

# Language and Identity:

## Promoting Dolly's Community Identity through Language Use

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**Abstract—** One of several language functions in social communication is expressing an individual's self, revealing who an individual is or how is his/her possible personality/character. Within wider context, language may also convey a certain community identity. Language becomes a means for community representation. This study focuses on Dolly community changes and its representation and communication by using language and visualization. After Dolly prostitution was closed in 2014, Dolly community has been changing substantively. They are transforming their self from localization area into a thematic home industries tourism destination. These closing and changing entail new identity. Language becomes one of several symbolic resources to convey socio-cultural production of Dolly community. Thus, this study aims to explore language variety used by Dolly local community and are introduced by Dolly supporting stakeholders to communicate and socialize Dolly's local culture and its new brand by using qualitative method. The data are collected through direct observation, collected pictures/photos, visualization and any symbolic representation and direct communication with Dolly local community. The data show that Dolly's changes, new image, brand and character are symbolized through Dolly language variety and symbolic representation in several areas. The first is language functional variety representing Dolly's home industries products. The second is written language variety used to socialize Dolly's changing character. The third is written messages communicating and informing Dolly's social and cultural events and communities. The fourth is messages introduced to control Dolly, induce and communicate certain intended character changes. The fifth is visualizations and symbolizations of Dolly's past identity and remaining symbolic representation depicting Dolly community's memory on their history. The study indicates that language element variation is community social and cultural products. It emerges as the result of, changes and adapts to community's social and cultural action.

**Keywords—** *community identity, Dolly community, social changes, social and cultural products, visualization, representation*

### I. INTRODUCTION

This Language is a tool for various/multi-communication. It can be used for interpersonal and personal communication, plays cognitive, affective, social, cultural or specific functions. One of language multi communication functions is conveying social and cultural changes and development. A community transformation tends to imply multi-dimension changes. These changes may cover character, social and cultural behavioural, values, physical environment, space, social environment and life transformation. This community development brings about identity changes. They produce new face, name and brand for this developing community.

Language has significant roles in introducing, establishing, socializing and maintaining these changes and identities. Through language, the developing community can inform their new identity to others and re-imaging themselves. Moreover, language can assist the developing community to establish new self perception and generate motivation for sustaining changes and their new identities continuity and be aware of their new identities. As socio-cultural production, language can grow, change, be re-modified even vanish. Its' continuity and development depends on human's socio-cultural actions/activities. This implicates that language are created through community's socio-cultural practices.

Dolly has been experiencing significant and substantive social and cultural changes. Before 2014, Dolly community relies their life on prostitution business producing high omzet, however suddenly that business is abolished by Surabaya local government. From the previous business, Dolly community could receive high income without having high level of education. However, the business violated social, cultural and religious values. Recently, Dolly community must change, absorb and practice socially favoured moral and cultural values. This changing was started in 2014 since Dolly localization is closed. Today, is still in the process of changing themselves. This transformation needs time and commitment to change. One of several symbols which indicate Dolly's

transformation is the use of language generating motivation and socializing Dolly's changes.

## II. PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There are two main issues explored in this study. Those are:

1. How language may represent Dolly's community changing identity?
2. How this language relates to socio-cultural context of past and today's Dolly?

This study identifies/examines Dolly's changes and the emergent of some language elements representing Dolly's changes. The study also highlights relationship between the purposes of the emergent language and Dolly's socio-cultural contexts.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Principles of Language

Language cannot be separated from human's social and cultural practices. It is not only the end fixed product of community, but it subjects to changing. These changes are relevant to human's dynamic socio-cultural actions. Language permeates social life (Krauss & Chiu, n.d., p. 2). Thus, language tends to be dynamic, following the socio-cultural direction and mobility. Language characterized as "open, dynamic, energetic, evolving and personal" which influences the complexity of communication (Shohamy, 2007, p. 5, cited in Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p. 16). Since language belongs to certain society, it responds to particular communities' needs to express things. Language appears within cultural situatedness (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012, p. 1). Language has social function. It is used for purposive communication, know and comprehend the world, a means for perceiving the world (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p. 16). Language is an instrument to convey certain ideas or information (Nath, 2010, p. 3). Since language tends to operate and function in socio-cultural contexts, it may change following the social changes. There are several connections between language and society: social system affects language structure and behavior, language may determine social system, language and social structure influence each other and there is no relationship between language and social structure (Wardhaugh, 2006, pp. 10-11). This is also relevant to Sapir (1912, p.228, cited in Sharifian, 2017, p. 87) who argues that language reflects physical and social environment which is indicated mostly through its vocabularies. Because a certain community is different from other communities, language may vary from one society to other societies. As mentioned by Hickey (n.d, p. 37) language varies as certain language may have different features describing social significance in certain community.

### B. Society Change and Identity

A society identity is not static. It may change as it is following the development of community. Identity is changing and multi-dimensional (Vahed, 2002, p. 77). Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012, p. 69) define identity as "traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is." Identities have a

focusing function in which it can direct self or others to examine certain trait instead of other characteristics (Oyserman, Elmore and Smith, 2012, p. 69). Identities can also be motivation of behavior (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000, p. 718). Moreover, identities can affect economic production (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). These identities are formed through social interaction of individuals within society (Thongpanya, 2017, p. 2). There are several types of society changes as the result of acculturation process: physical, biological, political, economical and cultural changes (Berry, 1992, n.p.). Berry (1992, n.p.) identifies three types of behavior on changes: adjustment, reaction and withdrawal. Furthermore, Berry (1992, n.p.) mentions that the changing culture can cause behavioural shift and accumulative stress.

Group changes have direct consequences on its' members identities. Changes of context or environment encourage individuals to adapt (Ethier & Deaux, 1994, p. 244). The changes of society require social relationship changes of its' members and capacity of each member to identify their selves to the changing identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994, p. 244). Ethier & Deaux, (1994, p. 244) argue that social change to focus into new social identity by using new social supports. However, changing social identity can also ignite conflict (Ethier & Deaux, 1994, p. 244-245).

### C. Dolly Community's Changes

Dolly area is inhabited by approximately 10.000 population. They inhabit 5 Rukun Warga (neighbourhood) from 15 Rukun Warga (neighbourhood), which are located in Kelurahan Putat Jaya, Kecamatan Sawahan, Surabaya. Before Dolly localization was closed on June 28, 2014, Dolly population are economically dependent on the operational process of Dolly (Putri, 2016). After the prostitution was closed, the prostitution houses were purchased by Surabaya government. Consequently, Dolly community must search other occupations. To empower Dolly community, Surabaya Government provide skill trainings. Moreover, Surabaya Government establishes several Usaha Kecil Menengah/UKM (small and medium industry) to support Dolly society and open new job employment. Recently, the majority of Dolly people have been changing, but still the prostitution may not disappear entirely (Nugroho, 2016).

## IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts qualitative method as a means to explore, collect and examine the data. Qualitative researchers aim to examine issues/problems emerge in natural situation (Neuman, 2006, p. 151). Thus, this study intends to explore natural phenomena in Dolly highlighting language variety used by Dolly to change their past identity and socialize their new identity. The data are collected by using some methods. Those are direct field observation and direct communication with Dolly local community. A field research is one of qualitative research styles in which researchers directly examine society in natural context (Neuman, 2006, p. 378). The collected data are in forms of some pictures, field notes and communication notes. The collected data are categorized into themes, analyzed and explained. Qualitative researchers

classify data into some categories based on themes, concepts and other classifications (Neuman, 2006, p. 460). Wolcott (1994, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 161) in making an ethnographic interpretation of the culture-sharing group, the researchers interpret the data or re-examine the theory to base their analysis. The collected pictures, field notes and communication notes are classified based on the emerging themes, analyzed and described.

V. DATA REPRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Dolly community has been experiencing substantial changes in several areas, including language. We examine



Figure 1. “Samijali,” Product of Dolly UMKM t/innovations emerging from Dolly’s changes.

The first area is the growth of new vocabularies and

is the name of “Samiler” chips product made by Dolly’s community and is provided in various flavours or “Serundeng Dolly Mbak Min”, which revives local products and made by Dolly’s women community, “stiwor,” the acronym of “stik wortel” (carrot stick) and “kriukzzz,” the name of snack made from “kebab.” This indicates that Dolly community is capable of incorporating their locality to create innovation. They do not totally leave their past positive identity. Dolly’s community is not only using local language to brand their home industries products, but also adopting vocabulary from other (foreign) language to represent their local/unique product, for example “Orumy,” name of flavoured drink made from pure seaweed, an innovative local product from Dolly. They are also being creative by adapting foreign language, such as “Kopi Dheplock,” the brand of coffee. This indicates that social and cultural practices encourage the growth of creative vocabularies. Language reflects the condition of environment (Sapir, 1912, p. 227). The growth of new vocabularies is relevant to the concept of how language is influenced by environment through content/subject matter and its grammatical form (Sapir, 1912, p. 228).

These vocabularies are emerged also for the purpose of product marketing and branding. These brands show Dolly’s identity and uniqueness. This indicates that language can emerge because of economic activities and human intention to communicate/express a specific purpose. Language is substantively product of human’s thinking (“what is language?,” n.d., p. 11).

The second area is the growth of vocabulary based on local culture. Language is the product of certain community’s culture (“what is language?,” n.d., p. 11). This is reflected in social and cultural phenomena in Dolly. After the closing of Dolly prostitution/localization in 2014, many social and

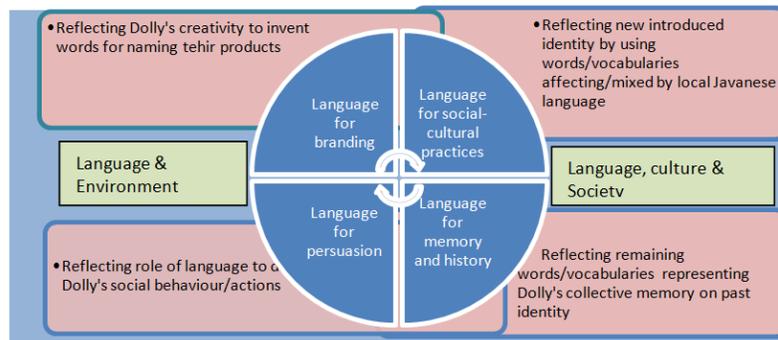


Figure 2. Language diversity emerging from Dolly’s Changing Identity

acronyms to name/represent Dolly’s products. There are several examples of home industries products named by Dolly’ society itself. They create their products and language (vocabularies and acronymies) to sell their products. Several examples of these are “Samijali” (Samiler Jarak-Dolly) which

cultural activities are stimulated to re-introduced and re-grow local culture. Some cultural events/series which are introduced and revived in Dolly recently is “Dolly Saiki” (Dolly now). This Dolly Saiki (DS) is consisting of several events, including “Dolly Saiki dodolan” (selling), “Dolly Saiki gawe

batik (making batik), “Dolly Saiki ngeremo” (dancing remo) These social and cultural events are named by using local Javanese language. Dolly Saiki, for instance, the vocabulary “saiki” (now) represents Dolly’s uniqueness in using language. Instead of using “Jaman now”, a trending vocabulary which is nationally widely used by Indonesian to represent “now,” Dolly community uses “saiki,” which indicates both adapting popular language, but at the same time being different from others. This validates and reinforces the concept of language and culture relationship. Language cannot exist without the presence of culture and culture cannot survive without having element of ordinary language (Mahadi & Jafari, 2012, p. 232).

The third language phenomenon which is emerging and relevant to Dolly changes and new identity is the slogan language and persuasive messages. For example no drugs/anti drugs slogan in Dolly environment. The aims of this message is directing/leading certain intended behavior and growing new values as a part of their new identity. It is expected that the use of slogan in posters and public boards can motivate Dolly society to change. Persuasive messages can appeal certain emotion and change behavior (Simunich, 2008). Boards and posters can be used as media of facilitating changes. Media can facilitate construction: self construction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), identity formation (Vittadini, Siibak, Reifová & Bilandzic, n.d) and social construction and learning (Gikas & Grant, 2013). In this Dolly context, language becomes shaper of thinking. Language forms human thought and language is formed by human thought (“what is language?,” n.d., p. 11). Language is influenced by its’ environment and affects its’ environment (Mühlhäusler, 2003, p. 2, cited in Nash & Mühlhäusler, 2014, p. 28).

The fourth language phenomenon is some remaining words representing Dolly’s former identity. Dolly intentionally does not change and leave several words/vocabularies which signify their history. Some of those words are road/street names or place names, such as “Dolly,” “Jarak,” “Dolly”, “Putat Jaya Collection,” “Jarak Arum.” Dolly community wants to maintain that words as they believe that those words are representing their distinctive characteristics. In this situation, language plays a role of social memory device. Through these words, Dolly community can remember their past stories. This also indicates the inseparability of language from its’ ecology. Language is attached to its’ ecology and one of several characteristics of ecologically-embedded language is words shows relationship between human and environment (Nash & Mühlhäusler, 2014, p. 28). How Dolly preserves some words as their history is also one of several properties of ecologically-embedded language. Language represents society’s historical memory on their relationship with other people and nature (Nash & Mühlhäusler, 2014, p. 28). Ecological language tends to be specific and distinctive (Nash & Mühlhäusler, 2014, p. 32).

The study indicates that Dolly’s identity changes generate variety/diversity of language words/vocabularies. These are words/vocabularies/names of their home products, socio-cultural activities or historical words. There are several

language phenomena emerge from Dolly changes, including the language branding/marketing purposes, language for social and cultural events, persuasive language for directing behavior and language for memory and history. These language functions show that language serves different functions/roles adapting to society’s different needs. This study also reinforces relationship between language and environment and the reciprocal influence of language and society in which language is determined by society and at the same time language influences society

## VI. CONCLUSION

The changing of Dolly brings about some impacts. One of those is the growth of some language phenomena. These language phenomena include the diversity of language, especially the diversity of language functions and elements/words/vocabularies. There are four areas which show diversity. The first is language used to represent Dolly’s home industries products which are related to language for branding. The second is the use of language for representing social and cultural events. This language phenomenon is closely link to Javanese local culture and language. The third is the use of language linked to persuasion which aims to direct and shape Dolly’s community behavior. The fourth is language linked to Dolly’s memory and history which tends to be maintained as part of their identity. This study indicates the relationship between language and environment. Language is the product of society’s social and cultural activities within certain domains. The changing of society brings about changes of language. Moreover, language shapes society’s thinking and behavior. It may direct collective actions.

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