

Full Length Research Paper

Creating identities through Facebook online comments: A postmodernist perspective on Indonesian youth culture

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Abstract

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The development in Information Technology has changed the lives of many people in the world. It is one of the most remarkable things human beings have ever made. The impact of information technology, like many other human inventions, has given both positive and negative impacts to human life. It has changed the life style of many people. Tim Berners-Lee, who is the inventor of World Wide Web, stated that the web is more a social creation than a technical one. This is to say that the impact IT has on the world today has put more serious emphasis toward the change of human social life than the change of technology (Crystal 2001).

Keywords: Identity, postmodernism, Facebook, youth culture.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the early studies in information technology regarded the new technology as revolutionary in both its technical innovation and its broad social and political implications (Wilson et al., 2002). Here information technology has been seen as cultural products, in which individual and community identities are negotiated on- and offline. Such studies, which are situated in online communication, are carried out through texts generated in chatrooms, newsgroups, and other multi user domains. They often include pictures, graphics and online verbal communication. Most users of this online communication, according to Crystal (2001 p. 174), are males between the ages of 19 and 25. Bucholtz (2000) maintains that youth have been the vanguard of linguistic changes resulting from new technologies. Cook (2004) also notes that our understanding of the role youth play in media or technology which results in linguistic change is sometimes overlooked. Hence, investigation into the nature of online youth communities could be an interes-

ting study to carry out.

Other studies carried out on the emergence of online communities are concerned with identification processes. Turkle (1995) explored online communities and their impact on personal identity construction. She gathered testimonies from members of multi-user domains which she followed. They show a unique picture in the building and experiencing of online individuals. She documents the ways in which individuals negotiate online identities relative to other facets of the self. Reeves and Clifford (1996) found that media objects become a viable 'other' in the building of self, in which human-to-machine relationships mirror human relationships. These studies have then developed into many other studies on online identities. One of the online communities which involve mostly young people is Facebook. Through Facebook, many Indonesian youth can create their identities creatively and playfully through their postings and responses or comments.

With such overwhelming data on how people create their virtual communities and communication on Facebook, it is intriguing to probe how young Indonesian users create their identities through the comments they post on the walls where many people can read. Bethan and Stokoe (2006) maintain that “due to anonymity, freedoms of time and space, and absence of audio-visual context in cyberspace, identity is deemed to be *more* unstable, *more* performed, *more* fluid (and thus prone to inauthenticity and deception)” (p. 245). As one can be a different person in age, gender and social status, one can play, build and rebuild oneself in endless new identities. Such a thing can happen easily and simply online.

One interesting finding on the construction of identity has been advocated by postmodernists who have tried to deconstruct the established gender identity categories in an effort to explore the full range of ‘being’. They challenge the dualistic, oppositional nature by which gender is traditionally framed (Cerulo, 1997). Interestingly, such notions on the multiple construction of identity in fact can be easily seen in new communication technology like in the language people use in Facebook comments. This new way of IT communication has meshed the stereotypes of men’s and women’s language, as postulated by many sociolinguists until the 1990s, as used in daily (offline) communication. On Facebook, male and female users equally can publish their comments in the language they find is most creative, innovative and thought-provoking instead of putting so much attention on the appropriateness of their comments toward their gender identity. Hence, identity is constructed on the basis of how thought-provoking, creative and innovative their comments are, so that they can trigger many other thought-provoking feedback comments.

Women’s position in Indonesian culture is traditionally regarded as lower than that of men. Well-behaved women are expected to be low-profile, gentle, feminine and good at the ‘3 Ms’ (*Macak*, *Manak*, *Masak* (doing make-up, reproduction, cooking)). A woman who does not behave as such and is incompetent at household chores is often considered as not acknowledging herself as a woman. Many girls, especially in rural areas, are taught how to become obedient wives and caring mothers (Susanto, 1992). Women’s conversations center mostly on domestic topics such as foods, fashions and relationships, while men talk mostly about politics, jobs, electronics and sports (Kuntjara 2003, 2009). Meanwhile, men are expected to be brave, assertive and are always ready to protect women. Men are often the breadwinners and are in higher positions than women in general. Such traditional attitudes of women and men seem to be challenged once they relate to each other in computer mediated communication (CMC) as studied by Lesmana (2009) on compliment responses stated by her young male and female friends through Facebook. She found that there are insignificant differences between males’ and females’ types of responses to compliments in which

accepting and upgrading oneself to compliments is more common than rejecting them like in offline communication. Hence, the traditional way for girls to keep themselves low-profile in social situations seems no longer to be regarded as a sign of polite attitude for women when they are online.

Related to the creation of identity in computer mediated communication is the notion of politeness or impoliteness issues. Many researchers who applied the politeness framework to CMC found that electronic communication seems to be less polite than in face-to-face communication. Darics (2010) found that in computer mediated discourse (CMD) of a virtual team the endeavor to communicate along the lines of politeness norms contradicts some of the findings of CMD research, such as the strategy for economizing or the use of capital letters. Park (2008) argues that the social interaction during the online-discussion forum shows that the realization of linguistic politeness is dependent upon speech participants’ cognitive assessment of contextual variables as well as interpersonal variables such as power, distance, and imposition. Herring (1994) accounts for gender differences in politeness in CMC, in which she found that men were more easily offended and in flame, while women favored using positive politeness. However, Turkle (1995) maintains that interactive online spaces were often seen to be gender neutral, egalitarian spaces, where an individual could take on multiple identities in ways never before possible and bring about changes in conventional notions of identity itself. Hence, online identities are seen to be infinitely malleable. Media has become the viable “other” in the building of self in which human-to-machine relationships mirror human relationships (Cerulo, 1997). Some scholars also view online identities as the exploration of real vs. virtual identities (Markham 1998). Here, online identity is seen to be more unstable, fluid, disconnected, and multiple.

Politeness in Indonesian culture is often seen as an act or a speech act which is considered appropriately expressed. When someone compliments someone else, it is often appropriate to be humble or low-profile by negating or questioning the compliment rather than thanking the person. It is not good to show off on what a person has or is capable of. Conflicts are better avoided (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Hence, one does not confront others for things one does not agree with or like. Rather, one is to be more considerate to someone’s face and avoid making other people feel embarrassed, ashamed or hurt because of what one says or does. In CMC however, there is a tendency that most young Indonesian users feel, of having more freedom to present themselves as they like with less pressure of having to conform to the social norms of politeness as they do in face-to-face communication.

Another sign of being judged as more polite is the choice of codes when Indonesians are communicating. Indonesian people hardly use standard Indonesian when

talking with close friends. They usually use a mixture of Indonesian, the local language and some foreign words from English or Chinese. This is often called the hybrid language. The use of the hybrid language may signify solidarity, friendliness or impoliteness depending on the condition and the code choice. In CMC, many users code-mix their postings, which sound more like their oral informal communication or the hybrid language. The use of colloquial local language such as the low-level Javanese¹ is usually considered rude, hence impolite, when compared to the standard formal Indonesian. Even a neutral word in Indonesian language may sound very rude when it is spoken or written in low-level Javanese. With the background of these CMC studies, this study probes two problems; first, to what extent identities are created, constructed and reconstructed by Indonesian youth through Facebook online comments; and secondly, how gender, Indonesian politeness and choices of codes are negotiated through their postings to affect their identities.

METHOD

In this study, data were collected from my own Facebook home wall. Comments posted by my young Indonesian friends within one month were downloaded. The good part of using the data from Facebook comments is the inclusion of not only the actual words used, but also the use of emoticons, pictures, videos and the play of words to express their feelings and moods. Those elements are often useful as contextual cues to understand the meaning the user wants to convey in his/her comments. Another convenience I had in the process of collecting data is the more flexible time of logging into my Facebook account in a day. Fifty eight interactive comments were noted. Almost all of them were posted from young Indonesian friends of mine although some of them were using creative fake names. The recognition of the persons who posted the comments gave me another benefit of understanding their linguistic behavior via online comments as compared to the offline ones. To keep the confidentiality of the persons quoted in the discussion, an initial M for male and F for female are used.

From the data, interactions which are related to the presentation of self in relation to others are especially noted. The data were analyzed based on how they are related to the issues of gender, (im) politeness, and the choices of codes. The gender of the person who posted the comments, status, or statements was also identified. The data were then analyzed based on how gender identities and politeness / impoliteness were stated through the online interactions. Following Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Locher and Watts (2005), Haugh (2007), who suggest the use of discursive approaches in politeness research, this analysis attempts to look more

closely at how the young Facebook users present themselves through their postings and interactions with their friends on Facebook.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that in the interactions which involve males and females. the common Indonesian norms of politeness were easily crossed. Females as well as males easily mock each other with no consideration of face as people have in offline communication. Indonesian women, especially, are very considerate in attending to the interlocutor's face when talking face-to-face, so as not to make the addressee feel ashamed, hurt or underestimated. In CMC however, they seem to have more freedom in throwing direct candid comments without any feeling of being rude or impolite, furthermore of making others feel ashamed. This is also shown from the codes they use, which is low-level Javanese.

Another phenomenon worth noting is the confusion of what is real and what is just unreal. Young Indonesian Facebook users, males and females alike, may post their comments which could be true, and yet are posted like one is joking. Therefore, their friends may not easily trust the comments as true or just a joke or a hoax for fun. This possibility of postulating a message which may contain true and false contents can also become an opportunity for the users to dare to write something that is perhaps improper or impolite, but true, in Facebook, since there is a possibility that friends would not take it seriously as a true message. Hence, impoliteness is mitigated by male as well as female users. It could even be taken as fun only. Something which people dare not say in offline communication due to the protection of someone's face or the consideration of being impolite, may be easily written on Facebook.

The followings are some comments given in Facebook by the young users where gender, polite vs. impolite, true vs. false, seem to blur.

M (male user) and F (female user)

1. M: *Selamat jalan guru besar bangsa, Gus Dur.*

Safe walk teacher great nation, Gus Dur

Kami akan melanjutkan semua cita cita luhur Mu.

We will continue aspiration noble you all

(Good bye, our great guru, Gus Dur. We will continue your noble aspiration)

F: *Ngewes2 y nges... gayamu lo sok*

...Huuuuuhh... style-POSS yea pretend

berkabung loe

condolence you ...

(Huuuuuhh ... so pompous of you with your condolence.)

M here initiates his posting by commenting on the death of Gus Dur, who was the fourth president of Indonesia. He posted his status in good standard Indonesian, which shows that he is really serious about his statement. In fact, M is a user who tends to show off

on his knowledge about some current issues in politics, which might be taken negatively by many lay people. His serious statement might be intended to show to his friends how he knew who Gus Dur was in his life and how M respects the late president. F directly responds to M's statement using informal low Javanese (*ngewes2y nges, lo, sok*) and Jakartanese (*loe*). Through the interaction, F can be identified by her use of direct and blunt statements, considered impolite by most Indonesians, when commenting on what is stated by M. F's comment does not seem to consider the 'face' of the person being commented upon. When F comments on M's solemn attribute towards the death of the late President, she might not consider whether her comment can threaten the 'face' of M and make M feel disgraced. The use of the low Javanese and Jakartanese codes even add to her comment some underestimating tone. In face-to-face conversation, such a comment might sound very impolite, especially for a woman to accuse a man's honest tribute to an important person as a pompous deed.

It could be true that M, in his real life, is an arrogant person. F then might think that her comment in Facebook is a good opportunity for her to reveal his real character as she might also want to show that people should not believe in him despite his 'looks serious and sympathetic' attitude. While in face-to-face communication F might not dare to confront it, in CMC the risk of having to face the tension, in case M does not accept F's 'accusation', is mitigated. Many young Facebook users often do not take their friends' comments seriously and regard them as jovial statements for fun. The use of informal Javanese code can also be seen as a sign of informality. Hence, whether F's response is true and serious or just a joke meant for fun is too trivial to be detected, for their friends might take their comments superficially. Gender does not seem to matter either. Even though she responds to it in low Javanese code, F does not seem to have any pretence that since she is a woman it might not be appropriate or polite for her to disgrace her male friend in public.

While in the first example above it is the male who is commented upon harshly by his female friend, the opposite also happens when it is the male user who comments on his female friend. In this interaction, the male's blunt statement could also threaten the face of his female friend:

2. F: *ponakanku rek, wis gedhe koyok ngene,*
Niece-POSS buddy already big like this
manis pisan
sweet very... ;-)

(look at my niece, already so big, and sweet too ... ;-))

M: *ijo nggak kayak tante ne welek tenan, heheheh*
Yes not like aunt POSS ugly indeed he he heh
(yes she isn't like her aunt who is indeed very ugly, he he heh).

In this interaction, it is F who initiates with her posting, commenting on a picture of her niece, whom she praises

as being so sweet. Perhaps she hopes that her friends would agree with her and add to it more compliments to both her niece and herself. She uses informal Javanese, which may connote friendliness. To her surprise, however, one of her male friends responds by first agreeing on her niece's beauty but then contrasting it with F, whom he claims to be very ugly. He uses low level Javanese with more emphasis given on the word '*elek*' (ugly) to become '*welek*' to show that she is really ugly. What is the purpose of such a negative comment? No one seems to bother of knowing. Yet such a remark given by a man to a woman in public space like Facebook must be very shameful for the woman and the remark can be considered as very impolite even when it is meant to be a joke. His laugh (*heheheh*), given after the remark, could also be taken as a sarcastic attitude of the man toward F. In face-to-face communication such a remark would certainly disgrace the woman. Only if the man has a grudge toward her could such a remark probably be expressed in public and be considered as a very impolite expression. For most Indonesians, it is important to save face. The loss of face in a public site may offend the person and be remembered her/his whole life. Such a direct negative comment expressed by a man to a woman could be taken with ill feeling by the woman, were it expressed in real life conversation. On the internet, however, even when it is expressed on a public wall, where everybody can read, she does not take such comments seriously. This public domain has been taken as an unreal space and therefore people are not supposed to take others' comments seriously even when they could be true in reality. Here, what is true and what is not, what is polite and what is impolite, is blurred, and people do not even care to find out which is which.

As this interaction happens in virtual communication, a question could be worth asking: are young Indonesians no longer regarding such remarks as a violation of politeness conduct? Or, is it the virtual setting which has caused them, Indonesian males as well as females alike, to lose their understanding of what is proper or improper, polite or impolite conduct? Or, could that be the nature of virtual world where people have more freedom to take everything superficially and regard things trivially without considering the propriety of the words they use? Such phenomena seem to be pervasive among the young Indonesian generation, which Baron (2008) calls a 'laissez-faire' or 'whatever' generation where "Anything's OK. Let's not fight over it. Whatever you do or say – including how you say or write it – is fine" (p.170).

This 'whatever' generation also likes to describe itself on Facebook as one who has higher or superior identity to their real one. Praising oneself as somebody better, smarter, or more beautiful than one-self in real life is very often intended as a joke. Therefore, others who want to respond to it could even mock her/him without feeling a sense of being arrogant or improper by posting negative comments to attack someone's face. Such a comment is

seen for instance in the following interactions:

3. F: *suaraku jd mbekuki, seksi loh, kayak suaranya*
Voice-POSS become harsh sexy like voice-POSS
mariah carey
Maria Carey

(my voice gets harsh, it's sexy, like the voice of Maria Carey)

M: *nggilani!*
(disgusting!)

F: *sesama orang nggilani dilarang saling menggila gilani!*-The same person disgusting forbidden reciprocal to disgust

(don't say I'm disgusting if you yourself is disgusting!)

The identity shown by F through the above interaction is the self pride in publishing her status. F shows herself-appraisal on her voice when she relates it to a celebrity. She feels proud of her voice which sounds like Maria Carey's voice even when she has a sore throat. Even when F is attacked by M that it is disgusting to feel that way, she does not seem rejected for being regarded as disgusting. Instead, she comments that in fact both of them are similarly disgusting and thus he should not have mocked her as being disgusting. Such a blunt statement is scarcely found in face-to-face interaction. Many females still believe that being low-profile about them is modest and good. Hence, young women will not explicitly display themselves as having nice voice or appearance. Obviously, when such self-praising comments are performed on Facebook, they do not take it as something serious. Hence, it would be alright to oppose each other using self appraisal expressions.

It is also interesting to note that even though at first, F takes pride of herself as she identifies herself like Maria Carey, in the next statement, after being commented by M as disgusting, she changes her former positive identity to a negative one, i.e. a disgusting person. That is when she acknowledges herself as equally disgusting as M. Her fluid identity seems to be expressed with no sense of being awkward. M does not even confront F for changing her identity so promptly. In fact, many interactions written on Facebook by these young people contain a lot of self-praise, which they frequently post as a 'feeling good about yourself' statement. Another self-praise statement is given by a young male user:

4. M: Oi, Jess. Thx a lot :) Merry Christmas. Impress me again w/ your piano performance next year.

F: hahaha....do u want to join me to play???

M: neah, am far more talented than you ;P

5. F: Is that Mrs. Monica? She still looks so young.

M: That's right. Just like me ☺

This time the interactions were written in English. The use of English itself makes the users become more equal. In interaction (4), at first M seems to be quite serious in posting his Christmas greetings and his compliment to his female friend on her piano performance. F might not have known that M could not play piano, yet she invites M to join her in her piano

performance. Perhaps this is just lip service. However, it could also be taken as an insult if we know that F knows that M does not play piano (which I know to be true). Instead of feeling insulted, M responds to her offer with no feeling of being offended or insulted. He even praises himself of being far more talented than F in playing piano. That is why he rejects her offer, which could again be regarded as another insult for F. Here M is not only doing the self-praising by identifying himself a talented pianist, but at the same time he also underestimates his female friend for not being as talented as he is.

Interaction (5) happens when a different female friend posts a comment on a picture of me and my friend Monica. Here, F's comment is meant to get some information from me about Monica who looks so young. Certainly F has no intention of joking with me. However, even before I reply to her comment, M (the same person as in example 4) posts his comment boasting that he himself is a young-looking man. In fact, people never comment on his looking so young. Hence, this self-praising comment could be taken as an improper and arrogant expression, since Indonesian people do not boast about looking younger than their age, but someone would say so to others' as a compliment. However, Facebookers do not seem to take these two above interactions as something improper. We laughed at it and took it as fun. Again, something which can be regarded as improper in the offline world is hardly considered as improper in the online world. Again, it could have been due to the fact that people often take Facebook postings with ease and regard them as something not serious.

The ways Facebookers comment on each other by praising in one sense, yet underestimating in another, are often created to show the individuals' strategies for shoring up an authentic sense of self in an uncertain world (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). Bauman (2004) uses the term 'liquid modernity' to refer to a world in which everything is elusive and identities are 'the most acute, the most deeply felt and the most troublesome incarnations of ambivalence' (p.32). Baron (2008) also maintains that "A Facebook Profile can be more an expression of who one wants to be rather than whom one really is" (p. 85). It reveals people's interest in accommodating the demand to exploit their creative potential. In the framework of postmodernists, people are emphasizing the concepts of 'fluidity', 'diaspora', 'hybridity', 'crossing' and 'decentering'. These are often characterized by fragmentation, relativism, a merging of the public and private spheres and a dislocation of the self. Such concepts are revealed not only in the presentation of self based on gender identity as in the examples above, but most young Facebookers do show the discursive model in their comments, which imply an anti-essentialist view of identity. Below are more samples taken from my Facebook comments:

7. M1: *Wasem..tampangmu kok koyo wong cacat ngono?*
Damnlook-POSS why like person disable this

Yo wes..
well already

Happy birthday deh, mudah2an wong sing wes *ganteng*
ok hopefully person who already handsome
jadi makin ganteng lagi :)
become more handsome again

(damn, how could you look like a disable man? Well, happy birthday, may your already handsome face becomes more handsome)

M2: *Maklumlah pak, kalo gak dijelek-jelekkkan, cewek-*
sir if not make ugly-PASS girls
cewek itu Beknown semakin menggila-gilain
daku: gila! gila!! :)

more that to make crazy me crazy crazy

(You know, sir, if I don't make myself look ugly, those girls will be chasing me: crazy, crazy!!)

8. M1: ready to preach about: the death of Superman
M2: *Ngawur ae arek iki, wong aku jik urip ngene*
Bulshit just kid this since I still alive this will
ape dikotbahno matek!
Preach-PASS dead

(this kid is just bulshit, I'm still alive. How could you say I'm dead)

Example number 7 opens with a young man's comment on his friend's profile picture. He (M1) starts with a swear word *damn..your face looks like a disable man* (like a person with down syndrome). However, even though he directly points to his friend's ugly face, he then congratulates him for his birthday and wishes that his already handsome face will become more handsome. It is not clear here whether M1 really wants to say that M2 is in fact ugly or that he is actually handsome. It does not seem to matter so much, as we see from M2's reply. M2 addresses M1 with *Sir*, which shows that M1 might have been far older than M2. M2 admits that he indeed tries to look ugly in the picture, since he does not want girls to chase him because he is handsome. It shows the 'decentering' of the main topic, which is a birthday greeting. M2 does not even thank M1 for the birthday wish M1 gives him. The main topic is not as interesting as the side comments. The hybrid language used by both of them seems to be taken more as friendliness, showing their close relationship. Therefore, even though low Javanese is used when M1 disgraces M2's face, M2 himself acknowledges that he is indeed ugly and in fact, he intentionally makes it that way to keep himself away from the girls who chase him.

Example 8 shows that M1 seems to open his status with what he was doing, i.e. preparing for his speech with the story about the death of Superman. However, what is stated by M1 was commented upon by M2 unserious but creatively. M2 himself claims to be Superman and gets mad at M1 for talking about his death while he is still alive. Therefore, no doubt M2 does not take M1's information as real. The use of Javanese word '*matek*' (dead) is a rude low Javanese term, usually referring to the death of an animal. Both interactions are obviously

unreal and trivial. With the mocking and self-praising, they seem to have an opportunity to express statements which they may not be able to freely express in offline situations. However, in online communication they can use these without being afraid others will take them seriously as true statements. All these online interactions can be counted as useless but enjoyable for many young Facebook users. The more creative the responses, the more enjoyable they are to many.

The confusion of what is true and what is not true, and what is polite and what is impolite, added with the use of hybrid language which tends to be creatively abused in its written form, are common among the young Indonesian Facebookers. Besides the abused form of writing, which they call the '*alay*' language, very often swear words and impolite expressions are used. Below are some other examples on the hybrid language which are often difficult to read for older people who still use the standard form of Indonesian writing system. In each example, the standard writing is provided in brackets for comparison.

9. M: *gilani koyo sampah suge ae diganti zhuge!*
SAMPAH!! BACOD!!

(*menjijikan seperti sampah Suge saja diganti Zhuge!*)

Disgusting like trash Suge just changed Zhuge
SAMPAH!! BACOD!!)

TRASH!! BLABBERMOUTH!!

(It's disgusting like trash to change just Suge into Zhuge!
TRASH!! BLABBERMOUTH!!))

10. M: *hei RAJA BACOD! DIAM! ini hr MINGGU...*
TOBAT KONO NANG GREJO!

(*hai Raja Penceloteh! Diam! Ini hari Minggu...*)

Hi King Blabbermouth Shut up this day Sunday
Bertobatlah sana ke gereja!)

repent go to church

(Hi King of blabbermouth! Shut up! This is Sunday...
repent and go to the church!)

11. F: *Ojok diGarai truÛzZz ta....skno loo bjKu...km ni*
kÓóQ...takSudet loo klian...

(*Jangan diganggu terus ya Kasihan lho*)

Don't be disturbed continue ok pity PART
istriku... kamu ini kok ... saya sudet lho kalian
wife-my you this PART I prick PART you-PL

(don't keep on disturbing ok... Pity my wife otherwise I'll
prick you all.)

12. M: *Walah rambut petal kok di-IWR!!!*

(**)*(*) ãkã|=D/ãkã=Dãkã(*)*(*)*)

(*Aduh, rambut gimbal mengapa dipelintiri!!!! Ha ha ha*)

Ouch hair sticky why twisted

(Ouch, why are you twisting your sticky hair ha ha ha...)

13. F: *Empuk?? Л66Өk salah??!! Berarti dibkn baso*
ae... Л66Өk punya gigi jg gpp tgl telan ãk=)) ãk=))
ãk=)) ãk=)))

(*Empuk? Tidak salah? Berarti dibuat bakso*
saja ... tidak punya)

Soft? Not wrong mean made-PASS meat ball just
not have

*gigi juga tidak apa, tinggal
telan ha ha ha ha*

teeth also know what just swallow ha ha ha

(Soft? Correct? So just make them into meatballs... with no teeth is fine, just swallow hahahah)

14. F: *hush ngguyune ojo banter2.. mambune tekan kene kye.. wakakakakakakaaa.....*

(hai tertawanya jangan keras keras... baunya sampai di

hi laugh-POSS don't aloud smell-POSS till in sini.. hahahahaha)

here, ha ha ha ha ha

(Hi, don't be so loud with your laugh... I can smell it from here. ha ha ha ha)

In the above examples (numbers 9-14), low Javanese is used almost exclusively, which may mean that these are close friends and 'talking' informally. However, the use of low Javanese always tends to be impolite such as the words '*gilani*', '*sude!*', '*mambune*', while many others are created words such as 'truÛûzZz', 'Jᄀᄀᄀ', 'kÓóQ', 'IWR!!!I!!!', 'ākā=D/□ākā=D□ākā(*)(*)', 'wakakakakakakaaa'. The nature of informality in using low Javanese could make these users become more creative in their remarks and writing. Such creativity and informality cause impoliteness but usually trigger laughter, and users take the interactions more as fun. Hence, such a habit could promote the mitigation of the sense of impoliteness into mere fun and entertaining.

CONCLUSION

The language used in the internet, particularly on Facebook, has opened up a new way to use language in virtual communication. A new genre in language use which cannot be categorized as either a spoken or a written language has emerged. Identities are created, constructed and reconstructed through the blurring and crossing of Indonesian gender stereotypes, the use of impolite language and the manipulation of language use which violates standard Indonesian language, yet very often they are all accepted as entertaining and creative ways of communication. This new way of using language among young Indonesian people who use Facebook as their means of communication shows some characteristics:

1. A creative and random use of writing words with symbols, abbreviation, acronyms, emoticons, capitals and other inventive uses of letters combinations.
2. The differences between what is true and what is untrue are blurred. It is difficult to differentiate between what is considered serious and what is just a jovial comment and therefore not true. This phenomenon can be taken as an advantage, where Facebook users could easily comment on a posting using improper words while they could be true.
3. What is often considered impolite and rude in real life

communication may be accepted with ease when delivered via Facebook. Saving face no longer constitutes a problem when people are throwing comments to each other. The more creative the response, the more creative feedbacks they get.

4. Gender difference does not seem to matter on Facebook communication. Some stereotypes of women and men are blurred or crossed.
5. There is a tendency of upgrading one's self identity while downgrading others; or of claiming one's worth of praise while being denied by others. One can therefore take multiple identities with ease.
6. There is fluidity in topic switch, decentering what is being discussed. No focus is required in making responses. Every Facebooker may introduce a new topic as long as the person can create a new interesting topic for others to comment on. A common feedback tends to end the conversation.

While these characteristics of communication through Facebook are relatively new, we have to admit that people in this new millenium are living in a rapidly changing world. The implication of these phenomena could be the possibility for someone to have multiple identities, which may disorient him/her from who he/she is; or may give him/her a chance to escape from his/her undesired self and be a different self which is more desirable. In terms of the online language use on Facebook, it may reveal the dynamic change of gender identity and other social life styles of the younger Indonesian generations. The young generation is becoming more and more comfortable with the *laissez-faire* culture or the 'Whatever' life styles as their ways of life.

Popular culture tends to be excessive, full of contradiction and complexity. The text, being excessive, is often evaluated as vulgar, superficial, cheap and sensational. The meanings produced by such texts are often out of control. The world they offer is a world of the bizarre or the abnormal. Text upon which meaning depends, is often social rather than textual and is constructed not by the writer in the text, but by the reader. This makes the text contain many gaps which provoke viewers to fill in their meanings from their own social experience, and construct their culture. People often assume that it is something easy and inferior and steadily declining from the common standard. Perhaps it is because the masses are assumed as dumb, attracting people just for pleasures and big media companies like FB provides the masses what they want. However, it seems like the exact opposite is happening: the culture is getting more intellectually demanding our intellectual involvement in interpreting the text (Kuntjara, 2012).

With the use of the hybrid language, the Indonesian language, which has often been the second language of many Indonesians, could be marred by the use of creative nonstandard language like that used in Facebook online communication. The hybridization of

culture and language may continue in the years to come, making it more and more difficult to define what our national language and culture are.

By the time research on the language use on Facebook is published, some other new uses of language may already be occurring. Hence, these linguistic practices and how they relate to individual and social practices are increasingly important for future research.

Notes

Javanese has at least three levels of language use which show degrees of respect and formality. The lowest is *Ngoko*, then *Madyo* (literally, middle) and the highest is *Kromo*, which is divided into *Kromo inggil* (high *Kromo*) and *Kromo andhap* (low *Kromo*). *Ngoko* is informal and non-polite. Its vocabulary is used only in addressing someone with whom the speaker is very familiar or to a subordinate. *Ngoko* words alone do not express any respect. *Madyo* is semi-polite and semi formal. *Madyo* words are used when addressing a person toward whom one must express a formality of intermediate degree, such as a neighbor who is not a close friend or sometimes an older relative. *Kromo* is polite and formal. *Kromo* words are used in addressing someone toward whom the speaker must be distant and formal. (Poedjosoedarmo, 1968).

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