

The Variation of Swear Word “Kleng” and its Flexibility in Denpasar

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the Balinese swear word *kleng* and its variations used by teenagers in Denpasar. They use this word in various types whose functions differ depending on the context of the situation. Basically, *kleng* is a swear word used to insult others or show anger. However, some people can use this word to show intimacy toward others and humour. This study investigates variations of the word *kleng* and its flexibility used by the young generation in Denpasar based on linguistic anthropology. This research is descriptive research through a qualitative approach. The data were collected from conversations of the young generation in several coffee shops in Denpasar. Besides, the social media platforms, namely Instagram and Tiktok, were also used as secondary data. Based on the results, this research found several variations of the word *kleng*, including *naskleng*, *kle*, *klieng*, *kli*, *nanas klengkeng leci*, and *klek*. These variations reflect psychological, social, and linguistic functions. This research underscores language's importance in reflecting evolving cultures, feelings, and social dynamics, offering insights into an ever-changing society.

Key words: Denpasar, *kleng*, Swear Words, Variation, Function.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, every language has its swear word. *Kleng* is one of the Balinese swear words in Denpasar. Teenagers, or the young generation, mostly use this word to express their feelings while conversing. According to the Balinese language dictionary translation, this word comes from the root word kelet "penis" (Wiki, 2023). According to Mahayana et al. (2020), the word *kleng* is included in the taboo words related to sexual organs. This word is generally used in the context of insults. Therefore, its use should be careful, especially in public places. However, shifts in language development, particularly those influenced by migration technological and media developments, have taken this word beyond conventional boundaries. Denpasar, as the centre of development on the island of Bali, has witnessed a significant cultural transformation due to the migration of people from various regions. This phenomenon not only affects social and economic aspects but also has an impact that can be seen in changes in the language used by residents. Migration has become one of the main factors in language change in Denpasar, creating

interesting linguistic variations to be explored and analysed. One of the most obvious impacts of migration on language in Denpasar is vocabulary enrichment. The Balinese language, previously thick with local elements, has now been formed with words from other languages. For example, new terms related to technology, commerce, or pop culture from migrant origins have been accepted into everyday vocabulary. This phenomenon reflects cultural adaptation and acculturation due to interactions between different cultural groups.

Migration has had a significant impact on language change in Denpasar. Enriched vocabulary, grammar changes, accent variations, and style influences result from interactions between cultural groups. Despite the challenges of maintaining the local language and culture, an inclusive approach and efforts to preserve traditions can help maintain the distinct linguistic diversity of Denpasar. Migration has shaped Denpasar into a city with rich cultural layers, and through wise management, language change can be a source of strength in building an inclusive and respectful society. In line with this context, the word “Kleng” can also show the closeness of the speaker and listener. Language changes include lexical and grammatical aspects and the desired style and nuance in communication. In an environment affected by migration, using words such as “Kleng” can reflect efforts to maintain social ties and identity as an indication of changing cultures and increasingly diverse environments. (Made, 2020) reveals that the word “kleng” is used by teenagers in Denpasar to express emotion and social interaction, reflecting a unique verbal culture within the youth group. This research shows how language is a tool for conveying emotions and strengthening social bonds between teenagers.

Kleng has many variations, such as *kle*, *klet*, *klieng* and others. This research focuses on variations of the word *kleng* expressed by teenagers in Denpasar. This Young Generation is increasingly heterogeneous, and the word *kleng* which was initially taboo for some people, has become a common expression. Even content contains the word *kleng* and how everyday people use this expression, especially the people of Denpasar. This content can be found on social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and others. The influence of technology, especially social media, has significantly impacted changes in the use of words like *kleng*. Even though the word has negative connotations and is taboo in local culture, its use is becoming more prevalent among teenagers, especially in cyberspace. This phenomenon can be observed on various social media platforms where words that used to be avoided in everyday conversations are frequently found in comments, posts, and messages between users. This phenomenon shows how technology has changed language norms and changed pre-existing boundaries. Something is taboo based on the norms and agreements that apply in society. Therefore, taboo activities and expressions found in a community cannot be separated from cultural impacts (I. M. Mahayana et al., 2022; I. M. A. Mahayana et al., 2022).

In the context of Balinese culture, which is rich in traditions and values, the change in the word *kleng* also describes how Denpasar youth interact with their own cultural identity. The use of the word may indicate some shift in language norms,

where words previously considered taboo are now used more openly. However, it is still important to understand that these changes are not just about language development but also reflect broader changes in social and cultural values. This phenomenon aligns with what Putri (2019) stated: using words like *kleng* and *bangsat* has nuances related to group affiliation and social identity. This word can be used in casual conversation to show intimacy and friendship between teens. This research illustrates how language can reflect group identity and intimacy between youth members in Denpasar.

For some people in Denpasar, expressing emotional state by using the word *kleng* or its variations is inevitable. It shows that this word can be used in any explication or statement. For example, why can it be *kleng*, *kesiap cang* “damn, I’m shocked as hell” when a person is surprised? Why can it be *kleee gagah* “damn, you’re so cool” when someone is amazed by their performance/appearance? On the other hand, this phenomenon illustrates how language is a living entity, always changing with time and culture. The use of the word *kleng*, which originally had certain meanings and implications, has evolved into new meanings and connotations in the digital environment. This research shows the flexibility of language, especially swear words *kleng*, in adapting to changes in the social and technological environment. Therefore, this research investigates forms or variations of the word *kleng* and its functions used by the young generation in Denpasar.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

Research related to swear words or offensive language on the certain word has been conducted by several researchers previously, for example, Sugeng and Sriyanti in research entitled "Penggunaan Kata "Jancuk" Sebagai Ekspresi Budaya dalam Perilaku Komunikasi Arek di Kampung Kota Surabaya (The use of "Jancuk" as a cultural expression in Arek's communication behavior in Surabaya)" and research entitled "The Flexibility of the "F" Word" by Machmudah. According to the research that were done previously, the Balinese swear word “kleng” was not thoroughly conducted and discussed by researchers. This research is motivated by Anderson & Trudgill (1992) and Jay (2009), stating that a swear word can be considered flexible because it can serve several functions, such as expressing anger, joy, humour, showing solidarity, harming someone, etc.

The Theory of the Variable.

Linguistic Anthropology

Foley (1997) used the term anthropological linguistics and calls this term a branch of linguistics that deals with the position of language in a broader social and cultural context, the role of language in combining and sustaining cultural practices and

social structures. In relation to the field of anthropolinguistics, there are several cultural activities in society that are of interest to anthropologists.

Wardough in Mahayana et al., (2022), stating that taboo or swear words refer to a prohibition inside a social society. In contrast, Jay used profanity to denote the concept of taboo. Profanity is employed to convey connotative meanings to elicit emotional responses or exert an emotional impact on the recipients (Jay, 1992). Moreover, Jay asserts that individuals typically ascertain specific words within particular situations based on the interplay between the speaker and listener, as well as the impact of the context on the discussion. The framework that serves as the reference for this research is the anthropological linguistic framework proposed by Duranti (1997). He divided the main study of anthropological linguistics in examining language, culture, and other aspects of human life into three aspects, namely performance, indexicality, and participation. Therefore, this research focuses on the swear word *kleng* concerning these three aspects.

Swear Words

Swear words refer to a category of terms widely regarded as taboo and unacceptable for usage in any language. According to Ljung (2011), swearing is among the various linguistic tools speakers use to enhance their communication by providing additional emphasis. Other emphasis techniques, including stress, intonation, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions, often complement this statement. Swear words encompasses not only individual words but also extends to phrases or complete sentences. Individuals possess unique methods of expressing and releasing their feelings, and cursing is among the several ways individuals express their emotions. Swearing expresses banned words through interjections and can be observed in spoken and written forms, for instance, within informal conversations in everyday life.

Ljung (2011) categorized the act of using swearing into two types: swearing and non-swearing. He asserted that the term "hell" exhibits a non-literal nature when employed in exclamatory contexts, such as "hell!" or "Oh hell!" According to their established criteria, these exclamations are categorized as instances of swearing. The previously mentioned term is employed in both its literal sense and in the context of religious discourse, such as the phrase "Those who have sinned will be sent to hell". This particular usage does not qualify as swearing when assessed using the identical criteria.

Functions of Swear Words

Anderson (in Karjalainen, 2002) stated that there are three motives in the use of taboo words, namely psychological (psychological motives), social (social motives), and linguistic (linguistic motives). The psychological function for cursing come from a variety of sources: language acquisition, personality traits, child-rearing practices, social rewards and punishments, human sexuality and intimacy,

and emotional needs. The social functions of swear words typically encompass the objectives of derogation, amusement, and the expression of identity and solidarity. Last but not least, linguistically using swear words fulfils a particular purpose for individuals who perceive the coarse and offensive characteristics of swearing as an effective means of intensifying their verbal expressions.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This research used qualitative descriptive method. This method emphasizes data acquisition with observation, interviews, and documentation. According to Cresswell (2013), qualitative approach involves researchers engaging in a research process to understand the subjects being studied. In essence, it signifies that research is not only a procedure but also an endeavour to comprehend the subjects of study by the researcher. The locations chosen include Veteran Coffee, Tan Panama, Frontier coffee shop and *Tukad Korea*. The four locations were chosen because many teenagers or young generation often visit these places.

Instrument and Procedure

The observation strategy used in this research is non-participant observation. This strategy is defined as a strategy in which the researcher does not participate directly in collecting data. Researchers only observe and record events or events found in public space. After determining the informant, the next step is interview the informant. The informants are the younger generation aged 15 to 30 years, totalling 20 people. This interview focuses on an in-depth exploration of informants' understanding of culture, especially the word *kleng* and its flexibility. After conducting interviews and successfully obtaining recordings, the transcription was done using a laptop device. The data of this research were also taken by documentation approach. Documentation is written information related to the data that is the focus of a study. In this case, instagram and tiktok (social media) was used as secondary data.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed discourse analysis as a methodology for gathering, categorizing, examining, and interpreting the data in the process of developing the data analysis procedure. The acquired data were subjected to analysis utilizing an interactive model of data analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), their interactive model of data analysis encompasses three simultaneous streams of work, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions/verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the flexibility of the word *kleng*. Flexibility, in this case, refers to the variations and functions of the word *kleng* used by the young generation in Denpasar when communicating with others. The results showed that the variations of word *kleng* include *kleng/naskleng*, *kle*, *klieng*, *kli*, *nanas kelengkeng leci*, and *klek*. Each can be used for a particular function depending on the context of the situation. Further information on the flexibility can be seen as follows.

Kleng/Naskleng

Nas is short for *tendas*, which means head categorized as *basa bali kasar* (harsh/lowest level of Balinese language). It is similar to the Javanese language, a testament to the closeness of Balinese and Javanese culture. *Kleng* is equal to "penis" or "the genitals of a stallion". When combined with the word *nas*, it makes the word *naskleng*, which means the head of the stallion's genitals, referring to the context of being a jerk/stupid/ugly. According to Jay (1992), swear words are likely to be interpreted connotatively by the listeners rather than denotatively. The following are the data related to the word *kleng/naskleng*:

Data 1:

A: We Bangsat, sing cocok sing otak cai otak jeleme, cicing mare luung. Muan ci gen polos bikas ci care kuluk. Nawang ci *Kleng?* Bangsat ci!
(Hey asshole! You're an idiot! If I had a penny for every brain cell you have, I'd have nothing. You know, you're a dickhead!)

B : Ci Bangsat!
(Fuck you!)

Data 2 :

A : Ije ci not? Mai ajak pesu mih!
(where you at? Let's hang out)

B : Cang di Badung ne ..
(I'm in Badung..)

A : *Kleng bilang wai ci ngorang di Badung nok!*
(I wonder, every time I asked you to go out, you always say you're in Badung)

B : Nah kudiang men.
(Well, there's nothing I can do)

The phrase *nawang ci kleng? Bangsat ci!* is one of the types of aggression of swear words. If translated literally, it will be "do you know what *kleng* means?" The expression above is a rhetorical question. Based on McEnery in Ljung (2011), the expression is similar to a personal insult referring to an identified entity (*kleng*). The sentence is delivered in a confrontational manner toward the recipient. The expression can also potentially use psychological function and be provocative, as the sentence expresses the speaker's frustration by using a grammatical pattern as a separate utterance. The utterance *Kleng bilang wai ci ngorang di badung nok!* is one type of dismayed swear word. That sentence conveys the speaker's displeasure at their inability to get along with others. Nevertheless, this utterance also has a social function because it demonstrates the speaker's intimacy with the interlocutor, as the interlocutor is not showing any signs of offense.

Data 3 :

A : *Naskleng, bangke jaenne nok!*

(It is so fucking delicious!)

B : *Ajan kle, jaen sajan!*

(No doubt)

Data 4 :

A : *Naskleng... Hebat khe!*

(Damn, you're amazing!)

B : *Iya ci, hebat kali dia!*

(Exactly. She's so fucking fantastic)

The utterance "*Naskleng bangke jaen ne nok!*" conveys the speaker's emotion of appreciation for the culinary experience they have experienced while also indicating the interlocutor's agreement with this opinion. Therefore, this expression contains both psychological and social functions. Similarly, the utterance "*Naskleng ... Hebat khe!*" contains psychological and societal implications as the speaker conveys their respect through swearing.

Kle

Kle represents a subtle form of *kleng*, containing several connotations contingent upon intonation. These connotations include but are not limited to amazement, anger, sadness, shock, interest, and even confusion. This word is usually linked with the word *nok* used to express certain emotions. The term *kle* is frequently employed by teenagers and is particularly common in Denpasar. The data presented in this analysis were taken from teenagers in Denpasar and sourced from a TikTok movie posted by the user "Jalanin aja dulu." The video explores the diverse applications of the term *kle* about different intonations and associated emotional states. Emotions can be expressed through emojis, visually represented symbols incorporated into written communication to effectively transmit sentiments to the intended recipients.

Data 5 :

A : *Kle nok* 🤔🤔🤔🤔
(Fucking amazing 🤔🤔🤔🤔)

B : *Biase gen ...*

(It's nothing though)

Data 6 :

A : *Kle!* 🤔🤔
(Dammit! 🤔🤔)

B : *hehehehe*

Data 7 :

A : *Khe tau mereka pacaran ?*

(You know what? They're just going steady with each other recently)

B : *Haaahhh? Kle nok! Terus, terus?*

(You must be kidding! Really? What then?)

Data 8 :

- A : Anjingku mati nok 🤔🤔🤔
(My dog has just died 🤔🤔🤔)
B : *Kle nok* 😡😡😡
(My condolences 🤔🤔🤔)

In the context of data 1, the term *kle* shows a significant psychological function as it expresses admiration. The words *kle* and *nok* in the data above come together and become *kle nok*, serving as an expletive. The word *kle* is followed by the clapping emoji, while the facial expression of the individual depicted in the image conveys a sense of adoration. Similarly, data 2 shows that *Kle!* indicates the individual's fury in the video, which is further reinforced by the presence of furious emoticons and the visibly irate facial expression exhibited by the man shown above.

In Data 3, the utterance *kle nok* exhibits a state of surprise. In this case, two teenagers were conversing in a coffee shop, gossiping about their friend who had just started dating and having a relationship. Meanwhile, the utterance *kle nok* in the next data shows a dominant sentiment of sadness, as seen by the crying emoticons showing frustration and despair. The utterance *kle nok* is an expressive illocutionary act because it expresses sympathy toward others. It shows that the word *kle*, considered impolite, can be used in mourning in certain contexts and situations.

Hence, the data from 1 to 4 exhibit a robust psychological function associated with the term *Kle*. Furthermore, data 1 through data 4 have a pronounced social function since this term is restricted to intimate relationships and not often employed in casual conversations.

Klieng

The term *klieng* is an alternative form of the word *kleng* that is not exclusively employed by teenagers but rather crosses age boundaries. The phrase *klieng* is commonly spoken by teenagers light-heartedly, often as a source of humour and astonishment.

Data 9

- A : Parahh ajan cii parah hahahaha....
(you're so rude! Hahaha)
B : *Klieng pe de nak ketoo*
(Come on man, don't be like that)
A: Hahahaha

Data 10:

- A : *Kle masak bisa jauh kali kelempar dia ci!*
(How come it was thrown so far away)
B : Hah? Masak? *Klieng pe.*
(Seriously? Damn man)

The utterance "*klieng de nak keto*" expressed by the speaker signifies a pronounced tendency towards humour, further reinforced by the previous speaker's laughter. Hence, the presented data demonstrates the impact of swearing on the level of intimacy between the speaker and the interlocutor, therefore highlighting its significant social and psychological function. Additionally, within the context of Data 2, the expression "Huh? Masak? Klieng pe" The phrase *Klieng pe!* can manifest a robust psychological function since it conveys a sense of shock in response to a statement made by the speaker's conversational partner.

Kliee

The term *kliee* represents a variation derived from the word *kle*. This variation is uncommon and is only used by a few teenagers in Denpasar. The use of the word *kliee* can be seen as follows.

Data 11

A: *Kliee* jangan ne khe gitu ma aku, tega kali!

(Come on, treat me like a friend, how could you do such a thing)

B : Iyuhh.. siapa khe?

(Huh? Know your place!)

The word *Kliee* from speaker A is used to express crankiness. Based on the conversation, it can be seen that the speaker is dissatisfied with the actions of his interlocutor. This word is usually used to express astonishment and sulking. Thus, this word is closely related to psychological functions. Besides psychological motive, the utterance above also functions linguistically to emphasize what the speaker tries to convey. In this case, the speaker tries to show his way of speaking to others.

Nanas Klengkeng Leci

Nanas Klengkeng Leci is a form of rhyming slang for *Nas kleng ci* which in English can be similar to the cockney insult "pony and trap-crap!" This word is also often used in humor among teenagers to show familiarity between speakers. Therefore, this word is usually used in humorous context as follows.

Data 12:

A : Kasiann deh lo! Hahaha

(Shame on you! Hahaha)

B : *Nanas klengkeng leci ! Naskleng ci!*

(Pony and trap! Crap!)

The data above shows how the speaker uses the rhyming slang *Nanas Klengkeng Leci* as a sentence to joke and tease each other while having a conversation. This utterance shows the close kinship of the speaker and the interlocutor and the apparent emotions of happiness and embarrassment. So, in this conversation, there is a social and psychological function.

On the other hand, the rhyming slang *nanas klengkeng leci* can also be used as a euphemism. It is commonly used to avoid offensive language by some teenagers in a particular society.

Klek

Klek represents a variation derived from the word *kle* commonly used by teenagers living in Denpasar. The use of the word *klek* is not common in Denpasar. It is used only by a few teenagers in a particular community. The variation of *klek* can be seen as follows.

Data 13:

A: Nah ayo aku kan dah bilang ...

(See? I told you...)

B : *Klek ci masak aku , aku lo gak ada ngapain.*

(It can't be helped. I didn't do something significant)

In the conversation above, the speaker B is trying to explain that he did not intend to do something bad to someone else. He was accused of doing something bad for a reason; in this case, he denied the fact by using the word *klek* in his utterance. The utterance *klek masak aku* is used to express astonishment. This sentence indicates a psychological function. Moreover, the word *klek* must be uttered carefully. The conversation above shows that a speaker is having a conversation with his close friend, and his friend does not feel annoyed after the speaker utters the word *klek* to express his disappointment and emphasize the word over what happened to him. Therefore, the utterance above also reflects a sociological and linguistic function.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the above findings, six variations of the word *kleng* were found; the most function is the psychological function. To briefly discuss the differences between this study and the previous studies mentioned earlier, this research explains some basic things from each study.

Sriyanto and Fauzie in their research entitled *Penggunaan Kata "Jancuk" Sebagai Ekspresi Budaya dalam Perilaku Komunikasi Arek di Kampung Kota Surabaya* (The use of "Jancuk" as a cultural expression in Arek's communication behavior in Surabaya) found that The use of *Jancuk* and any of its variations used by a community in urban villages can be used to express positive and negative emotion. It is used to express anger (psychological motives) and show friendship (social motives). This research also found that people who used it tend to be considered as a friendly and sociable person (Sriyanto & Fauzie, 2017). Meanwhile, the research conducted by Machmudah entitled "The Flexibility of the "F" Word" found that the word *fuck* in English varies based on its word element in a sentence and considered as a polymorphous word. In addition to the functions, this research found that the word *fuck* can be used to emphasize an utterance, express certain emotion, insult, and bring laughter (humour) (Machmudah, 2021). The two aforementioned

researches are in line with this research, In this research it was found that the word *kleng* has six variations and several functions; to show certain expression/feelings, such as anger, disappointment, astonishment, shock, happy, etc. (psychological motives), to show solidarity/kinship and humour (social motives), and to emphasize utterance and to create new word serving as aesthetic function (linguistic motives).

The implications of this study can offer enhanced understanding regarding the usage patterns and underlying motivations behind teenagers' use of the swear word *kleng* within specific circumstances in Denpasar. The findings of this research can contribute to a comprehensive comprehension of the determinants that shape the utilization of *kleng* among teenagers residing in Denpasar, as well as the subsequent ramifications on their daily existence. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. One primary constraint of this research is the limited generalizability of the research findings, which solely pertain to adolescents residing in Denpasar. The applicability of research findings to teenage populations or individuals in different nations may be limited by variations in cultural norms, linguistic factors, and social contexts.

CONCLUSION

This paper contributes to analysing the flexibility of the swear word *kleng* in Denpasar. The data indicates the presence of six variations in the flexibility of the word *kleng*. These variations include *kleng/naskleng*, *kle*, *klieng*, *kli*, *nanas klengkeng leci*, and *klek*. Almost all the data contain psychological, social, and linguistic functions. Psychologically, it can be used to signify a number of emotions, such as anger, astonishment, surprise, joy, disappointment, and even sympathy. Meanwhile, sociologically the utterance of *kleng* and its variations is used for solidarity and humour. The most important thing about swearing for solidarity and humour is that no one feels offended. Last but not least, the flexibility of the word *kleng* can be used to emphasize certain utterances and to create a new word for the sake of aesthetic purposes. It is related to linguistic motives. In addition to positive and negative use, the word *kleng* indicates the closeness of the kinship relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. It will become a negative swear word when used to insult others.

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