

MAKING QUEER KNOWLEDGE VISIBLE: DEBBY SAHERTIAN AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVING OF INDONESIAN QUEER TECHNOLECT ON TIKTOK

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ABSTRACT. This study explores how Indonesian queer linguistic knowledge becomes visible and preserved through digital platforms by focusing on a single TikTok video uploaded by Debby Sahertian on 7 July 2021. In this study, queer visibility is understood not merely as the appearance of queer expressions in public space, but as the process through which marginalized linguistic practices gain recognition, circulation, and partial legitimacy within broader sociocultural and digital infrastructures. Known for documenting queer slang (*bahasa gay/bahasa gaul*) in the late 1990s, Sahertian's presence on TikTok marks a shift from print-based documentation toward platform-mediated, audiovisual forms of linguistic knowledge production. Drawing on queer sociolinguistics, digital archiving studies, and platform theory, this research conceptualizes TikTok as an informal, community-driven archive where queer language is not only recorded but also performed, interpreted, and transmitted across generations. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative content analysis of the selected video, examining queer technolectal utterances, their lexical and phonetic features, and the metalinguistic explanations provided by Sahertian. These explanations function not merely as translations, but as pedagogical and archival strategies that render in-group language intelligible to wider audiences while maintaining its social markedness. The video's sustained engagement, evidenced by millions of views and continued interaction years after its publication, demonstrates its ongoing role as an active digital artifact. The findings show that Sahertian's digital practices perform multiple intersecting functions: documenting queer linguistic creativity, facilitating intergenerational knowledge transmission, and countering the historical exclusion of queer voices from formal linguistic and cultural archives. At the same time, the visibility afforded by TikTok is ambivalent. While it enables broader access and recognition of queer linguistic knowledge, it also exposes such knowledge to heightened surveillance, algorithmic filtering, and potential commodification. Overall, this study argues that *queer visibility* on digital platforms carries significant epistemic and sociopolitical implications: it reshapes how queer linguistic knowledge is legitimized, how community memory is constructed, and how marginalized identities negotiate presence within algorithmically governed spaces.

Keywords: *Knowledge production; Queer technolect; Queer sociolinguistics; TikTok; Visibility*

ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pengetahuan linguistik queer di Indonesia menjadi tampak dan terarsipkan melalui platform digital dengan berfokus pada satu video TikTok yang diunggah oleh Debby Sahertian pada 7 Juli 2021. Dalam konteks penelitian ini, visibilitas queer tidak sekadar dimaknai sebagai kemunculan ekspresi queer di ruang publik, melainkan sebagai proses di mana praktik linguistik yang selama ini terpinggirkan memperoleh pengakuan, mengalami peredaran yang lebih luas, dan mendapatkan bentuk legitimasi tertentu dalam lanskap sosial-budaya dan digital yang lebih luas. Dikenal sebagai sosok yang mendokumentasikan bahasa gay (*bahasa gay/bahasa gaul*) sejak akhir 1990-an, kehadiran Sahertian di TikTok menandai pergeseran dari dokumentasi berbasis cetak menuju bentuk produksi pengetahuan linguistik yang dimediasi platform dan bersifat audiovisual. Dengan mengacu pada perspektif sosiolinguistik queer, studi pengarsipan digital, dan teori platform, penelitian ini memposisikan TikTok sebagai arsip informal yang digerakkan oleh komunitas, di mana bahasa queer tidak hanya direkam, tetapi juga dipertunjukkan, ditafsirkan, dan diwariskan lintas generasi. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif terhadap video yang dipilih, dengan menelaah tuturan-tuturan teknolek queer, ciri leksikal dan fonetiknya, serta penjelasan metalinguistik yang diberikan oleh Sahertian. Penjelasan-penjelasan ini tidak semata berfungsi sebagai terjemahan, tetapi juga sebagai strategi pedagogis dan arsip, yang membuat bahasa kelompok dalam dapat dipahami oleh khalayak yang lebih luas tanpa menghilangkan penanda sosialnya. Tingginya keterlibatan audiens, yang terlihat dari jutaan penonton serta interaksi yang terus berlangsung bahkan beberapa tahun setelah video tersebut diunggah, menunjukkan bahwa konten ini tetap berfungsi sebagai artefak digital yang aktif dan mudah diakses. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik digital Sahertian menjalankan berbagai fungsi yang saling beririsan: mendokumentasikan kreativitas linguistik queer, memfasilitasi transmisi pengetahuan antar generasi, serta menantang keterpinggiran suara queer dalam arsip linguistik dan kultural formal. Namun demikian, visibilitas yang dihadirkan oleh TikTok juga bersifat ambivalen. Di satu sisi, ia membuka akses yang lebih luas sekaligus memungkinkan pengakuan terhadap pengetahuan linguistik queer; di sisi lain, ia juga membuat pengetahuan tersebut lebih rentan terhadap pengawasan, penyaringan algoritmik, dan komodifikasi. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa visibilitas queer di platform digital membawa implikasi epistemik dan sosiopolitik yang signifikan: ia membentuk ulang cara pengetahuan linguistik queer dilegitimasi, bagaimana memori kolektif komunitas dikonstruksi, serta bagaimana identitas yang termarjinalkan menegosiasikan kehadirannya dalam ruang yang diatur oleh algoritma.

Kata kunci: *Produksi pengetahuan; Sosiolinguistik queer; Teknolek queer; TikTok; Visibilitas*

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language, identity, and visibility has long been central to queer communities worldwide. However, the ways in which queer linguistic practices are documented and preserved remain uneven and often fragile. These inequalities are shaped by geography, culture, and unequal access to archival institutions and technologies. As a result, many forms of queer language circulate informally and risk disappearing over time. This condition raises important questions about how queer knowledge is produced, transmitted, and remembered.

In Indonesia, linguistic research has identified a socially marked form of language used within transgender (*waria*) communities and other queer groups. This linguistic register is commonly referred to as *bahasa gay* or *bahasa gaul*. Rather than functioning as a regional dialect or a standardized language variety, it operates as a socially situated register that indexes belonging, solidarity, and shared identity within queer communities (Boellstorff, 2004). Boellstorff conceptualizes *bahasa gay* as a flexible and context-dependent form of communication. Here, *flexibility* refers to its adaptive and non-fixed nature: its lexical items, phonological patterns, and usage can shift across contexts, speakers, and interactional settings, allowing users to creatively modify expressions while maintaining mutual intelligibility within the community. In this sense, *bahasa gay* functions less as a stable linguistic system and more as a dynamic, collectively negotiated repertoire shaped through ongoing social interaction.

Importantly, this flexibility is closely tied to the socio-historical conditions in which queer communities in Indonesia have navigated marginalization and limited public recognition. The use of a distinct linguistic repertoire has historically enabled forms of selective visibility, allowing speakers to signal in-group belonging while simultaneously obscuring meaning from outsiders. As such, *bahasa gay* has functioned not only as a marker of identity and solidarity, but also as a resource for negotiating safety, resistance, and community formation across different periods. In this study, this register is therefore understood as a queer technolact, highlighting its patterned lexical and phonological features as well as its role as a shared system of in-group knowledge that is continuously reworked in response to changing social and technological environments.

Historically, this adaptive and socially negotiated queer technolact circulated primarily through oral interaction and everyday community practices, reflecting the need for both flexibility and

selective visibility in marginal social contexts. Salon and beauty industry spaces played a crucial role as key sites of queer sociality, where linguistic knowledge was continuously produced, shared, and sustained through face-to-face interaction. Testimonial accounts from community insiders further illustrate this pattern of circulation. Debby Sahertian, for instance, recalls that queer slang was actively used within transgender communities in Medan in the late 1990s before spreading to Jakarta through salon networks (*Debby Sahertian Ceritakan Awal Mula Kamus Gaul Tercipta*, n.d.). Despite its sociolinguistic richness, Indonesian queer language has remained largely marginal in both formal linguistic scholarship and popular discourse. Documentation efforts have been limited, fragmented, and often dependent on individual initiatives rather than sustained institutional recognition.

One of the earliest attempts to document this linguistic practice in written form occurred with the publication of *Kamus Bahasa Gaul* by Debby Sahertian in 2000 (Sahertian & Danandjaja, 2000). The dictionary rendered a predominantly oral queer technolact visible as an object of linguistic reference. As a lexicographic work, it followed the conventions of print dictionaries by presenting language through discrete entries and glosses. While significant as an early documentation effort, its print-based format necessarily reduced language to decontextualized lexical items. The embodied, performative, and interactional dimensions of queer language use could not be fully captured within this medium.

The expansion of digital platforms in the twenty-first century has transformed the possibilities for documenting and preserving marginalized forms of knowledge. Social media platforms have enabled informal and community-driven modes of archiving that challenge institutional gatekeeping and expand access to cultural memory (Caswell et al., 2016; Cook, 2011). These platforms do not replace print archives, but extend them by allowing performance, interaction, and context to become part of the record. This shift is especially relevant for linguistic practices that rely on demonstration and embodied use.

Within this broader transition from print to digital media, TikTok has emerged as a particularly significant platform for queer identity expression and knowledge transmission. Its importance intensified during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical spaces of queer sociality became inaccessible and digital platforms became central to everyday interaction (Duguay, 2023; Hiebert & Kortess-Miller, 2023). TikTok's emphasis on short-form video, audiovisual performance, and

algorithmic circulation offers distinctive affordances for linguistic display and pedagogical explanation. These affordances differ markedly from text-based documentation practices (Abidin, 2020; Lee & Abidin, 2023). As such, TikTok provides a platform through which queer linguistic knowledge can be shown, explained, and circulated in ways that were previously unavailable.

It is within this digital environment that Debby Sahertian's renewed presence on TikTok becomes analytically significant. Since 2020, she has maintained an active presence on the platform, appearing in a wide range of content. While many videos focus on entertainment and social interaction, some explicitly feature the use of Indonesian queer technlect. In these videos, queer language appears either as the primary focus or as part of casual interaction. As of February 2026, Sahertian's TikTok account has amassed approximately 297.3K followers, indicating sustained public engagement and the platform's capacity to circulate queer linguistic practices beyond their original community contexts. This visibility positions Sahertian not only as a content creator, but as a key figure through whom queer linguistic knowledge intermittently becomes publicly accessible in contemporary digital space.

At the same time, these digital archiving practices must be understood within Indonesia's broader sociopolitical context. Queer communities continue to face discrimination, legal precarity, and expanding forms of digital surveillance (Wijaya, 2020, 2022). Platform visibility enables queer linguistic knowledge to circulate beyond traditional community boundaries. However, it also exposes such knowledge to appropriation, ridicule, and surveillance (Are et al., 2025; Duguay, 2023). Importantly, these risks do not depend solely on the positionality of the individual documenting the language. Regardless of whether the documentation is produced by community insiders or external mediators, the increased visibility of queer linguistic forms on mainstream platforms renders them accessible to wider publics, including those who may reinterpret, appropriate, or regulate them. Documenting queer language on platforms such as TikTok therefore entails a complex dynamic of opportunity and vulnerability, where visibility simultaneously enables circulation and exposes marginalized cultural knowledge to new forms of scrutiny.

This study examines how the TikTok content of Debby Sahertian functions as an informal, community-mediated archive of Indonesian queer linguistic knowledge. Sahertian is widely recognized for her early efforts in documenting *bahasa*

gay through print media in the late 1990s, making her a significant figure in the circulation and popularization of queer linguistic forms in Indonesia. Her transition to TikTok thus offers a unique site for examining how earlier practices of linguistic documentation are reconfigured within contemporary digital platforms.

While previous studies in queer sociolinguistics have examined the structure, function, and social meanings of *bahasa gay* (Boellstorff, 2004), and emerging research has explored digital archiving and platform-mediated cultural production, limited attention has been given to how queer linguistic knowledge is re-mediated, performed, and sustained across different media environments. In particular, the role of short-form video platforms such as TikTok in shaping the visibility, transmission, and reinterpretation of queer technlect remains underexplored.

Addressing this gap, this study asks how platform-mediated documentation shapes queer memory, identity formation, and intergenerational transmission. Drawing on queer sociolinguistics, digital archiving studies, and platform theory, it focuses on how queer technlect is performed, contextualized, and made intelligible in digital space. By situating these practices within Indonesia's queer linguistic history, this paper argues that digital platforms do not merely preserve queer knowledge, but actively participate in transforming how it is remembered, circulated, and negotiated in the present.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine how Indonesian queer linguistic knowledge is documented and made visible through digital platforms, with a specific focus on Debby Sahertian's TikTok content. The analysis is informed by an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates queer sociolinguistics, the concept of technlect as a socially marked linguistic register, digital archiving studies, and platform theory. Queer sociolinguistics provides the basis for understanding Indonesian queer language as a socially situated register that indexes belonging and identity rather than as a standardized or regional variety (Boellstorff, 2004). The notion of technlect is employed to emphasize the patterned lexical and phonological features of this register as a shared system of in-group knowledge.

Digital archiving studies frame social media platforms as informal, community-driven archives through which marginalized knowledge can be

preserved outside institutional structures (Caswell et al., 2016; Cook, 2011; McKinney, 2020). Platform theory is used to examine how TikTok's audiovisual affordances, participatory features, and algorithmic visibility shape the circulation, explanation, and interpretation of queer linguistic practices (Abidin, 2020; Duguay, 2023; Lee & Abidin, 2023). Together, these perspectives allow the study to situate linguistic analysis within broader questions of visibility, access, and digital mediation.

The data for this study consist of a single TikTok video uploaded by Debby Sahertian on 7 July 2021, which serves as the primary unit of analysis. This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, prioritizing depth of analysis over breadth in order to closely examine how queer linguistic knowledge is performed, explained, and circulated within a specific digital artifact. In addition to the video content itself, selected user engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, saves, and shares) and recent viewer interactions are used as contextual data to understand its ongoing circulation and reception.

This video was selected purposively for three reasons. First, it was published during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period when digital platforms became central to queer social interaction and knowledge exchange. Second, the video is pinned on Sahertian's TikTok profile, indicating its continued relevance and prominence within her digital presence. Third, it has received approximately 1.8 million views, suggesting wide circulation and sustained audience engagement.

Although the video was originally uploaded in 2021, the data reflect a longitudinal observation of its continued activity up to February 2026, when this article was written. At that point, the video had accumulated approximately 166.6K likes, 2,841 comments, 5,160 saves, and 2,041 shares, with the most recent viewer comment posted on 20 January 2026. These metrics indicate that the video is not only repeatedly viewed but also actively interacted with and recirculated over time.

While the analysis is based on a single piece of content, this study does not aim for statistical generalization. Instead, it seeks analytical depth by treating the video as a critical case that illustrates how queer linguistic knowledge is mediated, interpreted, and sustained within platform environments. As such, the findings are intended to contribute to theoretical understanding rather than represent the entirety of Indonesian queer digital practices. The sustained engagement and layered interaction surrounding this video support its interpretation as a living digital archive rather than a static or time-bound artifact



(Source: TikTok)

Figure 1. Debby Sahertian's TikTok video

The audiovisual format of the video further strengthens its archival function. Through Sahertian's spoken performance, viewers are exposed not only to lexical items but also to their pronunciation, rhythm, and distinctive intonation. These phonological features, which are difficult to capture through text-based documentation alone, allow the queer technoclect to be learned as an embodied and sounded practice. In this sense, the video's continued circulation, multisensory affordances, and participatory engagement contribute to the effectiveness of TikTok as a platform form the digital archiving of queer linguistic knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the analysis of Debby Sahertian's TikTok video as a site of queer linguistic performance and digital archiving. The discussion is organized into two main subsections. The first focuses on the linguistic features of Indonesian queer technoclect as performed in the video. The second examines how the linguistic practices are archived and circulated through TikTok's platform affordances and participatory features.

1. Queer Technoclect in Performance: Lexical Creativity, Phonological Stylization, and Community Knowledge

The analyzed TikTok video presents a short but dense performance of Indonesian queer technoclect framed as an invitation to learn. In the video, Debby Sahertian addresses viewers enthusiastically and asks them to translate a full utterance produced entirely in queer technoclect into standard Indonesian. Crucially, the on-screen text displays only the technoclectal sentence, without any official translation. Meaning-

making is therefore deferred to audience participation, particularly through the comment section, where viewers collaboratively provide interpretations and word-by-word glosses. This interactional setup positions queer language not as a closed code, but as shared cultural knowledge that is activated through communal engagement. The utterance performed in the video is as follows:

“Yuhuu... *Belagio bahasa gaul lenggang yuk. Terjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Indonesia. Shanghai-shanghai begini, akika mawar makasar baksos yang pedesaan. Hmmm pesantren yuk, pakarena gojija.*”

Her followers subsequently provide the following interpretation in Indonesian:

“Yuhuu... *Belajar bahasa gaul lagi yuk. Terjemahkan ke dalam bahasa Indonesia. Siang-siang begini, aku mau makan bakso yang pedas. Hmmm pesan yuk, pakai Go-Jek.*”

This example illustrates how Indonesian queer technoelect operates as a systemic yet playful linguistic repertoire, rather than as random word substitution. The technoelect draws on multiple cultural resources such as: brands, toponyms, food, institutional terms, and inherited in-group forms, while maintaining phonological proximity to the base words. Such practices align with observations in queer sociolinguistics that marginalized communities often develop speech styles characterized by exaggeration, recontextualization, and semi-opacity to index solidarity and identity (Barrett, 2006; Zimman, 2017).

Historically, Indonesian queer technoelect emerged and circulated through oral practices within *waria* communities and urban salon networks, long before its appearance on digital platforms. As Sahertian herself has recalled, these forms were actively used in Medan in the late 1990s and later spread to Jakarta through salon cultures. The video thus represents not the invention of a new register, but the re-performance of historically grounded linguistic repertoire within a platform-mediated environment. TikTok enables this repertoire to be preserved audio visually, allowing viewers to access not only lexical meanings but also pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.

a. Lexical Patterns and Cultural Resources

The table below summarizes the key lexical substitutions used in the video, their standard Indonesian equivalents, and the dominant linguistic strategies involved.

Table 1. Lexical Patterns of Indonesian Queer Technoelect

Queer Technoelect	Standard Indonesian	Linguistic Strategy
Belagio	Belajar	Partial syllabic retention + brand-based substitution
Lenggang	Lagi	Cultural reference-based substitution (regional food name)
Shanghai	Siang	Toponymic substitution (phonological similarity)
Begindang	Begini	Syllabic expansion and rhythmic elaboration
Akika	Aku	Inherited in-group form (<i>waria</i> speech)
Mawar	Mau	Lexical substitution via phonological similarity (flower name)
Makasar	Makan	Toponymic substitution (city name)
Baksos	Bakso	Recontextualized abbreviation
Pedesaan	Pedas	Semantic extension via rural terminology
Pesantren	Pesan	Institutional reference recontextualization
Pakarena	Pakai	Cultural reference (traditional dance and song)
Gojija	Go-Jek	Phonological modification + expressive infixation

One prominent lexical strategy evident here is toponymic substitution, such as *siang* becoming *Shanghai* and *makan* becoming *makasar*, inspired by Makassar city. In both cases, geographic names are repurposed based on phonological resemblance rather than semantic equivalence. This practice can be understood through Eckert’s notion of stylistic bricolage, in which linguistic forms are assembled from heterogeneous cultural resources to produce social meaning and index social positioning (Eckert, 2008).

Another recurring strategy involves lexical recontextualization, as seen in *baksos* for *bakso*. While *baksos* is widely known as an abbreviation for *bakti sosial* (social service), its use here reassigns the term to denote food. This playful shift exemplifies processes of resignification, whereby established meanings are strategically reworked in new contexts (S. Hall & Du Gay, 1996). The humor and opacity produced through such recontextualization serve important in-group functions, reinforcing shared knowledge while resisting full transparency.

Several substitutions draw on culturally loaded references, such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) for *pesan* and *pakarena* (a traditional dance and song from South Sulawesi) for *pakai*. These choices expand the base word into a longer, rhythmically rich form, foregrounding expressivity over communicative efficiency. Similarly, *lenggang*, a term associated with a Palembang culinary variant

of pempek, functions as a substitute for *lagi*, though its formation does not follow a clear phonological pattern. This irregularity highlights that not all elements of queer technoelect are rule-governed. Some forms circulate because of shared cultural familiarity rather than structural predictability.

Importantly, *akika* occupies a distinct position within this repertoire. Unlike substitutions that draw on external cultural resources, *akika* originates from long-standing *waria* speech practices as stylized form of *aku*. Its use involves vowel expansion and rhythmic elaboration, producing a form that is both phonetically expressive and socially marked. The presence of *akika* signals historical continuity between pre-digital queer interaction and contemporary TikTok performances, demonstrating that digital archiving does not erase earlier linguistic traditions but reanimates them in new modalities.

b. Phonological and Suprasegmental Stylization as Performative Practice

Beyond lexical substitution, the Indonesian queer technoelect performed in Sahertian's TikTok video relies heavily on phonological and suprasegmental stylization. In this performance, meaning is not carried by words alone, but how those words are sounded, through intonation, rhythm, and duration, becomes equally salient in the unfolding of utterance.

At the suprasegmental level, Sahertian's speech marked by deliberate manipulation of intonation, rhythm, and vowel length. The opening exclamation "Yuhuu..." provides a clear example. The initial syllable *yu* is produced with a falling pitch, followed by an elongated *huu* that rises and is sustained. This falling-rising contour appears before any lexical explanation is offered, foregrounding vocal delivery at the very outset. Previous sociolinguistic research has shown that pitch movement and vowel elongation can function as resources for stance-taking and interactional alignment in queer and performative speech styles (K. Hall & Bucholtz, 1995; Podesva, 2007).

Importantly, phonetic and prosodic modification in this utterance is not applied uniformly across all lexical items. Most words are articulated with relatively neutral segmental realization, more salient phonetic expansion is concentrated in a limited set of forms, most notably *Indonesia* and *Go-Jek*. This selective patterning indicates that phonological stylization in the video is selective and localized rather than pervasive. Table 2 summarizes these forms by presenting their IPA transcriptions, the type of phonological or prosodic modification involved, and the observable features associated with each case.

The word *Indonesia* /indone'sja/, for instance, is realized as *Indoneysia* /indonej'sja/, involving the insertion of palatal glide /j/ and increased vowel duration. This results in syllabic expansion and a more elaborated phonetic form, making the articulation of the word acoustically prominent within the utterance. A comparable process occurs in *Go-Jek* /go'dzek/, which is realized as *gojija* /go'dzidza/. **Here, segmental modification and syllabic expansion produce a rhythmically more complex form, accompanied by observable pitch movement across syllables.**

Elsewhere in the utterance, prosodic organization takes the form of segmentation rather than internal phonological change. Short pauses separate lexical groups, as in *Shanghai shanghai begindang | akika | mawar makasar | baksos | yang pedesaan*. These pauses structure the utterance into rhythmic units without altering the segmental makeup of individual words. In *baksos*, increased prominence is observable on the second syllable (-sos), while in *yuk*, vowel duration is extended, particularly on /u/. In the final sequence *pakarena gojija*, pitch movement is distributed across syllables, with a downward contour on *ji* followed by a rising contour on *ja*.

Taken together, the analysis shows that phonetic and prosodic resources, such as pause placement, syllabic prominence, vowel duration, and

Table 2. Phonetic and Prosodic Modifications Observed in the Utterance

Lexical item	IPA	Modification Type	Observable features	
Standard	Indonesia	/indone'sja/	Phonetic and prosodic	Palatal glide /j/, vowel lengthening, syllabic expansion.
Technoelect form	Indoneysia	/indonej'sja/		
Standard	Go-Jek	/go'dzek/	Phonetic and prosodic	Segmental modification, syllabic expansion, pitch movement.
Technoelect form	Gojija	/go'dzidza/		
Standard	Bakso	/bakso'/	Prosodic prominence	Increased prominence on second syllable.
Technoelect form	Baksos	/bakso's/		
Standard	Yuk	/yuk/	Prosodic segmentation	Vowel lengthening on /u/.
Technoelect form	Yuk	/yuuk/		
Lexical groups	Modification Type		Observable features	
<i>Shanghai-shanghai begindang akika mawar makasar baksos yang pedesaan</i>	Prosodic segmentation		Pauses between word groups.	

pitch movement, are deployed selectively rather than uniformly across the utterance. Only certain lexical items are phonologically expanded, while others remain segmentally unmarked and are organized primarily through rhythmic segmentation. This pattern underscores that phonological stylization in the video operates as a targeted practice, allowing particular form to become acoustically salient without transforming the utterance as a whole.

The salience of these features depends on their audibility. Through TikTok's audiovisual affordances, phonetic detail and prosodic patterning are not merely implied but directly perceivable and reproducible by viewers. The platform enables repeated listening, imitation, and circulation. It positioning the video not only as a moment of linguistic performance but also as a form of digital archiving through which queer technolectal knowledge is preserved and transmitted. This shift from localized phonological practice to mediated circulation provides the basis for the discussion in the following section on digital archiving and platform affordances.

2. Digital Archiving and Platform Affordances

In addition to its phonological and prosodic patterning, Sahertian's utterance can be understood in relation to the affordances of TikTok as a digital platform. The speech analyzed here is not produced solely for immediate interaction, but is recorded, circulated, and made available for repeated listening. In this sense, TikTok operates not only as a site of performance, but also as a space where spoken language may persist, be replayed, and be recontextualized over time.

The notion of affordances refers to the possibilities for action that an environment makes available to its user (Gibson, 2015). In the context of digital platforms, affordances emerge through an interaction between technical design and user practices rather than form technological features alone (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). TikTok offers affordances that are particularly relevant for spoken performance, such as short video duration, a strong orientation toward sound, and the option to reuse audio across multiple videos. Within these conditions, speech that is rhythmically clear and acoustically salient becomes especially effective. In a limited temporal frame, phonetic exaggeration such as: vowel lengthening, pitch movement, and syllabic expansion, can increase perceptual prominence and recognizability. Rather than serving expressive purposes alone, prosodic stylization functions as a resource

that supports the circulation and replayability of speech within the platform's sound-oriented ecology.

TikTok's infrastructure further enables this process by allowing spoken utterances to be detached from their original visual and interactional contexts and reused as audio tracks. Research on social media discourse has shown that platform affordances play a significant role in shaping how linguistic forms are repeated, circulated, and imbued with social meaning (Zappavigna, 2012). Through such processes, stylized speech may come to function as a shared semiotic resource across multiple performances. Although TikTok content is often perceived as ephemeral, recorded speech remains accessible within the platform. Phonetic and prosodic features that would ordinarily be fleeting in face-to face interaction thus become fixed and replayable. Through repetition and circulation, these features may accumulate indexical meaning beyond the moment of initial performance.

From this perspective, phonetic and prosodic stylization in Sahertian's utterance emerges as the result of an interaction between linguistic practice and platform conditions. TikTok's affordances, particularly its emphasis on sound, replayability, and short-form video, create an environment in which selective phonological highlighting becomes especially effective. Rather than stylizing all lexical material, Sahertian foregrounds specific forms in ways that are compatible with platform's sound-based logic. Through this alignment, prosodic variation functions not simply as expressive ornamentation, but as a resource that supports circulation, recognizability, and the accumulation of meaning within TikTok's informal digital archive.

This study set out to examine how Indonesian queer linguistic knowledge is made visible and preserved through digital platforms, focusing on Debby Sahertian's TikTok activity as a contemporary site of documentation. By analyzing a single, highly circulated video, the study demonstrates that Indonesian queer technolect is not constituted through lexical substitution alone, but through a combination of selective lexical strategies, phonetic and prosodic patterning, and platform-mediated circulation. Rather than treating TikTok as a neutral container for pre-existing language, the findings show that linguistic form, performance, and platform affordances are deeply intertwined in documenting queer linguistic creativity, enabling intergenerational knowledge transmission, and countering the historical exclusion of queer voices from formal linguistic and cultural archives. At the same time, this intertwining remains shaped by the ambivalence of platform visibility, as

TikTok's algorithmic affordances both expand access to queer knowledge and expose it to processes of surveillance and commodification.

From a queer sociolinguistic perspective, the video illustrates that Indonesian queer technolact operates as a socially marked repertoire rather than a fixed or standardized system. The lexical strategies observed, such as: partial phonological resemblance, toponymic substitution, cultural referencing, and inherited in-group forms, reflect processes of stylistic bricolage (Eckert, 2008), in which heterogeneous linguistic and cultural resources are recombined to produce recognizable social meaning. These patterns are consistent with earlier descriptions of *bahasa gay* as flexible, playful, and context-dependent (Boellstorff, 2004), while also showing how such practices are rearticulated within contemporary digital environments.

At the level of linguistic form, this study extends existing accounts of Indonesian queer language by foregrounding the role of phonetic and suprasegmental detail. While prior research has emphasized lexical creativity and social indexing, the analysis demonstrates that fine-grained phonetic features, such as: syllabic expansion, pitch movement, vowel duration, and pause placement, play a crucial role in making queer linguistic style perceptible and learnable. Importantly, these features are not applied uniformly across the utterance. Instead, phonological stylization is localized and selective, with only certain lexical items undergoing salient expansion or modification. This pattern resonates with sociophonetic research showing that identity work often emerges through targeted phonetic detail rather than categorical alternation between linguistic varieties (Eckert, 2008; Podesva, 2007).

These linguistic practices gain additional significance when situated within TikTok's platform affordances. TikTok's emphasis on sound, short-form video, repetition, and replayability creates conditions in which phonetic and prosodic detail becomes durable rather than ephemeral. Spoken language is not limited to the moment of performance, but remains accessible for repeated listening over time. The continued circulation of the video, sustained audience engagement, and the accumulation of comments across several years suggest that TikTok enables a form of informal digital archiving in which queer linguistic knowledge can be stored, revisited, and transmitted beyond its original interactional context.

The role of audience participation further complicates conventional distinctions between speaker, analyst, and archivist. In the absence

of an official translation within the video itself, metalinguistic explanations emerge through viewer comments that gloss, interpret, and normalize the technolact for broader audiences. Following digital archiving scholarship, these participatory practices can be understood as community-driven archival labor rather than peripheral interaction. Linguistic knowledge is not transmitted solely from Sahertian to her audience, but co-produced through platform-mediated engagement.

At the same time, the visibility afforded by TikTok remains ambivalent. While platform circulation allows queer linguistic practices to reach audiences beyond their original community contexts, it also exposes them to misinterpretation, appropriation, and surveillance. This tension reflects broader discussions in queer digital studies about the double-edged nature of platform visibility, particularly in sociopolitical contexts where queer identities remain precarious. Digital archiving, in this sense, does not merely preserve language but reshapes its social trajectories and associated risks.

Overall, this study contributes to queer sociolinguistics by demonstrating that Indonesian queer technolact is best understood as a multimodal sociolinguistic practice shaped by selective phonetic, prosodic, and platform-mediated processes. Rather than a stable code or bounded variety, technolact emerges here as a flexible repertoire whose meaning is produced through patterned use, performance, and circulation. By foregrounding sound, rhythm, and delivery alongside lexical creativity, TikTok extends earlier print-based documentation and reconfigures how queer linguistic knowledge is remembered, shared, and carried forward. In doing so, the platform participates actively in shaping how Indonesia's queer linguistic past is rearticulated in the present and projected into the future.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian queer linguistic knowledge can be made visible and sustained through platform-mediated practices that foreground sound, performance, and participation. Focusing on a single, highly circulated TikTok video by Debby Sahertian, the analysis shows that queer technolact is produced not only through lexical creativity, but through selective phonetic and prosodic patterning that becomes durable through circulation and repeated access. The findings highlight TikTok's role as more than a site of performance. Through recording, replayability, and audience engagement, spoken language acquires archival value, allowing

phonetic and prosodic detail to persist beyond the moment of interaction. In this context, queer linguistic knowledge is preserved through everyday digital practices rather than through formal or institutional documentation.

At the same time, the study underscores the ambivalent nature of platform visibility. In this context, ambivalence refers to the simultaneous production of accessibility and exposure through the same discursive and platform-mediated processes. On the one hand, the video's metalinguistic explanations, through which Debby Sahertian translates, contextualizes, and performs queer technolact, enable broader audiences to understand linguistic forms that were previously restricted to in-group communication. On the other hand, this very process of explanation and circulation renders these forms available for reinterpretation beyond their original social context.

This ambivalence is further reflected in patterns of audience engagement, where repeated viewing, commenting, and sharing contribute to the circulation of queer linguistic knowledge across heterogeneous publics. While such circulation facilitates intergenerational transmission and collective interpretation, it also opens the possibility for appropriation, trivialization, or surveillance, particularly in a platform environment where content visibility is shaped by algorithmic amplification rather than community control.

Digital archiving, therefore, does not simply preserve language, but actively reshapes its conditions of circulation, intelligibility, and risk. By bringing queer sociolinguistics into dialogue with platform affordances and digital archiving studies, this article emphasizes the importance of sound, delivery, and circulation in understanding how marginalized linguistic practices endure. It suggests that contemporary queer linguistic archives are increasingly audiovisual, participatory, and platform-based, transforming how queer linguistic histories are not only preserved, but also reinterpreted and contested in the present.

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