expression (Chaer, 2014). However, language is not only a tool of communication among humans but also a representation of social identity, educational background and cultural influences. Kridalaksana (2014) mentioned that language is dynamic, which means it keeps changing adapting to changing times based on the influence of social, culture and technology. How education level influences the way someone speaks is exceptionally connected to someone's socio-economics factors. That individuals who are able to achieve a high-level of education usually come from a family that is financially supporting that leads them to express themselves like those that have a middle-upper class accent or dialect (Hanus, 2016). For example, in the United States, standart English is used as the only acceptable code used in formal or education setting and that variation of dialects or accents are usually looked down (Curzan, Queen, VanEyk & Weissler, 2023).

However some studies suggested that people from lower-education are not impossible to achieve the same way of communication as those whose education is high (also known as standardized "language") (D'almeida & Ramachandran, 2023) and that it enhances learning opportunities and shaping the vocabularies, speech styles and exposure to various linguistic influences (Zainal & Rahmat, 2020).

This study intends to find how education level influences the way people speak and the truth behind higher-educated people using a more standardized language beyond academia, which is in daily life. This study also intends to figure out if social media is, in reality, that helpful in shaping low-educated individuals to communicate the same way as those with higher-education level. Both are using the perspective of undergraduate students due to undergraduate students being on the level where they are in the middle of the "higher-level" and "lower-level" education.

By examining this phenomenon through the eyes of undergraduate students, the gap between education level will help people to be more aware on the truth of the education level's generalization in shaping how people communicate and if it is true that social media plays a part in shaping it. In addition, it is expected that if those statements are proven to be true, both education/school or college and social media should be taken seriously as a way of improving the style of one's speech.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language difference is possible because language consists of grammatical and phonological features that are distinct or foreign from one language to another. Not only that people speak different language can influence the way they think or their economic status, it can also identify the educational level one can have based on their dialect (Haig & Oliver, 2003). It is not without an evidence. A quantitative-method previous study in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia suggested that individuals with higher education levels are prone to use regular language that are understandable for all the people across the country, use a sophisticated and well-formed sentences meanwhile those with lower education levels tend to use regional dialects that are not used in all regions (Ibrahim, 2020). This statement goes along with the theory of Basil Bernstein's code theory in which he introduced his idea of elaborated code and restricted code (Bernstein, 1971). Elaborated code means that there is a type of language/dialect/accent used by those whose education is higher, usually with complex grammar and vocabulary and there is a restricted code which usually is used by those with a lower-education level and among the characteristics are informal and simpler grammar.

Social media has been known as being the platforms and means for people to be more exposed to new things. That includes finding new terms, access to knowledge of a language, language study and many things that can shape the way they communicate. For instance, a study conducted by Zainal & Rahmat (2020) suggested that social media platforms give a positive impact in building English vocabularies among college students in Malaysia. Marshall McLuhan's coined the term "The Medium is the message" which is quite the evident here where he quoted that shapes human's communication patterns by exposing them to a huge amount of information (McLuhan, 1964). This gives a hint that social media can also shape the way people from low-education to speak the same way as those whose education level is high.

METHODOLOGY

The method in this article uses a mixed method approach, namely a method with research that emphasizes in-depth and descriptive understanding of phenomena, experiences, or meanings combined with some numerical data provided. This mixed-methodology is more concerned with the accuracy and adequacy of the data. The emphasis in qualitative is data validity, namely the correspondence between what is recorded as data and what actually happens in the setting under study the setting under study.

This research method designed with a survey approach to analyze the influence of education level and social media on language use in everyday life. Data were collected through a questionnaire compiled using Google Forms. The questions are both provided bilingual (English and Indonesian) in case participants have a hard time understanding the question in English. There are 5 Participants in this study that came from the same education background: undergraduate programme.

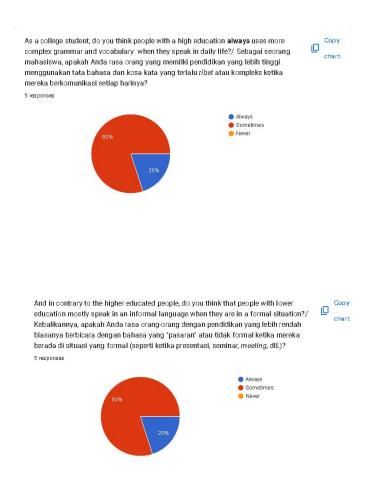
The questionnaire used in this study consisted of closed questions and was designed to measure several aspects, such as language use patterns in everyday conversation, vocabulary variations based on education level, grammar preferences and sentence structures, communication styles influenced by social media, critical thinking in language use, and the role of environmental exposure in shaping communication patterns.

Then the data obtained will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure different language use patterns and communication styles among different educational groups. In addition, comparative analysis will be applied to explore significant differences in learning aspects, grammatical structures, and the impact of social media on the way individuals communicate.

RESULTS

The results show a clear relationship between the use of certain code and education level as well as the way social media makes a path in creating the code.

For the first question whether they think people with a high education uses more complex grammar and vocabulary when they speak in daily life, it suggests that 80% answers sometimes and 20% always. The same result appears for the second question which is the contrary to the first question: whether those with low education level use informal words in a formal situation.



The third question discussing about the probability of lower-education people to speak the same way as those with high education show the tendency to depend on how willing, familiar and accostumed they are with the language used by those with high level of education.

Participant 1:

Bisa saja jika sebelumnya mereka pernah terpapar pada lingkungan yang seperti itu, sehingga mereka dapat gambaran tentang cara berbahasa secara formal dan itu kembali lagi kepada mereka jika mereka ingin menggunakan cara berbicara tersebut.

(It is possible if they have once been exposed to that kind of surrounding that they get the picture of speaking formally and (again) it depends on the individual whether they want to apply that style of speaking

The final question regarding to the possibility of social media influence as a means to shape people's way of speaking 4 out of 5 respondents agreed that social media can affect those with lower education to speak formally as those whose education level is high.

Participant 2:

I think social media has a role and impact in terms of communication. In addition, if it can be utilized properly, then people will know how to speak formally, for example, they can practice or see educational videos about good and correct formal speaking. So, it can be useful for people who want to learn how to speak well and correctly.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it was found that individuals with higher education tend to use more complex grammar and vocabulary in everyday communication. However, most respondents stated that this is situational and depends on the context of the conversation. In addition, respondents also revealed that individuals with lower education can still use formal or academic language if they have previous experience or exposure to an environment that requires the use of the language. Other factors such as social media were also mentioned as tools that help individuals with lower education acquire better language skills, allowing them to speak in a more formal style.

This finding is in line with some of the literature that has been reviewed. For example, Ibrahim's (2020) study found that individuals with higher education tend to use more structured and widely understood language, while those with lower education use

more regional dialects that are not always understood throughout the region. This is also in line with Basil Bernstein's (1971) language code theory, which divides language use into elaborated code (more complex, used by individuals with higher education) and restricted code (simpler, common among individuals with lower education). However, in this study, it was found that language use by individuals with higher education was not always complex in all situations, which is slightly different from Bernstein's more rigid view in dividing language codes based on education level.

In addition, the role of social media found in this study is also in line with the literature reviewed. Zainal & Rahmat (2020) stated that social media contributes to increasing vocabulary and language comprehension, especially among students. This supports the finding that social media can help individuals with lower education to access more formal and academic language sources, allowing them to communicate in a way that is more similar to individuals with higher education. This finding also supports Marshall McLuhan's (1964) idea in the concept of "The Medium is the Message," where media, including social media, shape human communication patterns by providing broad access to information.

Overall, this study strengthens the theory that education does have an influence on language variation, but also adds a new perspective that factors of experience, exposure to academic environments, and social media can play a role in bridging the language gap between individuals with different levels of education.

CONCLUSION

This study utilizes a qualitative approach coupled with a survey to establish how educational levels affect language variation in everyday life. The results show that although individuals with higher education utilize more complex grammar and lexicon, their language usage remains situational and not necessarily formal in all interactions. At the same time, less educated individuals are also able to communicate formally or in an academic style if they have been exposed and experienced. This validates the hypothesis of the interconnection of language and education, as advocated by Basil Bernstein, but adds a

different perspective which states that not only is formal education the architect of language, but the surroundings and media utilized in day-to-day living are also involved in shaping language.

But this research has several limitations that can be considered by subsequent research. One of them is the respondents' number is still small, therefore the result gained cannot be generalized widely. Furthermore, this research has not explored in depth other social and cultural factors influencing the use of an individual. Therefore, a more detailed and a more intensive analysis is required to develop a more comprehensive picture of the interaction between education, environment, and technology in influencing language variation in society.

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