

LANGUAGE, HUMOR, AND URBAN BALINESE IDENTITY: THE REPRESENTATION OF “KAWITAN KODYA” IN TIKTOK DIGITAL CONTENT

I Made Darma Sucipta¹⁾, I Made Rai Jaya Widanta²⁾

Tourist; Mechanical Engineering

Politeknik Negeri Bali

Denpasar, Indonesia

darmaucipta@pnb.ac.id ; maderaijayawidanta@pnb.ac.id

Abstract

The development of social media has created new spaces for the production and negotiation of identity through language. One interesting phenomenon in the Balinese context is the use of the phrase “kawitan kodya” in digital comedy content on TikTok. The term kawitan, which culturally refers to genealogical origins and the sacred dimension within Balinese tradition, has been reinterpreted as a symbol of urban identity through humor. This study aims to describe the forms of usage of the phrase “kawitan kodya” along with supporting expressions such as “tabik sugra” and “kle kle kle,” and to analyze their meanings and social functions in constructing urban Balinese identity. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using digital discourse analysis. The data consist of utterances in TikTok content that were transcribed and analyzed through the semiotic perspective of Roland Barthes and pragmatic theory. The findings indicate that the phrase “kawitan kodya” has undergone a shift in meaning from a sacred concept to a symbol of modernity and urban community solidarity. Meanwhile, “tabik sugra” and “kle kle kle” function as performative strategies that construct intimacy, humor, and distinctive digital identity markers. These findings demonstrate that language in digital content functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for identity construction and cultural meaning transformation in contemporary urban Bali.

Keywords – *digital language, humor, urban identity, kawitan kodya, semiotics*

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology over the past few decades has brought significant transformations in societal language practices, particularly among younger generations. Social media, as a space for digital interaction, functions not only as a medium of entertainment but also as an arena for the formation, negotiation, and representation of social identity through language. One of the most widely used social media platforms today is TikTok. This application enables users to create, edit, and share videos with various features such as filters and background music. In Indonesia, TikTok usage is extremely high due to its accessibility and engaging content. Data from KompasTekno (Tempo, 2023) show that as of July 2024, the number of TikTok users in Indonesia reached 157.6 million, making it the country with the largest user base globally. This large number of users makes TikTok an interesting space to study, particularly in relation to the language variations that develop within it. Platforms like TikTok, with their short-video format that is highly popular in Indonesia, have generated new linguistic trends that reflect language creativity, social variation, and the dynamics of cultural meaning in contemporary digital discourse. This indicates that social

media contributes to the emergence of neologisms and language variations that not only expand vocabulary but also mark the identity of digital communities (Huwaida et al., 2025).

Some language uses that emerge, particularly in Bali, highlight the dynamics of language itself. For instance, in the local Balinese context, regional languages and cultural symbols undergo transformations of meaning within digital spaces. Several Balinese TikTok creators popularize expressions such as “tabik sugra,” “kawitan kodya,” and “kle kle kle” as part of a comedic speech style and the representation of urban identity. The term *kawitan*, which traditionally refers to sacred genealogical origins, is reinterpreted in digital practice as “kawitan kodya” to humorously refer to urban youth social circles. Meanwhile, “tabik sugra” is used as a performative greeting, and “kle kle kle” functions as a humor marker that strengthens community solidarity. This phenomenon shows that language in Balinese digital content not only undergoes lexical innovation but also experiences shifts in cultural meaning that reflect the dynamics of contemporary urban identity. This makes it particularly interesting to examine and analyze the transformation of meaning within ongoing language dynamics.

Several previous studies have examined neologisms and slang variations on TikTok as part of the linguistic dynamics of Generation Z. For example, research on neologisms derived from loanwords shows that TikTok content generates many new words originating from foreign languages and functions as expressions of slang in digital interactions (Huwaida et al., 2025). Slang variation on TikTok also demonstrates how young people assert social identity and virtual group belonging through lexical choices, reflecting linguistic adaptation in digital social contexts (Amalia et al., 2025). A pragmatic approach shows that language creativity found in TikTok comments serves as a communication strategy for Generation Z in digital contexts (Tampubolon et al., 2025). In addition, cognitive semantic studies on viral TikTok terms illustrate how popular words or expressions undergo meaning changes due to digital socio-cultural contexts (Juliana et al., 2025). Other studies on language in social media also indicate that digital platforms impact linguistic change and innovation. Research on neologisms in social media provides an overview of how new terms emerge as responses to the needs of digital expression, subsequently influencing language practices and communication among users (Tumasang, 2025). Another study highlights how linguistic identity is negotiated by content creators through glocal practices, namely the integration of local and global elements in constructing digital identity (Sudikan & Murugesan, 2025). This demonstrates that language use on platforms such as TikTok not only reflects local dynamics but also global trends in the construction of linguistic identity.

However, most of these studies focus on broader phenomena related to neologisms, slang variation, and comment pragmatics, while research on specific phrases produced within the context of particular content creators serving as symbols of local urban identity remains very limited. In Bali, the emergence of phrases such as “kawitan kodya,” “tabik sugra,” and “kle kle kle” used by several TikTok content creators presents an interesting subject for study. These phrases are not merely slang variations but represent new constructions of meaning rooted in local culture and the urban social context of Bali, functioning as humor, distinctive greetings, and markers of urban identity in digital content. Traditionally, the term *kawitan* in Bali refers to genealogical origins that are spiritual and sacred. However, in digital content practices, the term is reinterpreted as “kawitan kodya,” used humorously to represent urban identity. This phenomenon indicates a shift in meaning as well as a negotiation of cultural identity in digital spaces that has not been widely addressed in social media linguistic studies. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by analyzing how the phrase “kawitan kodya,” along with “tabik

sugra” and “kle kle kle,” functions as a representation of language, humor, and urban Balinese identity in TikTok digital content through semiotic and pragmatic approaches.

Based on the above explanation, this study positions the use of the phrases “kawitan kodya,” “tabik sugra,” and “kle kle kle” in TikTok content as the object of analysis to reveal how language is used as a tool for representing urban Balinese identity and as a form of social interaction through humor and linguistic performativity. This analysis is important because it contributes to understanding how digital language practices not only reflect the communication patterns of newer generations but also create new meanings within local cultural contexts that are currently undergoing transformation in the era of social media.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a digital discourse analysis method. This approach is chosen because the research focuses on interpreting meaning, social function, and identity construction produced through language within the context of social media. The research data consist of verbal utterances in TikTok content containing the phrases “kawitan kodya,” “tabik sugra,” and “kle kle kle.” The data were obtained from videos uploaded by content creators in the form of digital comedy content that presents responses to comments as well as self-narrated content related to urban Balinese identity.

The unit of analysis in this study includes: (1) phrases and sentences containing the term “kawitan kodya”; (2) supporting expressions such as “tabik sugra” and “kle kle kle”; and (3) the visual and situational context accompanying these utterances. Data collection was conducted through digital documentation techniques with the following steps:

1. Identifying TikTok content relevant to the research focus.
2. Capturing screenshots and recording the transcription of utterances.
3. Classifying data based on the occurrence of phrases and their context of use.

The analysis was carried out through the following stages:

1. Data reduction, namely selecting utterances relevant to the research focus.
2. Data categorization, which involves grouping utterances based on their functions as humor, greetings, and identity representation.
3. Semiotic analysis, using Roland Barthes’ model to identify denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings (Barthes, 1972; Leitch, V. B., 2001).
4. Pragmatic analysis, to examine speech functions (phatic, expressive, and performative) within the context of digital interaction (Austin, 1962).

The validity of the data is ensured through theoretical triangulation by combining semiotic and pragmatic analyses to obtain a comprehensive interpretation of meaning.

Finding and Discussion

1. The Transformation of the Meaning of “Kawitan” in the Phrase “Kawitan Kodya”

Traditionally, *kawitan* in Balinese culture refers to genealogical origins that are sacred and spiritual in nature. In line with Dana et al. (2021), *kawitan* derives from the Sanskrit word “*wit*,” meaning origin or lineage. However, in TikTok digital content, this term is reinterpreted within a modern urban context. Data from the content creator Tugek Ojol show explicit usage of this phrase, for example in captions or utterances such as:

“Ternyata di kawitan living world ada”
 “Halo honey tugek lagi di kawitan ya di living world”

Additionally, variations of usage appear in several other captions, such as:

“sesolahan ring kawitan LW”
 “pemedek ring kawitan living world”
 “mekemit ring kawitan living world Denpasar”
 “nemenin adek aku ke kawitannya”
 “top 3 kawitan anak kodya”
 “nangkil ke kawitan living world ring rahina soma mule”
 “top 3 hal yang dilakukan cewek kodya saat ada di kawitan LW”

The use of religious and kinship-related terms within the context of modern spaces such as shopping malls indicates a complex process of meaning production. From a semiotic perspective, language and visuals function not only as communication tools but also as systems of signs that produce social reality. Every word, metaphor, and visual representation in TikTok content can be understood as a sign that carries multiple layers of meaning, both literal and culturally embedded. Therefore, semiotic analysis is necessary to reveal how meanings are constructed, negotiated, and represented within digital discourse. Referring to Barthes’ two-order signification model (Barthes, 1972; Leitch, V. B., 2001) denotation, connotation, and myth the phenomenon can be described as follows:

Semiotic Analysis

Denotation

Living World is a modern shopping mall located in an urban area.

Connotation

The mall is positioned as a space for social interaction, lifestyle expression, and urban youth activities.

Myth

The mall is constructed as an “origin place” or a center of identity for the urban Balinese community, as if it functions as a new *kawitan* for “anak kodya.”

The use of religious terms such as *pemedek* (worshippers), *mekemit* (staying overnight in a temple), and *nangkil* (attending temple worship) in the context of a shopping mall indicates a shift in meaning framed through humor. This reflects a form of symbolic desacralization that is comedic in nature, yet simultaneously demonstrates the creative reinterpretation of local cultural symbols within digital spaces. This transformation shows how sacred cultural symbols are recontextualized into symbols of modernity and urban solidarity.

2. “Tabik Sugra” as a Performative Strategy and Digital Identity

The expression “tabik sugra” consistently appears in various contents by Si Bli Wira. This content creator is known for a unique style that delivers humor based on audience comments in the comment section. The data obtained from several video titles on the creator’s TikTok account include the following excerpts:

Video “Rejeki Nomplok”

“...Kle jackpot kali ni ci, kle kle kle, setabik sugra ini gedanya ya...”

Nyaris Pewaris

“... bisa ikut custom war ni, tapi khe di parkiran mih tabik sugra...”

“... setabik sugra ini showermu ya...”

“...setabik sugra ini aquariummu ya...”

“...kle kle kle khe mau merapan nih...”

Swastyastu Calon Matua

“...kakk wira read dm, kalo gak dibales taka jak nyentana ya, mih tabik sugra, ga bakal tak bales...”

Bule Lokal

“...kle gebrakan akhir tahun kali ini ci ... kle kle kle ... mih tabik sugra...”

Si Paling Improve Jalan

“...kle setabik sugra ini ci isi melow gini lagi matan ainya...”

Setabik Sugra Itu

“...Setabik sugra ini macetnya nok, wih kle kle kle pasti banyak yang tangkil di kawitan ni...”

From a pragmatic perspective, the expression “tabik sugra” functions as an interpersonal communication strategy in digital spaces. First, it serves a phatic function, as it is used to initiate and maintain interaction with the audience, aligning with the view that utterances are social actions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). In the TikTok context, this function strengthens engagement and closeness between the creator and their followers.

Second, “tabik sugra” functions as an expressive speech act, conveying the speaker’s attitude, such as admiration, exaggeration, or satire. The meaning is often implicit and understood through shared context.

Third, the repeated use of this expression establishes it as a performative strategy that shapes the creator’s digital persona. From the perspective of performativity, language not only conveys messages but also constructs identity. When audiences understand and imitate the expression, social solidarity and collective identity are formed within the digital community.

3. “Kle Kle Kle” as a Marker of Humor and Urban Irony

The phrase “kle kle kle” appears repeatedly in the data:

“...kle jackpot kali ni ci, kle kle kle...”

“...kle kle kle khe mau merapan nih...”

“...liat bulenya tu kle kle kle...”

“...wih kle kle kle pasti banyak yang tangkil di kawitan ni...”

Pragmatically, “kle kle kle” functions as a marker of symbolic laughter. It generates an implicature that the situation being discussed is ironic or humorous without requiring explicit explanation. In some contexts, the utterance “kle kle kle” may also signal emphasis, statement, or even questioning, depending on the situational context within the video. It can therefore be said that the utterance “kle kle kle” reflects the creator’s self-expression in responding to a particular event or situation.

This repetitive sound pattern enhances the dramatic effect in digital performativity. In a cultural context, the phrase becomes part of a distinctive speech style that reinforces the local identity of Denpasar within social media discourse.

4. The Integration of Language, Humor, and Urban Balinese Identity

When analyzed holistically, the data reveal a consistent pattern of representation:

Table 1. Summary of Analytical Findings

Linguistic Element	Function	Identity Representation
Kawitan Kodya	Reinterpretation of sacred symbols	Collective urban identity
Tabik Sugra	Performative greeting	Creator's digital persona
Kle kle kle	Humor marker	Community solidarity

This phenomenon reflects a process of glocalization, in which local symbols (*kawitan*, *nangkil*, *pemedek*) are integrated with modern spaces (malls, parking areas, barbecues). Humor serves as a medium that enables the transformation of meaning without creating direct conflict with traditional values. Thus, language in TikTok content is not merely a tool of communication but also a medium for constructing urban Balinese identity that is fluid, performative, and grounded in digital community solidarity.

At first glance, the use of the term *kawitan* in the phrase “kawitan kodya” may be interpreted as a form of desacralization of cultural symbols. A term traditionally associated with genealogical origins and spirituality is now attached to capitalist spaces such as shopping malls (Living World). However, when analyzed more deeply through Barthes' semiotic perspective, this phenomenon does not simply eliminate sacredness but rather produces a new myth within an urban context. The mall does not truly replace the temple as a religious space; instead, it is humorously represented as the “center of life” for urban youth.

Therefore, what occurs is not merely desacralization, but rather a reappropriation of cultural symbols, namely the reuse of traditional symbols in new contexts to construct meanings that are relevant to the experiences of urban generations. Humor functions as a mechanism of cultural mediation. Through humor, the transformation of meaning is not perceived as a threat to traditional values, but as a form of creativity and cultural adaptation.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the use of the phrase “kawitan kodya” in TikTok digital content represents a transformation in the meaning of local Balinese cultural symbols within a contemporary urban context. The term *kawitan*, which traditionally refers to sacred genealogical origins, is reinterpreted as a symbol of modernity and community solidarity among “anak kodya” through the framework of humor. The expression “tabik sugra” functions as a performative strategy that constructs a digital persona while simultaneously strengthening social closeness between the creator and the audience, whereas the phrase “kle kle kle” serves as a humor marker that signifies solidarity and shared understanding within the urban Balinese community.

This phenomenon indicates that language in digital content functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a medium for identity construction, cultural meaning negotiation, and glocalization practices that integrate local symbols with modern global spaces. Thus, TikTok becomes a representational space that illustrates how urban Balinese identity is produced, reproduced, and negotiated through language and humor in the era of social media.

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