



Solidarity in the Discourse of Protests for Women's Right Liberation: A Sociolinguistics Study of Mahsa Amini's Case

Solidaritas dalam Wacana Protes Pembebasan Hak Perempuan: Kajian Sociolinguistik pada Kasus Mahsa Amini

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Abstract

Language as human communication tool plays a substantial as the tool exertion, redemption, and rights fulfillment of the oppressed society. The use of language becomes crucial as a means of discourse on social issues and identity. The protest for women's rights fulfillment is one of the social issues that gets a lot of attention, both from the demonstration and the discourse used in the movement. Physical abuse led to death which happened to Mahsa Amini in Iran evoked the public's anger which then led to massive protests all around the world. This article aimed to identify the form of solidarity shown in the use of language in the discourse of the liberation of women's rights specifically in Mahsa Amini's death case. This research used descriptive-qualitative methodology which used interpretive case study in the protests of Mahsa Amini's case. The data were in the form of phrases and slogans in English written on the posters used in the protests around the world. The data was collected by searching #MahsaAmini on the search bar of the *Instagram* application. The data used was only those taken directly from the event of protests. The data then were analyzed by identifying and sorting the speech acts used. Next, the lexical units containing any form of solidarity for the liberation of women's rights were identified. The result showed that there was a form of solidarity built among the participants of the protests through the identified speech acts.

Keywords: *Language, Solidarity, Protest, Mahsa Amini*

Abstrak

Bahasa sebagai alat komunikasi manusia berperan besar sebagai alat perjuangan, pembebasan, dan pemenuhan hak anggota masyarakat yang tertindas. Penggunaan bahasa menjadi krusial sebagai ajang diskursus isu sosial dan identitas. Protes perjuangan terhadap pemenuhan hak perempuan merupakan salah satu isu sosial yang banyak mendapat sorotan, baik dari aksi protes, maupun bentuk wacana yang digunakan dalam memperjuangkan hak perempuan. Peristiwa kekerasan berujung kematian kepada Mahsa Amini di Iran membangkitkan

kemarahan publik, yang berujung dengan munculnya protes dan demonstrasi besar-besaran di berbagai negara. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk solidaritas yang ditunjukkan dari penggunaan bahasa dalam wacana protes pembebasan hak perempuan spesifik dalam kasus tewasnya Mahsa Amini di Iran. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif-kualitatif dengan pendekatan interpretasi studi kasus dan data temuan dalam aksi protes Mahsa Amini. Sumber data berupa frasa dan slogan dalam bahasa Inggris yang dituliskan dalam poster aksi demonstrasi di berbagai tempat di dunia. Data dikumpulkan melalui kolom pencarian Instagram dengan menuliskan tagar #MahsaAmini, data disortir, dan dipilih hanya yang berbentuk dokumentasi dari aksi demonstrasi langsung. Data dianalisis dengan mengidentifikasi dan mengelompokkan jenis tindak tutur, kemudian dilakukan identifikasi unit leksikal yang mengandung pemarkah solidaritas pembebasan hak perempuan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya solidaritas yang terbangun antar partisipan aksi protes melalui klasifikasi tindak tutur yang teridentifikasi.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa, Solidaritas, Protes, Mahsa Amini

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's rights liberation are considered to be one of global issues that draw considerable attention from the public. Gender-based discrimination and women's rights oppression happening around the globe is the highlight of the problem. Especially, the form of the longevity of patriarchal culture which directly affects the life rights and basic rights of women. Rokhmansyah (2013) stated that patriarchy comes from the word patriarch which means placing men as the main chief, the center, and the most important role in everything. The oppression following the imbalance of gender power was supported by Humm (2002) who defined patriarchy as a system of male authority that oppresses women through its social, political, and economic institutions.

Gender discrimination is a product of patriarchal culture which puts women as the second layer of society who takes the role of a subordinate in every layer and social structure in the society. Patriarchy has power from men's greater access to, mediation of, and resources and rewards of authority structure inside and outside the home (Humm, 2002). The implication in the society then led men to sit on a higher throne than women in every public sector: education, politics, economy, etc. This imbalanced structure evoked inequality in every activity and daily routine.

Not rarely, do women get their rights deeply oppressed caused of the influence of patriarchal culture in the government and social structure. The patriarchal culture grows and thrives in some countries around the globe. However, its phase grows differently among countries depending on the education level and the government system of each country, Countries that are fairly influenced by patriarchal culture both in their government and social structure mostly come from Asia and Africa. Other factors to influence the role of patriarchy is religion and social construct. Middle Eastern countries mostly populated by Muslims were quite influenced by Islamic values deep in each element of the society, from their government, education, to social norms and social laws.

Iran is one of the countries highly influenced by religion. In Quran, the holy book of Islam, the use of hijab or headscarf is compulsory for all Muslim women who have reached the age of puberty. Iran sets hijab as a mandatory dress code for women along with a set of laws constructed and modified by the social constructs of the society. In establishing the law, Iran assigned special forces called the morality police to patrol the public areas. The morality police is a part of FARAJA (The Law Enforcement Command of Iran). Mahsa Amini is a 22-year-old woman from Saqqez, Kurdistan, Iran. Mahsa Amini was arrested by the morality police on September, 13th 2022 for alleged non-compliance with the mandatory dress code. After getting arrested, Amini was transferred to the custody of moral security where she was assumed to be beaten up by the officers resulting in her falling into a coma and dying three days afterwards. The evidence found in this case showed that an abusive act had happened to Amini which was done by the morality police. The death of Mahsa Amini drove public anger resulting in numerous massive protests and demonstrations initiated by women and human rights activists around the world.

This article aims to identify the forms of solidarity found in the speech acts of posters used during Mahsa Amini's protests uploaded on Instagram. The speech acts found in the posters were analyzed using the speech act approach relating to the social context of protests for women's rights liberation. The analysis used speech acts classification by Searle (1979). The results were accumulated to find the most dominant speech acts used and their relation to the expressions of solidarity for the women's movement.

Literature Review

Language and Solidarity

Expressions of solidarity are closely related to the use of language as its main means of expression. Yusra and Lestari (2011) defined solidarity as a process where people gather and act as one coherent and united power. The togetherness or unity of a group of people is the main characteristic of solidarity. Bauman (1995) supported this idea by defining solidarity as the togetherness which was manifested and postulated contextually. A manifested togetherness might happen if the similarity among people was motivated by a strong similar purpose and interest. For example, the solidarity among online taxi drivers, solidarity among students' clubs, and solidarity among soccer fan clubs. A postulated solidarity means when togetherness is motivated by similar beliefs as a member of a society, race, and social class. Examples include solidarity among ethnicities or religions. This definition proved that solidarity was formed not only by similar physical traits but also through shared beliefs and dreams.

Solidarity can finally be seen as a phenomenon which does not come from a void, instead, it comes from direct contact with society, the dynamics of social issues, also the development of civilization and social norms. It was the result of the driving factors of solidarity which expanded beyond self-identity. Solidarity could be seen as a dynamic system. The dynamic phenomenon of solidarity was approved by Crow (2002) who stated that solidarity would not last forever since a human's ability to maintain solidarity is not automatically permanent. It is shown that in the context of a newly formed community built due to certain factors, the solidarity will reform on account of the desire to rebuild togetherness in a new environment. In every community, of any size, cooperation and solidarity

must be created and recreated at all times (Moore, 1978), the need to build solidarity created a practical function for the community.

Durkheim (1984) classified solidarity into mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. According to Durkheim (1984), mechanical solidarity was formed through common beliefs of social, cultural, and economic. However, this form of solidarity only lasts for a while, because even having similar interests is possible to unite people, it is impossible to last long. It shows that building a strong and permanent solidarity it needs more than sharing similar identities like understanding, shared beliefs, mutual trust, and interdependence among the members of the community.

Using the same terms, Giddens (1994) said that mechanical and organic solidarity formed from shared similarities (*gemeinschaft*-like solidarity) also interdependence among members (*gesellschaft*-like solidarity) were weakened by a massive migration, which then formed various bigger communities with a network of association among members in urban society. Furthermore, observing solidarity from the pronoun “Tu/ Vous (T/V)” (you in French) shows that the use of “Tu” doesn’t always mean a close kinship and contains solidarity, it all depends on the context and the speakers’ situation (between a cop and an arrested civilian, for example) Likewise, the use of pronoun “vous” doesn’t always determine the degree of “formality”, for instance, some upper-class families use “vous” to address other families with the lower range of the class.

Vigner (1978) gave instructions to newcomers on how to use “tu” and “vous” in a socially acceptable way during that time: “tu” should be used between relatives, brothers, and sisters regardless of age, between parents and children, between close colleagues, or younger individuals who live or work closely or older individuals only in certain occasion considered common, and between teenagers with distant kinship relationship, especially those in the same genders. Meanwhile, “vous” should be used between strangers without any relationship, and between the weak and the strong.

Brown & Levinson (1987) shared the same beliefs that the use of “T/V” is more fundamentally identical to various types of social relationships. People of lower social status in a community have interdependence among members. To have stronger solidarity, exchanging relationships in communication uses a symmetrical “T” For example, among teenagers. Meanwhile, the relationship among higher social status communities is more independent and does not show any interdependence among them, therefore, “V” is more likely to be used.

Protests Discourse and Social Movement

Discourse is an object study of linguistics in the form of oral and written speech. Eriyanto (2006) defined that the term discourse refers to a complete linguistic unit which commonly bigger than sentences, conveyed both orally or in writing. Thus, discourse can be defined as a series of sentences which connects one another to make a single unit. A similar definition was also proposed by Chaer (2007) that discourse is the highest grammatical unit formed from sentences or sentences which fulfill the grammatical requirements or other discursive requirements.

The understanding of discourse emphasizes the unity and inter-relationship among elements in the form of sentences. According to Djajasudarma (2010), discourse is a series of related sentences which connects one proposition to others

to form a single whole. In the development, discourse covers various fields of study and groups of knowledge, one of which is a social and political field. The form of discourse in social practice commonly relates to a specific mission and is conveyed in a certain type like protests, demonstrations, petitions, or oration. The form of protest discourses can be oral and written and tend to not too committed to grammatical rules or formal speech. This article focused on the analysis of written protest discourse on the posters used in Mahsa Amini's protests.

Protest discourses in a social movement usually have a specific purpose addressed to the "oppressor" of the movement. Social movements emerged as a form of rebellion against the oppression of power which was considered too strong and too dominating from one party to the other or other actor. Social movement, then, was considered as an organized but informal social entity involved in an extra-institutional conflict which oriented to specific purposes. The purposes are addressed to a specific and narrow policies or more broadly aimed at cultural changes. (Christiansen, 2009). In his essay, Christiansen explained the existence of social movements is specific to making changes both at the social level of society, as well as legal changes in the form of policies or regulations by the authority. Furthermore, De la Porta and Diani (2006) explained the common characteristics of social movement are the formation of a group of people involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; (and they) share a distinct collective identity. In the context of Mahsa Amini, the protests mostly came from the global feminist movement, which then got more support from the wider international society. The oppressor in these protests was clearly identified: the police and Iran's government which were considered to be very oppressive towards women's rights and liberty.

From the side of identity, these protests started by involving women and feminist movements, specifically in Iran. However, as the conflict escalated, the scope of supporters was expanded involving various backgrounds of society: social identity, religion, and gender. Regardless of these differences, they moved together as one and expressed one single voice. This research aimed to identify any form of solidarity which was created through utterances spoken in the protest and demonstration for Mahsa Amini from around the globe.

Language and solidarity are topics that are rarely studied in linguistics. Several previous studies discussing solidarity commonly focus on the form of solidarity of certain groups in their communication with other social groups. One of the studies on the construction of solidarity among ethnicities was done by Yusra & Lestari (2011), the result of which, showed various linguistic forms used to represent and reconstruct ethnicity and inter-ethnic solidarity which were; articulatory phonetics, metalinguistic comments, and forms of address. It was also found that every ethnicity has its own linguistic features, which are, however, often used by non-members of the ethnicity showing the phenomenon of a new constructing ethnicity which eventually constructs inter-ethnic solidarity with the other party. The researchers also found the possibility of one to "expel" oneself from the original society and negotiate with the other party's community to form solidarity. Furthermore, a study on solidarity was also found in the context of social media among the users of Facebook which was carried out by Ambarwati (2017). This study analyzed the language feature used by the female users of *Facebook* expressing solidarity which was analyzed according to classifications of the function of speech acts (illocutionary acts). The two previous studies

mentioned above provided an overview regarding the use of language to build solidarity among certain ethnicities or communities, however, current research on the efforts of national or humanitarian movements had not been widely studied in the field of linguistics. Therefore, this research would fill the gap of the research.

Research Questions

This study answers two research questions, (1) How does the form of solidarity look like in the discourse of Mahsa Amini's protests on Instagram?, (2) What kind of speech acts are used in the protests to express solidarity?. Those two questions were explained through an analysis of the speech act and were associated with the discourse of Mahsa Amini's protest social context.

METHODS

This research used a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. To fulfill the research purpose, the qualitative approach was used due to its function in understanding social and linguistic phenomena (Mahsun, 2012). The subject of this research were utterances both in phrases, clauses, and sentences used in the posters for Mahsa Amini's protests. The data were gathered by searching posts with #MahsaAmini on Instagram. The data were the most searched for by the users during September-October.

The data were restricted using the sampling method. The selected posts were only showing posters in English. The data analyzing technique was observing and note-taking technique (Teknik Simak dan Catat) by Sudaryanto (1993). The observation technique (Teknik Simak) is done by scrutinizing or observing the object of language study (Sudaryanto, 1993). The observed data then were noted down and classified according to the speech acts based on Searle's classification. Processes done were; (1) Gathering data from Instagram, (2) Recording the data using screenshots, (3) Observing and taking notes of the utterances used, (4) Identifying and classifying the speech acts, (5) Identifying the form of solidarity, (6) Making conclusion of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The recorded data were identified according to the speech acts used based on Searle's classification of speech acts. Searles developed a classification system of illocutionary-based speech acts in five categories: (1) Assertive, which expresses belief about the truth of a proposition convinced by the speaker; (2) Directive, where the speaker tries to make the addressee perform an action; (3) Commissive, a speech act whose point is to commit the addressee to do something in the future; (4) Expressive, express the psychological state regarding certain situations, also reactions or responses towards certain actions done by others, (5) Declarative, expressions which bring a real change in life.

Out of a total of 45 screenshots of the #MahsaAmini protests found from the top search posts on Instagram, there were 50 speech acts which were analyzed and classified according to the type of illocution. Results found showed that the percentage of the speech acts were dominated by assertive illocutionary acts, and none of them were declarative.

Based on the analysis, there was a phenomenon and a strong solidarity formed between the demonstrators and women activists from around the world. The solidarity could be seen in the utterances written on the posters of the protests. The analysis revealed signs of solidarity contained in the expressions of the demonstrators, both spoken directly or indirectly. The speech acts classification done to the 50 utterances showed a dominance of assertive illocution used in the protests for women's liberation in the case of Mahsa Amini. The assertive type appeared 31 times and reached 62% of the total utterances used. This finding followed the context of demonstration and protest which were commonly used to express aspirations, statements, claims, or facts and certain data to build sympathy and solidarity. Those statements fall into the assertive type of speech acts where there is a correspondence between prepositions and the truth of the prepositions. Other types of speech acts were also found in smaller percentages: directive speech acts appeared 12 times or 24%, commissive speech acts appeared 3 times or 6%, and expressive appeared 4 times or 8% of the total utterances.

No type of declarative act was found in this research due to the tendency of the speech used in a protest or demonstration to be more directed towards expressions of persuading and efforts to achieve a specific goal. Expressions of solidarity appeared in this research generally showed identity and solidarity which were manifested from the shared desires and goals stated by the demonstrators. Some utterances also proved the theory of manifested liberty by Bauman (1995), and the concept of shared fate also emotional experiences proposed by Johnson (1986)

Table 1. Percentage of speech act appearances in posters from the protests

Speech acts	Number of Appearances	Percentage
Assertive	31	62%
Directive	12	24%
Commissive	3	6%
Expressive	4	8%
Total		100 %

From the table above, it is shown that assertive illocutionary acts became the most-used type of speech act. This is related to the tendency of expressions used in a protest which state claims or sarcasm. Some of the speeches were also informative, stating data or specific facts which also fall into the category of assertive speech acts. Solidarity was spoken indirectly through assertive speech acts containing socio-pragmatic meanings and involving the identity of the women's movement.

Discussions


The following is the discussion of some samples of the speech containing signs of solidarity along with the type of speech acts:

Table 2. Expressive speech art samples

 <p>indonesiafeminis</p> <p>752 likes</p> <p>indonesiafeminis Aksi solidaritas kawan-kawan kepada Mahsa Amini di depan kedutaan besar Iran. #MahsaAmini</p> <p>View 1 comment</p> <p>October 2 · See translation</p>	<p>Poster</p> <p><i>“Mandatory hijab rule sucks”</i></p>	<p>Speech act</p> <p>Expressive</p>
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From the data above, the statement “Mandatory hijab rule sucks” which shows an angry expression from the women activist due to it being the initial cause of the Mahsa Amini arrest. This illocution falls into the category of expressive speech act. According to Searle (1979), expressive illocution expresses the psychological state regarding certain situations, also reactions or responses towards certain actions done by others. In this context, the statement “Mandatory hijab sucks” was considered to be a form of reaction and also the demonstrators’ expressions of feeling towards the rule which caused the death of Mahsa Amini. The expression of solidarity showed in the statement was the expression of regret for the rule. This counted as solidarity because it showed the demonstrators’ concern, who were not Iranian yet still voiced their disagreement with the hijab rule. This expression is under the theory of Johnson (1986) which stated that solidarity is a relationship based on a shared moral feeling, belief, and emotional experience among individuals or groups. In this context, the demonstrators showed their emotional experience shared with the other women victims in Iran.

Table 3. Directive speech acts sample

 <p>mahsaamini</p> <p>jusmun</p> <p>Follow</p> <p>5,914 likes</p> <p>jusmun in perpetual awe of women resisting state violence / subjugation around the world... more</p> <p>September 26</p>	<p>Poster</p> <p><i>“Scream, so that one day a hundred years from now, another sister will not have to dry her tears wondering where in history she lost her voice”</i></p>	<p>Speech act</p> <p>Directive</p>
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The data on table 3 showed directive speech acts, which translated to Indonesian as *“Berteriaklah, agar suatu hari nanti, seratus tahun dari sekarang, saudari kita lain tidak perlu mengeringkan air matanya bertanya-tanya di mana dalam sejarah dia kehilangan suaranya”*. This speech act had a directive function due to its purpose of voicing an invitation to all women throughout the world to

act and fight injustice. The verb ‘scream’ is a sign of directive speech acts. In this speech act, the solidarity found could be seen from the effort of the speaker to build a communal movement among oppressed women throughout the world, where the speaker indirectly built a sense of togetherness by saying the phrase “*another sister*” which directed to women globally and gave out an impression of a connection between each other.

The message of unity is aligned with a theory proposed by Bauman (1995) which stated that solidarity is the togetherness which was manifested and postulated contextually. A manifested togetherness is possible to occur if the similarities among individuals are motivated by a strong shared goal and interest, which in this context: to have liberty and justice for women who were oppressed by the state regulatory system or social construct.

Table 4. Assertive speech acts sample

Poster	Speech act
	<p data-bbox="683 819 1050 891"><i>“Distance doesn’t separate people, silence does”</i></p> <p data-bbox="1082 819 1209 853">Assertive</p>

From the sample above, the speech act showed an assertive type. The statement’s speech act falls into the category of assertive or representative illocution according to the classification proposed by Searle (1979) who stated that the assertive type focuses on the truth of the proposition of the speaker, which is generally in the form of statements, claims, or advice. This sample of speech act showed the truth of the proposition of the speech itself: to speak against oppression.

The demonstrators proved their proposition by protesting. Meanwhile, the expression of solidarity from the sample above is a call for voicing the basic rights of women. Even though the message was conveyed indirectly, this speech act called women and women’s rights activists to speak their voices together. This message of solidarity is in line with the theory of manifested liberty proposed by Bauman (1995), due to the shared goals that the speakers wanted to achieve.

Table 5. Commissive speech acts sample

Poster	Speech act
 <p>449 likes johnbehets The Iranian parliament has voted to apply the death penalty to over 14000 civilians arrested during the 2022 protests chargin... more</p>	<p><i>"UK Government when will you listen to your British-Iranians? We are calling you."</i></p> <p>Commissive</p>

The speech act in Table 5 showed a commissive illocution. The statement falls into the category of commissive speech act as it conveyed a demand for the UK government to do something about what was happened in Iran. It suited the commissive category proposed by Searle (1979), which was the type of speech act containing a message to the addressee to commit to do something in the future. The expression of solidarity reflected in this statement was a form of togetherness among the British-Iranians, who settled in the UK but still spoke for the rights of Iranian women. The sense of togetherness showed a strong solidarity despite the border of geography, ethnicity, and nationality between the speaker and the oppressed party in this case.

CONCLUSION

Research related to solidarity in the context of language use showed that certain social phenomena underlie the birth of solidarity in a social group. Based on the results and discussion of this research, it was found that social movements happening around the globe showed a pattern in the use of language reviewed from the speech acts used. The domination of assertive and directive illocutionary in this research reflected the main mission of the protests for Mahsa Amini's death in Iran. Assertive speech acts point out the statements and true propositions, in the context of protests, the use of assertive speech acts indicates the demonstrators' demands or dreams which were expected collectively, which in this context: the rights of women's liberation. The directive speech acts found in this research are closely related to the fighting spirit in the form of open demonstrations which have a mission to spread the message of the movement and attract the public's sympathy.

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, the protests showed solidarity which was dreamt to be formed through the short utterances containing strong messages of togetherness. Related to the theory of social movement, the results of this research also proved the concept of social movement characteristics which was stated by De la Porta and Diani (2006) which explained the common characteristic of social movement is the formation of a group of people involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; (and they) share a distinct collective identity. In Mahsa Amini's context, a group of people who gathered and were involved in the protests from their countries indirectly were bound to have a protest against the

“identified enemy”: the Iran government who were patriarchal and discriminative towards women. Research related to solidarity in the context of sociolinguistics are crucial in the recent years considering the society nowadays are more open to changes, however, these changes were often clashes with the values shared in the society. In that situation, people create more communities and social groups formed through solidarity and a similar fate to fight for the same purpose or identity. Similar research on solidarity will be very much needed in the future, to examine and explain social phenomena that happen through linguistics that emerge among certain social groups.

It is hoped that more research on the use of language in the context of protests on social issues will be carried out in the future, considering more linguistic aspects which can show the phenomenon or ideology created. This research explained the phenomenon of solidarity by indicating the illocutionary acts used on posters in the protests. Analysis on a more complex level like discourse analysis can be done to show more representative values or ideologies through the language used. Analysis on speech acts which was done in this research was hoped to be able to be a point of reference for language use analysis in the level of clause based on forms and functions related to the social mission said by the speaker.

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