

## Pronoun Variations and Code-Switching as Intimacy and Politeness Strategy; A Corpus Study of Community Interaction in Balikpapan

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### ABSTRACT

*Socio-pragmatic competency is related to the ability of people to use language in accordance with certain social contexts or certain social conditions. The various use of honorific forms and the variation of “self” and “other” reference forms become a very important instrument in maintaining politeness as an aspect of socio-pragmatic. Those variations show the socio-pragmatic aspect of the participants involved. This paper aims to examine the use of various pronouns among the member of one neighborhood community in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. The methodology of this study is descriptive, corpus-based study by collecting data from WhatsApp group conversations and conducting analysis using AntConc tools. The focus of the paper is to examine the pronoun variations of “self” and “other” references including the choice of pronoun code-switching. Although in Balikpapan, colloquial Indonesian is used in daily conversation, for politeness and intimacy, the code-switching of pronouns is observed. Thus, other than Indonesian common pronouns, the other pronoun used is the Javanese pronoun first person singular (kulo) “I/me/my” and Banjarese “ulun”. Furthermore, the honorific address of Pak Haji (given to a person who has conducted a Hajj pilgrimage from Mecca) is found and is used as second-person and third-person singular pronouns. Then, there is also “Pak RT” (The chief of the community association) that is addressed using the term to refer to him, both as a second-person and third-person pronoun. These extensive variations and code-switching of pronouns observed in a small neighborhood show that pronoun variations and pronouns code-switching is an important tool in everyday conversation to maintain intimacy and politeness to achieve a harmonious living in a heterogeneous society.*

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### 1. Introduction

Using appropriate and polite language in daily communication is an important part of maintaining harmony in a community and neighborhood, especially in a heterogeneous society such as Balikpapan. The speaker's competence in using appropriate and polite language during communication is one of the objects of pragmatics study. Leech (2014) mentions that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects in pragmatic work together in building pragmatic competence, especially in politeness.

Furthermore, if pragmalinguistics is about the linguistics modification of expressing politeness such as morphological, and syntactic modification, then sociopragmatic is related to how the sociocultural aspect affects the pragmatic use (Napoli & Tantucci, 2022; Andini et al., 2021). One of the aspects of sociopragmatic that is very important in maintaining politeness is the variations of the use of pronouns (Leech, 2014).

Yule (2005) states that everyone can think of politeness in general terms as having to do with ideas like being tactful, modest, and nice to other people. This study aims to highlight the variation of pronouns as a politeness strategy used in social interaction from WhatsApp conversation in the community unit in Balikpapan Selatan sub-regency, Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, and to analyze how those aspects play an important role in maintaining respectful communication and interaction among member of the community.

Balikpapan municipality is a city in Kalimantan Timur with a population based on the result of the 2020 population census is 688,318 people. of these, 352,802 were male and 335,516 female., distributed to 6 Sub-regencies. Balikpapan Selatan Subdistrict itself has a population of 145,007 people.



Figure 1. Map of Population Distribution in Balikpapan

Source: Balikpapan Municipality in Figures 2021 (Statistics of Balikpapan Municipality)

Balikpapan is a heterogeneous society, where people from various background of ethnicity live, some of those ethnics are Banjarese, Dayak, Kutai, Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, Java, Toraja, Batak, Buton, and many others ethnics who lives in harmonious living. Those harmonious living of them is supported by the ability of the people in using socio-pragmatic competence when communicating with others. That socio-pragmatic competence can be shown from the variations of pronoun use to maintain politeness as the focus of this study.

Fairclough (1989) states that “politeness is based on the recognition of differences of power, degree of social distance,” proposing that the scale of ‘Politeness’ in any community depends on two factors: (1) An assessment of the social relationship between interlocutors (2) Knowledge of the social values and norms of the sociocultural community involved.

Brown and Levinson (1978) state there are three factors of politeness, they are: 1). Social distance between speaker and hearer determined by four parameters: gender, age, situation, and familiarity, 2). The speaker and hearer's relative power is based on their asymmetrical position, 3).The degree of imposition associated with the required expenditure of goods and services. Those three factors also become a consideration when analyzing the way pronoun is used.

Pronoun itself has been widely acknowledged as one of the important tools in maintaining politeness (Saleh et al., 2021; Sukmawaty et al., 2022). In English, Pronouns have separate forms to identify number, case, person, and gender. Numbers are shown by different forms for singular and plural pronouns (Igaab & Tarrad, (2019); Rahman & Weda, 2018). The personal pronouns of subjective case (he/she), objective case (him/her), and possessive case (his/her) are essential to be known by the speakers in producing appropriate utterances (Muryasov, 2021; Sukmawaty et al., 2022). An individual is referred to by distinct types the first-person (I), second-person (you), and third-person (she/he/it). The gender of a personal pronoun includes masculine (him), feminine (her), and neuter (it), which means neither masculine nor feminine (Yule, 2005; Rahman, 2018.).

Whereas in the Indonesian language, the pronoun does not vary based on gender, however, in particular second person plural pronouns, the significant aspect is there are exclusive ‘we’ and inclusive ‘we’ (Hiep & Thuy, 2022; Prihandoko et al., 2019). The inclusive we are *kita*, which is widely used as an in-group identity and to include all of the participants in communication as part of the group. Whereas the exclusive ‘we’ is *kami*, where the audience or the addressee is not a part of the speakers’ group. That is why one of the purposes of using inclusive we, is to maintain intimacy and relationship within a group. Following the table of main pronouns in the Indonesian language.

**Table 1. Form of Indonesian Pronouns (Adapted from Semana & Menggo, 2022)**

Person and Form	Personal Pronouns	Singular	Plural
First Person	Subjective	saya, aku, daku	Kami (exc. We), kita (Inc. We)
	Objective	Saya, aku, daku	Kami, kita
	Possessive	-ku, saya	Kami, kita
Second Person	Subjective	Anda, Engkau, kamu, dikau	Kalian, kamu sekalian
	Objective	Engkau, kau	Kalian, kamu sekalian
	Possessive	-mu, kamu	Kalian, kamu sekalian
Third Person	Subjective	la, dia, beliau	mereka
	Objective	Dia, beliau	mereka
	Possessive	-nya, dia, beliau	mereka

The list above is only listed the standard form and does not list all other colloquial forms based on dialects that can be found in different areas in Indonesia. E.g.: *lu/ elu* (You) in colloquial Jakarta for first person pronoun, or *kita* (You) in colloquial Makassar. Wardhaugh (2015) states that “the pronoun system in colloquial Indonesian includes two pronouns which can both signal distance as well as intimacy, *kamu*, and *elu* (or its variants, *lu*, *elo*, and *lo*); while both are appropriate for use with intimates and other young people, *kamu* is derived from Standard Indonesian and *elu* and its variants from colloquial varieties. As the focus of this study is the relation between the variations of pronoun use and address terms, some other variations of pronouns other than those listed in Table 1 above will also be the focus of the study.

This study will provide a piece of evidence on how the participants who are involved in communication in a multilingual setting in a community group in Balikpapan, show their sociopragmatic competence through the use of an appropriate pronoun to maintain politeness and respect.

## 2. Methodology

The study is a descriptive qualitative study using data from a WhatsApp conversation group that is converted to txt and then analyzed on Antconc concordance tools (Anthony, 2022). The first stage of the study is to export the WhatsApp conversation from “Warga RT.06 Daksa” WhatsApp group. The file after export will be in .txt file, which will be ready to be uploaded and to be analyzed by Antconc Concordance tools. Names of speakers and phone numbers in the data are covered.

Antconc is A freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordance and text analysis. This tool is commonly used in corpus study for several purposes such as semantics and sociolinguistics. In Antconc, each keyword will be typed to search for use. The feature used is KeyWord In Context (KWIC) as seen below:

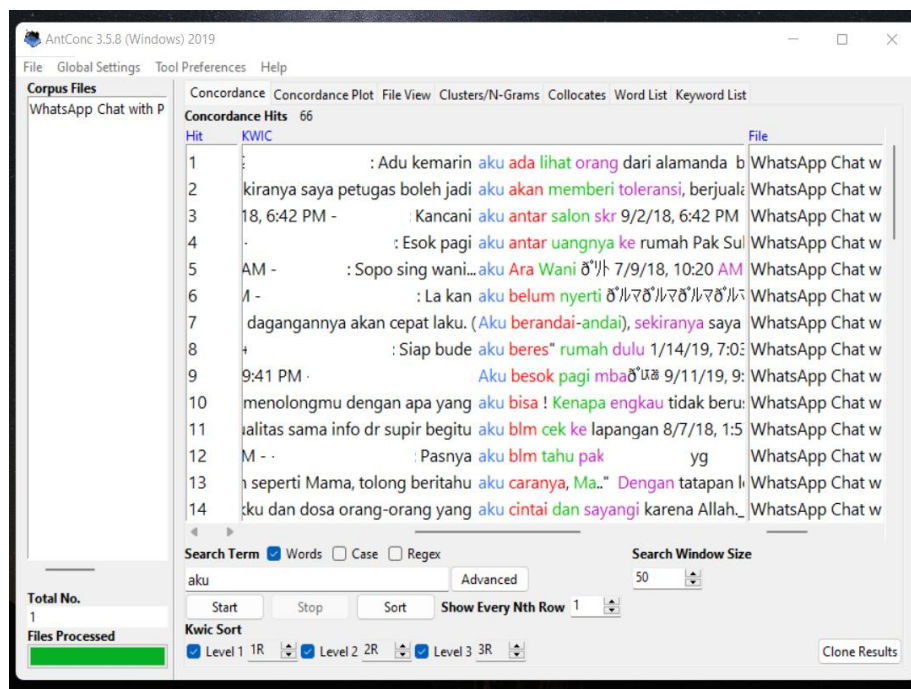


Figure 2. The result of KWIC search in AntConc

Once the result has appeared, the next stage is to analyze the quantity of the particular pronoun, and the context of the conversation to identify who speaks to whom and analyze the pronoun used. Brown and Levinson's (1978) three factors of politeness and Fishman's (1965) sociolinguistic factors (who speak what language to whom and when) are taken into consideration during analysis to explain how the pronoun choice reflects the politeness strategy by the speaker/participant.

The pronouns to be analyzed is not only the common pronoun, but also some other colloquial pronoun based on the traditional language of the participant involved, such as *ulun* (Banjarese), *kulo* (Javanese), or honorific forms of Bapak, Pak haji, Pak RT.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### A. Variations of Pronouns

Fishman (1965) summarizes factors that must be considered when observing the use of language in society in a multilingual setting: who speaks what language to whom and when. Those aspects are not only focused on the relationship between the participants involved but also the context of the conversation.

The use of first-person singular pronoun from the data corpus shows various way of referring to first-person singular pronoun which depends on social relation, social context as well as the level of formality, and the ethnic background of participants. There are four variations of first person singular pronoun used, the standard form of *saya* and *aku* with two pronouns from the local language; Banjarese (*ulun*) and from Javanese language (*kulo*).

Thomason & Everett (2005) states that the Indonesian language differs quite significantly because it has "an open pronoun system" which allows expressions for self-references to be represented by various first-person pronouns such as *saya*, *aku*, *gue*, *kita*, as well as personal names and kin terms (Djenar, 2007). this situation was also found from the data which use two traditional language pronouns; *ulun* and *kulo*.

#### 1. Saya (I/me)

The use of *saya* as the first person pronoun appears 451 times during the interaction. This pronoun is the highest number of first-person singular pronouns used to refer the speaker to him/herself. *Saya* becomes the most common pronoun used showing that this pronoun is the most neutral one, in terms of formality and in terms of the participants' relation, i.e.: Whoever the speaker speaks to, He/She will most likely use the pronoun *saya* as the first person.

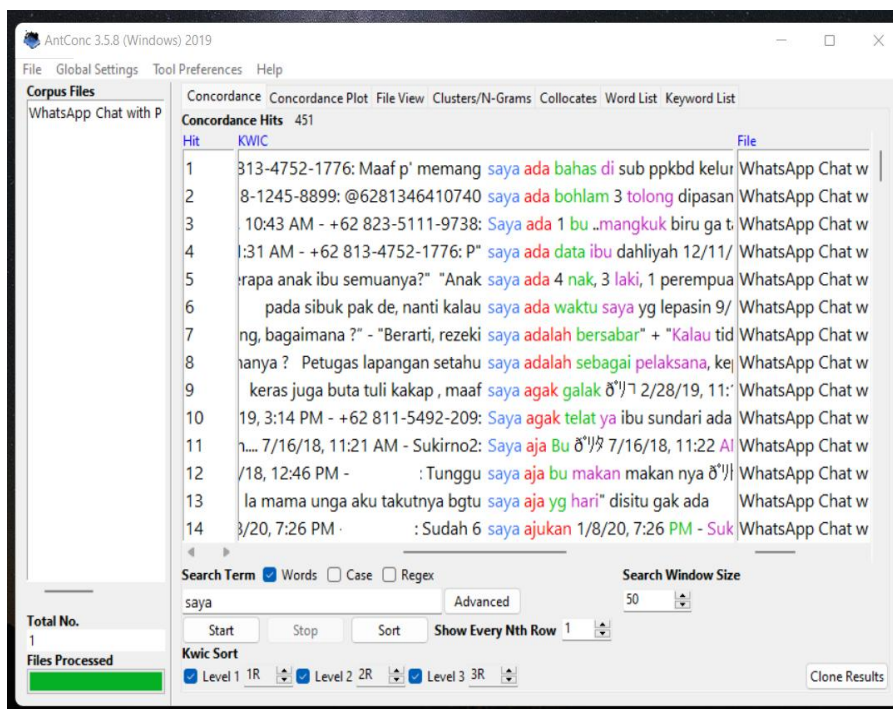


Figure 3. The result of KWIC for the word "saya"

### Datum 1

This interaction between two members of the group discussed the naming of Posyandu (Integrated Healthcare Center) in the community unit.

Participant A : iya barusan di wa sama pengurus posyandu kelurahan...ditanya kenapa ko pucuk merah nama posyandunya

(Yes, I received a text from a staff of Posyandu in the district office and ask why is the name of our Posyandu pucuk merah)

Participant B : Maaf Pak memang saya ada bahas di sub ppkbd kelurahan.

(Sorry sir, I discussed that matter at the district office)

Participant A and Participant B use the more formal pronoun *saya* since the context of the discussion is a rather formal one, discussing the naming of a public facility in the community unit, also the relation between the two participants involved in the conversation is socially equal.

### 2. Aku (I/me)

Other than *saya*, one of the common first-person pronouns used is *aku*. The pronoun *aku* appears 66 times. The pronoun *aku* is generally accepted to be used in an informal context and *saya* is more neutral because the pronoun *saya* creates a sense of politeness, respect, and non-offensiveness in addressing oneself to another.

According to Alwi et al., (1998), the Pronoun *saya* is more formal and in general is used in the written form or the formal situation. Nevertheless, some of the usage of the pronoun found is not from an informal interaction between participants, rather, the texts are from forwarding information and not an original utterance of the speaker.

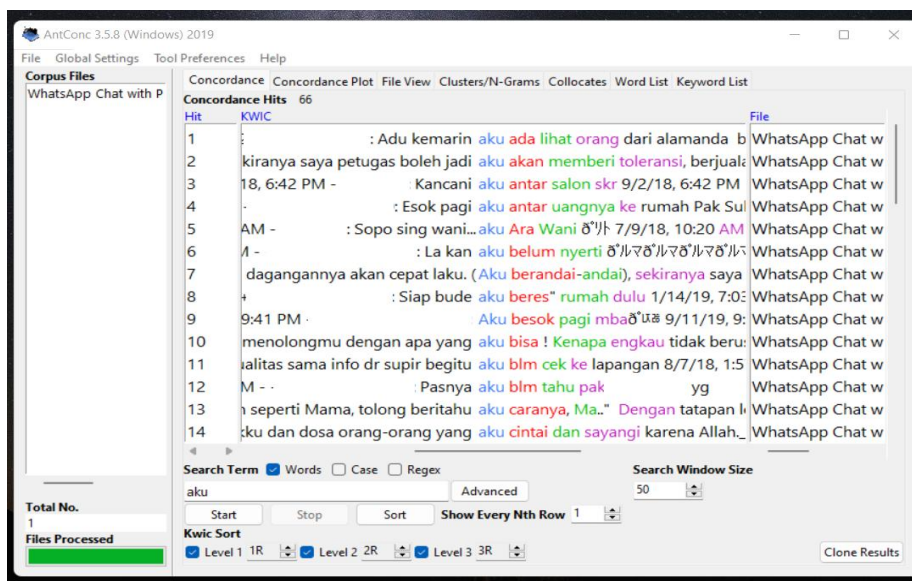


Figure 4. The result of KWIC for the word “aku”

One of the forwarded texts using the pronoun *aku* can be seen in a forwarded prayer from one of the participants.

#### Datum 2

Ya Allah, ampunilah seluruh dosa-dosaku, dosa ibu bapakku dan dosa orang-orang yang *aku* cintai dan sayangi karena Allah.

(Dear Allah, forgive all my sins, the sins of my parents, and the sins of those I love and care for because of Allah).

The use of *aku* in the context is of course not an informal one, but rather a poetic use. A further study should be conducted to focus on the variations of use between the two pronouns, *saya* and *aku* in Balikpapan setting.

### 3. *Ulu* (*lme*)

The Banjarese *ulun* as first person pronoun is commonly used in Balikpapan by the Banjarese people. Not only that, when speaking to an older Banjarese person by a speaker from another origin, it is customary to be polite to refer to self by using the pronoun *ulun*

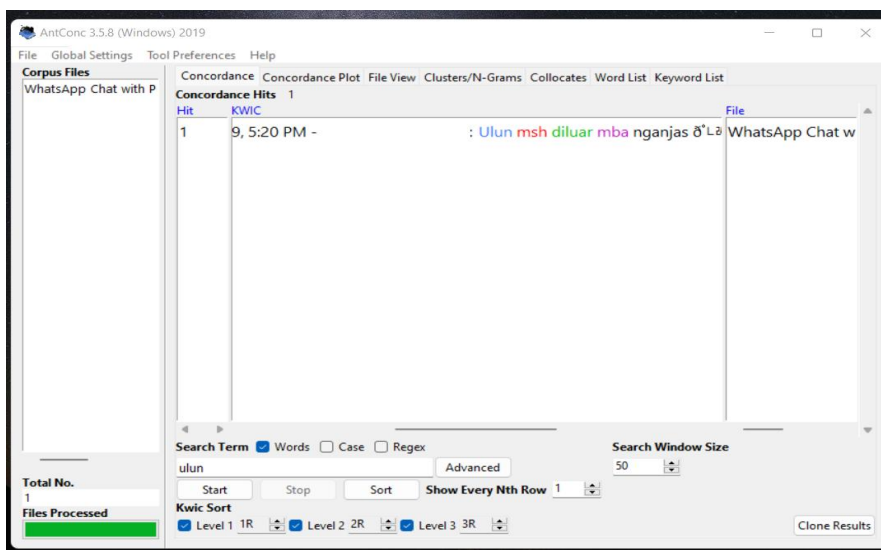


Figure 5. The result of KWIC for the word “ulun”

This particular variation of using traditional language and code-switches the particular pronoun, not only reflects the heterogeneous composition of the community but also shows how the speaker maintains an intimate relationship in the interaction based on to whom she speaks.

#### 4. *Kulo (l/me)*

As one of the major ethnic that live in Balikpapan, the Javanese language is commonly used in the city. Not only the simple Javanese but the polite form of the language is frequently found in an interaction among Javanese people. In the WhatsApp group, there are many conversations conducted in Javanese as the speakers and the addressees are both of Javanese origin.

In particular first person pronoun, the use of *kulo (l/me)* which is the most polite style of the language shows that the speaker speaks to a person from a higher social status or age.

##### Datum 3

Pak kulo nggeh purun

(Sir, I am interested also).

This conversation is related to the distribution of donations from the government to the community, and when it is announced by the Head of the Community Unit (Pak RT), there are many members of the community unit who are interested to register as recipients. One of the replies was by a Javanese speaker origin who is code-switched and uses the most polite style of Javanese.

The speaker addresses her speech to another member of the group who is also of Javanese origin. The use of traditional language in the group is actually common, it does not mean that there is an attempt to neglect other participants out from the speech community when speaking a particular language, but all participants understand that even though once and a while code-switching is done, other participants will still be able to understand the sentence.

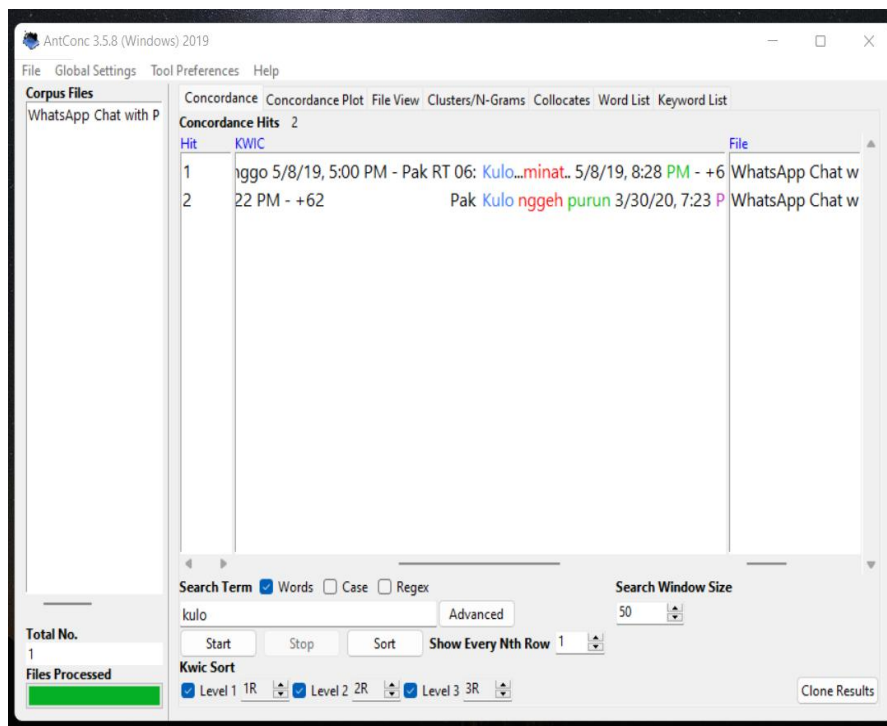


Figure 6. The result of KWIC for the word “kulo”

As seen from Figure 7 above, all usages of pronoun *aku* are not used in international context, therefore, the finding supports Flannery's assertion (2007) that *anda* is not commonly used in a conversational setting, rather it is mostly found in a more formal and in the language of media as seen from the data corpus where all of the usages are from forwarding a piece of information from other sources.

### 5. Pak Haji and Pak RT

The address terms *Pak Haji* and *Pak RT* used as a pronoun to address others are also found. According to Wardhaugh (2015), address term is the way to name or address another by using a title (T), by first name (FN), by last name (LN), by a nickname, by some combination of these, or by nothing at all. *Pak Haji* is a title given to a person (male) who has been to Hajj, this address term is a respectful one for any person who has completed the Hajj pilgrimage. By using this, the speaker maintains his/her politeness to the addressee. From the data, the use of *Pak Haji* is mostly for the third person singular to address the member of the group or to speak about the member of the group. This address term used by the participants shows a form of respect.

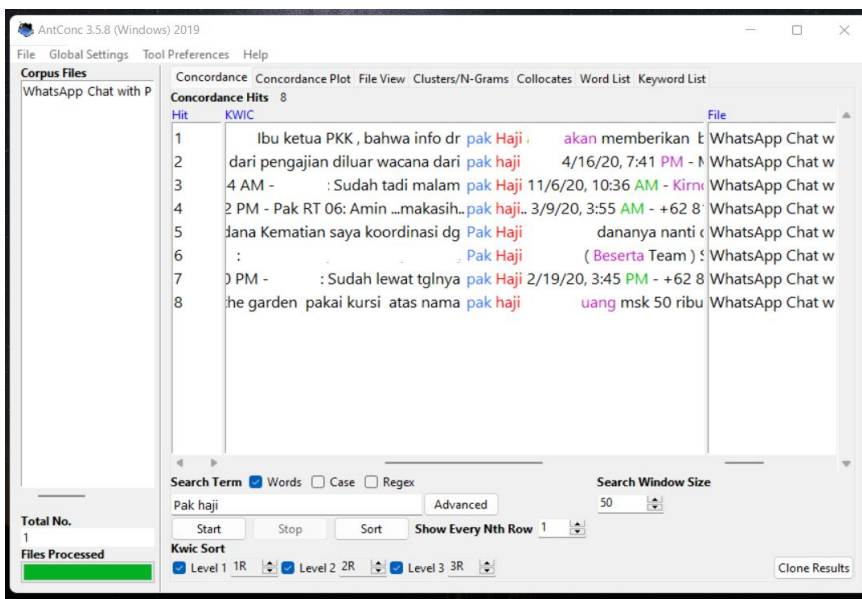


Figure 7. The result of KWIC for the word “Pak haji”

The same also for the position title of *Pak RT*. *RT* (Rukun Tetangga) is the smallest community unit consisting of around 100 houses and the head of the unit is called *Pak RT* or *Ibu RT*. This title becomes a common address term for the member of the community when addressing the head of the RT. From the interaction in WhatsApp conversation and used not only as a first-person pronoun but also as a third-person pronoun.

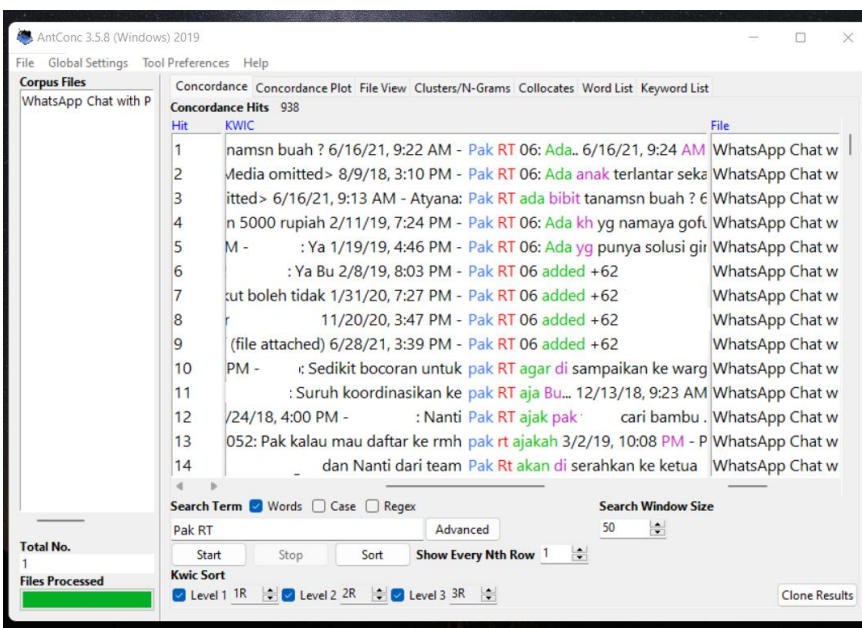


Figure 8. The result of KWIC for the word “Pak RT”



The use of *Pak RT* as first person pronoun can be seen below:

**Datum 4**

‘Pak Kalau mau daftar ke rumah Pak RT aja kah?’

(For anyone who wants to register, Does he/she just go to your house?)

Whereas the use of *Pak RT* as third person pronoun can be seen below:

The use of *Pak RT* as first person pronoun can be seen below:

**Datum 5**

Suruh koordinasikan ke Pak RT aja Bu.

(Just coordinate with (him) Pak RT)

Both of the conversations above discuss the registration for donations that will be distributed to the member of the community unit. The participant refers to the head of the community unit as *Pak RT*. The use of this third pronoun is a form of address to show respect and politeness.

**B. Code-switching as part of speech accommodation**

The use of code-switching to maintain politeness is shown by using different pronouns based on the ethnicity of the addressee. By switching code, the speaker accommodates his/her speech by doing speech convergence (Bell et al., 2009)

A speaker can perform speech divergence by performing a different style to the hearer, thus decreasing communicative distance. The speech accommodation theory was extended by Allan Bell (1984), who claims that speakers principally adapt their speech style to respond to the listeners present. The speaker switches the code to adjust to the addressee's ethnic can be found on two pronouns of first person singular I/me. The first one is *ulun* in the Banjarese language, and the second one is *kulo* in the Javanese language:

**Datum 6**

“Ulun masih diluar Mbak nganjas”

(I am still outside sister, picking up kids from school).

This pronoun is spoken by a Javanese participant to address a Banjarese participant. It shows how the speaker doing speech convergence by accommodating her speech and switching code to the Banjarese language.

Another pronoun used as a polite form is the use of *kulo* means I/me. This choice of using the highest level of Javanese variation shows how the speaker shows respect to the addressee. As asserted by Errington (1988); Herrick (1984); Poedjosoedarmo, (1979) that in relation to politeness, they classify Javanese speech levels into three levels: the least polite, *Ngoko* (Ng), the middle polite, *Krama Madya* (KM), and the most polite, *Krama Inggil*, (KI). Each level is different from another in its lexical items.

Not only during the use of pronouns, but the whole sentence used by the speaker is switching to Javanese language using the most polite form.

**Datum 7**

Pak kulo nggeh purun

(Sir, I am interested also)

Since both participants are Javanese, and the speaker respects the status of the addressee, *kulo*, which is the most polite style of Javanese is used as the first-person pronoun.

### C. The level of Formality and The use of inclusive ‘We’ (Kita) as identity markers

The level of formality plays a significant role in the choice of pronoun used by the participants in the group. One of the formal second-person singular pronouns from standard Indonesian that appear is *anda* (You), this form is commonly used in a formal setting. Although there many use of this pronoun. None of them actually refers to an interaction between the speaker and addressee, rather, it is only forwarding news, information, and other broadcast.

For the first-person singular pronoun used during interaction in the group, the most neutral one is *saya* used in a more formal context with 451 usages. Whereas *aku*, the less formal one used only 66 times. Another two first-person pronouns used in informal settings are from the traditional language of the member of the group, i.e.: *ulun* of Banjarese and *kulo* of Javanese.

One positive politeness strategy that is also found in using pronouns is the inclusive use of the first-person plural pronoun *kita* (We/us). The inclusive use of *kita* from the group conversation appears 503 times as seen in Figure 10 below

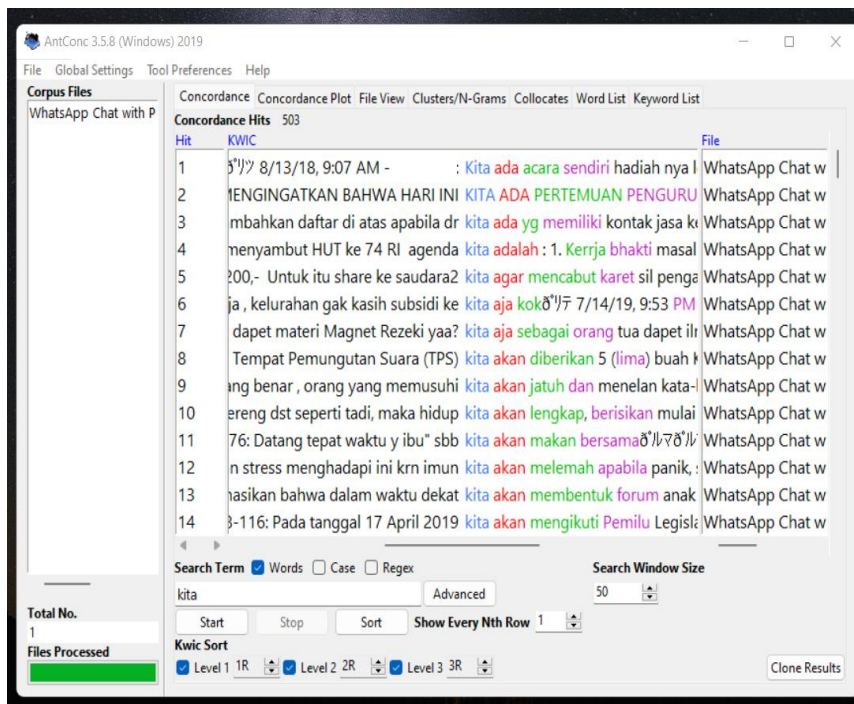


Figure 9. The result of KWIC for the word “kita”

The use of inclusive pronoun *kita* as seen in Figure 10 above, shows how community includes the members of the group as the part of the group. This is in line with Brown and Levinson's (1978) proposal of positive politeness strategies where one of the strategies is to use in group identity markers.

#### Datum 8

“Kita ada acara sendiri hadiahnya lebih meriah”

(We will have our own event, with a better prize)

The sentence above is sent by a participant to discuss an event for the Indonesian Independence Day anniversary. Using the inclusive *we* reflect the intimacy and the identity as one community among members of the group.

The use of inclusive *We* in the interaction of the group is higher than the use of exclusive *we* (*kami*) with only 305 usages. This shows that the speakers are aware of how the use of inclusive *we* during interaction in the community can bring intimacy and a sign of being included in a group.

#### 4. Conclusion

The choice to use a particular pronoun to show politeness among the people in the community unit in Balikpapan is based on the social distance between speaker and hearer which is determined by gender, age, situation, and familiarity. Also, the speaker and hearer's social relation and the context of conversation play a significant role in pronoun choice. Ethnic background is also a determinant in the particular pronoun chosen. Specific to the first person, the use of pronouns by switching code from Banjarese, 'ulun' (I/me), and also from Javanese 'kulo' (I/me) show a very high politeness level when speaking to others and doing a speech convergence to accommodate the addressee. The speaker understands the ethnic background of the addressee and accommodates the pronoun use by switching code, even if the speaker him/herself is not a native speaker of the traditional language of the pronoun. As for the second-person and third-person pronoun, several variations of pronoun is used to show social status such as Pak RT and Pak Haji. This study shows evidence that the sociopragmatic competence of using the appropriate pronoun as a politeness strategy is an important aspect in maintaining a harmonious living in the society, this is done not only by using the correct pronoun from the Indonesian language but also by using pronoun from the native language of the addressee and or the speaker. A further detailed study should be conducted on the use of first-person pronouns of *aku* and *saya* specific to the Balikpapan setting, to observe and to describe in detail the difference in use.

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