

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sociolinguistics

1. Definition of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a branch of science that studies the relationship between language and society, as well as how language is used in a social context. William Labov (1972) views sociolinguistics as the study of language as social behavior that is closely related to social structures and processes in society. He emphasized that the study of language variation is always influenced by social factors such as social class, gender, age, and speech community. Therefore, language is not only a structural system, but also a reflection of the social dynamics that shape language behavior.

Jiayu Wang, Gaungyu Jin, and Wenhua Li (2023) explain that sociolinguistics examines language as signs and symbols, both written and spoken, that humans use to interact. The main focus of this branch of science is to understand how language reflects and shapes human communication. Through sociolinguistic studies, researchers can identify patterns of language use in various social contexts and see the relationship between language variation and social dynamics in modern society.

Furthermore, Grieve, Bartl, Fouli, et al. (2025) emphasize that sociolinguistics specifically studies language variation in various social dimensions. Language is not only a means of communication, but also an indicator of social identity, class, gender, age, and geographical location. This language variation reflects how individuals adapt to the social norms that apply in their environment.

Thus, sociolinguistics helps us understand the adaptation of language to social contexts and power relations in society.

2. The Relationship between Language and Society

Language does not exist independently, but is always related to the society in which it is used. Erdocia, Scheneier, and Migge (2025) state that large language models based on machine learning technology have reshaped the linguistic context and understanding of language. This technology influences how language is used, the position of authority in determining language standards, and shapes the dynamics of communication in society. This shows that the relationship between language and society is dynamic, where language use is not only influenced by traditional social factors, but also by technological advances, which help shape society's norms, practices, and perceptions of language.

According to Adizovna (2025), the sociolinguistic approach offers important insights into the interaction between language and society. Language functions as a means of cultural reflection, social identity, and interpersonal relationships. This approach emphasizes that language is not only a tool for communication but also a medium that indicates social status, identity groups, and cultural norms. Sociolinguistic analysis helps us understand how social contexts influence word choice, language style, and communication patterns. Thus, the relationship between language and society is a reciprocal process, in which language shapes and is shaped by social structures and community interactions.

Kelly-Holmes (2024) highlights that communication mediated by artificial intelligence (AI) often fail to capture sociopragmatic nuances. As a result, language practices can lose their cultural context,

putting the cultural aspects inherent in global community interactions at risk of erosion. This phenomenon emphasizes that language and society are complexly intertwined, and technology can change the way humans communicate. By understanding this relationship, linguistic research can assess the role of language in social dynamics, preserve cultural nuances, and bridge the gap between linguistic traditions and technological innovation.

3. The Function of Language in Social Interaction

Language plays a central role in social interaction because it is not merely a tool for communication, but also a means of forming relationships between individuals. Prof. Simona Pekrek Doehler (2025) emphasizes that language functions as an important resource in regulating social interaction, shaping the dynamics between interlocutors in real time. Language enables coordination, adaptation, and mutual understanding in social contexts. Thus, social interaction is not only determined by the messages conveyed, but also by how language is actively used to build relationships, affirm social roles, and create dynamic social structures through continuous conversation and communication.

According to Gholami, Sarkhosh, and Abdi (2023), language plays an important role in shaping educational practices and reflecting the socio-cultural dynamics of society. In the context of education, language is used to assert the authority of teachers, facilitate learning, and build interactions between teachers and students. This function is not only limited to the transmission of knowledge, but also as a reflection of prevailing social norms and cultural values. By understanding the function of language, researchers can see how communication practices

in education reflect social hierarchies, group interactions, and cultural adaptation in modern societies.

Hossain (2024) asserts that the function of language in social interaction goes beyond the mere exchange of meaning. Language fundamentally shapes individual identity, community membership, and cultural continuity. Through language, individuals assert their social position, regulate power relations, and mediate interactions in various contexts, both face-to-face and digital. This shows that social communication cannot be separated from the strategic use of language, as language enables the formation of complex social structures, power relations, and collective interactions, which ultimately strengthen social cohesion and maintain the sustainability of cultural practices in society. By understanding the role of language in social interaction, sociolinguistic research can reveal how language influences social dynamics, cultural reinforcement, and the continuity of communication practices that shape society holistically.

4. Language Variation in Sociolinguistics

Language variation is a phenomenon that is the main focus of sociolinguistics because it shows how language changes and adapts to social contexts. Spotti (2025), states that language variation can be seen from geographical, social, and ethnic factors, all of which are closely related to the construction of individual and group identities. This variation appears not only in vocabulary or dialect, but also in syntactic structure, intonation, and communication style. By understanding language variation, sociolinguistics can examine the relationship between language, identity, and social dynamics, as well as how communities use language to assert their status, group, and cultural uniqueness.

According to Sultani (2025), language changes that result in dialects and accents are influenced by various factors, including social, geographical, cultural, and political factors. The language a person uses can vary depending on the social context and background of the community. For example, the language used in urban areas often differs from that used in rural areas, in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication style. This shows that language variation is a complex phenomenon that reflects the social, cultural, and political conditions of a community. Sociolinguistic studies enable researchers to understand the reasons behind differences in language use in various communities.

In addition, language variation also appears in digital communication, especially among the younger generation. Mawene (2024) highlights language variation on Instagram among the younger generation in Papua, who mix Indonesian with distinctive Papuan dialects. This choice of language not only demonstrates linguistic creativity but also reflects the cultural and social identity of the users. This phenomenon confirms that language variation can emerge in various communication platforms, including social media, and become a tool for individuals to assert cultural uniqueness, group identity, and social affiliation in modern global and digital interactions. By understanding these factors, sociolinguistics can examine how language variation functions as a communication tool and a marker of social identity in society.

5. Sociolinguistics and Gender

Sociolinguistic and gender studies emphasize that language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a means of shaping and reflecting social structures, including gender inequality. Limnios (2023) emphasizes that language plays an active role in maintaining power

structures, thereby influencing perceptions and practices related to gender in society. Language is not neutral; word choice, terminology, and speaking style can reinforce or challenge gender norms. Therefore, sociolinguistic analysis of gender is important for understanding how language shapes social relations and gender identity and how language practices can reinforce or reduce inequality in specific social contexts.

According to Morgenroth (2025), the study emphasizes that researchers should use gender-related language flexibly and deliberately so as not to reinforce stereotypes or exclude certain identities. This approach is important to avoid reproducing bias in research and everyday communication. Inclusive word choices allow for fairer representation of individuals of various gender identities. In addition, the use of gender-sensitive language helps to strengthen social awareness and inclusivity. Thus, gender sociolinguistics not only examines language variation, but also evaluates the social and ethical impact of language practices on gender identity, roles, and equality in modern society.

Furthermore, Parales (2025) highlights the relationship between non-binary identification and the use of the neutral pronoun "they," which shows the close connection between gender identity and language choice. This phenomenon confirms that language is not merely a linguistic system, but also a means of social representation and expression of identity. The use of inclusive pronouns allows individuals to assert their identity while challenging traditional binary norms in language. This shows that gender sociolinguistics not only examines linguistic aspects but also analyzes how language reflects, shapes, and supports social inclusivity in various communities.

Waluyo and Anita (2024) highlight the importance of gender awareness in English language education. Their study shows that

students and lecturers recognized the importance of gender dynamics in educational settings and emphasized the need for inclusive language and content, equal opportunities, and the removal of gender biases and stereotypes from educational materials. These findings indicate that language use is closely related to gender awareness and the representation of gender in social contexts. Therefore, sociolinguistic studies of gender should also consider how language practices may contribute to gender equality, inclusivity, and the reduction of gender stereotypes.

By understanding the relationship between language and gender power structures, societies and researchers can develop communication strategies that are more inclusive, fair, and sensitive to different gender identities, so that language functions as a means of empowerment rather than restriction.

B. Language Variation

1. Definition of Language Variation

Language variation is a natural phenomenon in linguistic systems that reflect the diversity of ways in which humans express the same meaning. Helmut WeiB (2024) asserts that natural languages exhibit significant variation, so that there is often more than one way to convey information or ideas. This shows that variation is not merely coincidental, but rather an inherent part of language itself. By understanding language variation, researchers can trace communication patterns that emerge in society and see how differences in language form reflect individuals' flexibility, creativity, and adaptation to social and cultural contexts and interactions with others.

According to Schmied, Bondi, Dontcheva-Navralitova et al. (2023), language variation has an important social dimension. This

variation arises as a result of social interactions between individuals or groups in society, so that diversity in language forms cannot be separated from social dynamics. Word choice, sentence structure, and speaking style are influenced by social context, status, group, and cultural norms. In other words, language reflects an individual's social identity and position within the community. Sociolinguistic studies emphasize that language variation is a mirror of social interaction, where language functions as a means of communication as well as a marker of social relationships.

Furthermore, Xinye Zhang, Aini Li, and Xiaoshi Li (2025) highlight the dimension of social change in variationist studies, which focus on the regular diversity of certain linguistic features. This variation does not appear randomly, but is related to the social meaning contained in interactions. For example, the use of certain dialects or vocabulary can indicate cultural identity, social group, or community affiliation. This study emphasizes that language variation plays an important role in the process of linguistic change, as language constantly adapts to the evolving communication needs and social contexts within society. Understanding patterns of variation helps researchers identify the relationship between language forms and their social functions.

2. Types of Language Variation

Language variation encompasses various forms that reflect differences in communication practices within society. Botha and Bernaish (2025) highlight the connection between the study of World Englishes and sociolinguistic variation, emphasizing vernacular language practices and the use of a corpus approach. Language variation arises from everyday interactions and corpus-based analysis, allowing researchers to identify different linguistic patterns among social groups.

This shows that language is not homogeneous, but flexible, adaptive, and influenced by social, cultural, and communicative context, making language variation an important indicator of social dynamics and the identity of language users.

According to Sadigzade (2025), language variation can emerge in urban, digital, and modern subcultural contexts. Urban multi-ethnolects, code-switching, and hybrid language practices reflect the social identities of individuals and groups. Dialect levelling occurs alongside the standardisation of new linguistic repertoires, making language variation a means of expressing identity and social membership. This phenomenon shows that types of language variation are not limited to regional dialects, but also include variations that arise through digital practices and cross-group social interactions. This study emphasizes the importance of sociolinguistics in understanding the complexity of language variation in modern society.

Furthermore, Ballare (2024) emphasizes the influence of linguistic and non-linguistic factors on language variation. Analysis of relative clause strategies shows that the distribution of language forms is influenced by both internal linguistic factors and extralinguistic factors, such as age, gender, and social background. This variation shows that language is adaptive to social contexts and interactions, and functions as a tool for expressing identity and social relationships. The study of types of language variation helps researchers understand differences in language use, interaction patterns, and the relationship between language practices and social structures in society.

Martina et al. (2025) demonstrate that code-mixing is a form of varied language use in bilingual communication. Their study identifies three types of code mixing: insertion, alternation, and congruent

lexicalization. The study also identifies several factors related to the use of code mixing, including participant roles and relationships, situational factors, message-intrinsic factors, linguistic attitudes, dominance, and lack of vocabulary. These findings show that language use may vary through the combination of languages and that such variation can be influenced by linguistic, situational, and social factors.

3. Factors Causing Language Variation

Language variation is influenced by various complex social, linguistic, and contextual factors. Palander, Kok, Riionheimo et al. (2023) explain that living in isolation from native speakers of one's native language, as well as interacting with speakers of new languages and members of other ethnic groups, shapes individual language variation. Migration, isolation, and contact with the dominant language are the main triggers of language change, as individuals adapt their vocabulary, intonation, and language structure to their new environment. This shows that language variation does not arise randomly, but is influenced by social and geographical conditions and cross-group interactions that form new patterns of communication.

According to Arndt et al. (2025), the context of social activities and interactions also influences language variation. The use of language in specific activities, including the intensity of interaction, the character of the interlocutor, the duration, and the purpose of communication, shapes different language user profiles. Different social activities produce unique classes of language variation, as individuals adapt their speaking style, vocabulary choices, and language structure to the context. Thus, language variation arises not only from environmental factors, but also from the way individuals use language in their daily lives, demonstrating the close relationship between social context and

linguistic diversity.

In addition, social structures also influence language variation. Chen et al. (2024) found a significant correlation between linguistic features and community types, particularly those related to exoteric (open) and esoteric (closed) communities. Factors such as population size, social mobility, and long-distance communication shape the way people speak and interact. In exoteric societies, language variation tends to be more extensive due to interaction with many different groups, while in esoteric societies, variation is more limited. This shows that social structural factors play an important role in shaping patterns of language variation in society. Understanding these factors is important for explaining how language changes, adapts, and reflects social identity and the evolving conditions of society.

Andriadi and Sarwono (2024) found that language contact and preference for dominant languages contributed to the decline of Lembak language use, particularly among younger generations. Their study also indicates that globalization and modernization create challenges for language maintenance, while the digital era requires indigenous languages to adapt to changing conditions. These findings show that language use can be influenced by contact with dominant languages, generational differences, and changes in the social environment. Thus, social change and language contact are important factors to consider when examining changes in language use within a community.

4. Characteristics of Language Variation in Social Media

Language variation on social media displays unique characteristics that differ from traditional spoken and written interactions. Karjus and Cuskley (2024) state that analysis of conversation topics, word frequency, message sentiment, and lexical

semantics, including emojis, reveals complex linguistic differences on digital platforms such as Instagram. These findings indicate that social media presents dynamic language variation, encompassing topics, language style, and emotional expression. This variation is not only about vocabulary, but also how users combine text, symbols, and emojis to convey meaning, shape identity, and adapt to their digital audience.

According to Khan et al. (2025), social media texts are prone to intentional textual variation, including out-of-vocabulary (OOV) words. Users often adapt spelling, abbreviations, or writing styles for expressive, humorous, or identity-related purposes. This phenomenon confirms that digital language is creative, flexible, and adaptive to online social contexts. Therefore language variation on social media reflects the influence of social norms, individual creativity, and interaction with diverse digital communities.

Marko (2023) highlights the role of emojis as a characteristic of digital discourse. Emojis are present in almost every online interaction and have become an inherent element of social media communication. Analysis shows that some emojis are used consistently by many accounts, while others are specific and used to emphasize certain aspects of identity or messages. This confirms that, in addition to text, visual symbols also shape language variation on social media. Emojis not only add emotional expression but also serve as a tool to show social affiliation, identity groups, and unique digital cultural nuances for each user.

5. Language Variation Based on Gender

Language variation based on gender shows differences in communication patterns between men and women in various contexts, including online communication. Elmahdi, Balla, and Abdelrady (2024)

state that women tend to use language that is more emotionally expressive, draw on personal experiences, and build intimate discussions. In contrast, men tend to express their opinions authoritatively with longer posts and less collegial exchanges. These differences confirm that gender influences linguistic style, including topic selection, word count, and communication tone, so that language variation reflects social identity and gender roles in online interactions.

According to Mariana Macedo and Akarti Saxena (2025), women express emotions more intensely than men, despite differing interaction volumes. In the context of online communication such as Twitter, women tend to emphasize emotional expression and higher interpersonal engagement. This emotional intensity is not merely a personal style, but a pattern that can be consistently identified in online interactions. These findings suggest that gender plays a role in determining how individuals convey meaning, influences the nuances of communication, and shapes different digital social interactions between men and women.

Furthermore, Rubaa Panchendrarajan, Harsh Saxena, and Akarti Saxena (2025) found that female academics exhibit a more empathetic writing style and tend to discuss personal issues and experiences. These differences emerged without significant differences in other factors such as self-praise, politeness, or stereotypical comments. This confirms that gender-based language variation encompasses aspects of emotional expression, empathy, and a focus on personal experiences, which are characteristic of female communication. This variation serves to strengthen social bonds and affirm gender identity in both professional and online contexts.

6. Netizen Comments

a. Definition of Netizen

Netizen is a term that refers to individuals who actively use the internet to interact, obtain information, and express themselves. Kun He, Scott A. Eldridge II, and Marcel Broersma (2024) state that netizens not only use the internet for information consumption, but also as a means of political expression. They often navigate complex censorship systems and online norms to convey their views. This shows that netizens act as social actors who strategically utilize digital technology, both for personal and public interests, as well as to shape opinions and participation in various discourses in the online realm.

Furthermore, Lin Ma, Bowen Li, and Junyao Wang (2024) emphasize that netizens are members of society who use social media to obtain information and participate in public discourse. Netizens are not passive in receiving information, but actively comment, share, and criticize content online. This role confirms that netizens are an important part of the digital communication ecosystem, as they contribute to the formation of public opinion, social perceptions, and political discourse. This active participation shows that netizens have a significant social role in shaping the dynamics of information in the digital age.

Additionally, Jerome Visperas Cleofas and Czarina C. Labayo (2024) explain that daily users of the internet and other digital technologies, such as social media and mobile phones, are also categorized as netizens. This definition emphasizes that netizen engagement is routine and consistent, involving the use of technology for social interaction, entertainment, and information communication. Netizens, as active users of digital technology, influence online

culture, information trends, and the way people interact virtually. Thus, netizens not only act as content consumers but also as content producers who shape social and cultural dynamics in the digital space. Understanding netizens is important for analyzing online communication behavior, social dynamics, and gender interactions on social media, as their activities shape discourse and social practices in the digital space.

b. Comments as a Form of Digital Communication

Comments on digital platforms are one of the most prominent forms of communication in online interactions. Emily Kubin, Pascal Merz, et al. (2024) assert that user comments are a form of User Generated Content (UGC) and significant public participation. Comments are not only a means of expressing opinions, but also an indicator of user engagement in digital discourse. This function shows that comments serve as a means of public participation in the digital space, allowing individuals to express their opinions, support or oppose content, and build social interactions that can strengthen or influence online discourse.

Furthermore, in the context of health communication, Fangcao Lu and Caixie Tu (2024) emphasize that comments on social media reveal the public's diverse attitudes toward certain issues. Comments can be supportive, oppositional, or even contain rude language. This variation indicates that comments are a form of digital communication that can influence public perception, attitudes, and behavior. This demonstrates the power of comments as a dynamic medium of interaction, where users not only receive information but also help shape public opinion through responses, evaluations, and criticism of the content presented.

Morena-Cabanillas et al. (2024) add that comments and reviews allow web users to evaluate, respond to, and discuss content directly. This function makes comments a means of two-way communication in the digital space, unlike traditional one-way communication. Comments enable public and semi-public dialogue, reflection, and exchange of ideas. This emphasizes the role of comments as a social medium, where digital interactions shape communication dynamics, user engagement, and information dissemination, while providing significant feedback on uploaded content. This understanding is important in sociolinguistic and online communication studies, as comments become a medium of interaction that reflects social behavior, participation dynamics, and the influence of identity and social context, including gender identity, on how people communicate on social media.

c. Types of Netizen Comments

Netizen comments are a form of active participation in the digital space that is diverse in type and characteristics. Junhan Chen and Shilin Xia (2024) state that the types of netizen comments can be distinguished based on their valence or attitude. Comment valence includes positive comments that support or agree with the original message's opinion, as well as negative comments that oppose or criticize it. This distinction shows that comments are not merely expressions of opinion, but also indicators of social responses to digital content. Thus, the valence of comments reflects the attitudes of users and their potential influence on public perception in online discourse.

Hsin-Yu Kuo and Su-Yen Chen (2025) add that netizen comments can be classified based on cognitive and emotional

engagement. Cognitive engagement includes knowledge-based or critical comments, while emotional engagement can be positive, negative, or neutral. Their classification confirms that comments are not merely superficial opinions, but also contain various levels of thought, reflection, and emotional responses to content. This demonstrates the complexity of digital communication, in which netizens act as agents who simultaneously express knowledge, emotions, and personal perspectives.

Teresa K. Naab, Hanna-Sophie Ruess, and Constanze Kuchler (2023) emphasize that comments can also be distinguished according to the quality of the discussion they generate. Deliberative characteristics, such as reciprocity, respect, rationality, and constructiveness, influence the number and quality of responses received. Comments that are polite, rational, and constructive tend to increase two-way interaction and strengthen the quality of discourse. This shows that the type of comment is not only seen from its valence or emotion, but also from its contribution to public discussion and community involvement in building healthy discourse in the digital space.

Understanding the types of comments is important for analyzing digital communication behavior, interaction dynamics, and the role of netizens in shaping public opinion and discourse, including how gender identity and social perspectives influence how comments are conveyed and received in online spaces.

d. Language in Social Media Comments

The language in social media comments shows unique and complex dynamics, reflecting the communication style of online users. Marco, Loru, et al. (2024) emphasize that there is a consistent trend of decreasing text length and lexical richness, but users actively introduce new words in their comments. This phenomenon shows that the language of comments is adaptive, creative, and constantly evolving. Users utilize comments not only to express their opinions, but also to adapt their language style to the digital social context, shape their online identity, and express their involvement in the social media community in real time.

Tom Dobbler and Michael Hameleers (2024) explain that comments accompanying news on social media offer an important interactive context for readers. However, comments can also facilitate the spread of anti-institutional opinions that undermine public trust in the media. This shows that comment language is not neutral but has the power to influence public perception and opinion. Users utilize language to affirm support, criticism, or disagreement, making comments a strategic communication medium that shapes public discourse and social perceptions in the digital age, including influencing attitudes toward institutions and specific issues.

In addition, Yurou Wei (2023) emphasizes that comments also have an affective function, namely building a sense of connection and meaning within online communities. Users comment on content to show support, empathy, humor, or personal reflection, which strengthens social interaction and group cohesion. The language used in affective comments includes emotional expressions, the use of emojis, and community-specific terms. This shows that the language

of comments is not only for conveying information or criticism, but also for strengthening social relationships, increasing engagement, and building collective identity in the digital space.

Understanding comment language is important for digital sociolinguistic analysis, as it shows how netizens use language to assert identity, interact socially, and shape opinions and social norms in online spaces. Comments become a complex, strategic, and affective medium of communication.

e. Netizen Comments Based on Gender

Netizen comments on social media can be influenced by gender factors, both in terms of language style and level of engagement. Constanze Kuchler, Anke Stoll, and Teresa K. Naab (2023) found that women's engagement in news comment sections tends to be lower than men's. However, comments written by women are more polite and ethical than those written by men, indicating a difference in the quality of gender-based communication. These findings confirm that gender not only influences participation, but also linguistic and ethical characteristics in commenting, making it important to consider in the analysis of digital interactions and online communication behavior.

In addition, Maj Britt Dahl Nielsen, Veronica Pisinger, et al. (2024) emphasize that gender-based comments also often take the form of harassment, especially among teenagers. Women are more often the targets of unwanted verbal comments or gender-offensive images. This phenomenon indicates an imbalance in digital interaction experiences based on gender, where women face the risk of online intimidation. This underscores the importance of understanding the social and gender context in comment analysis, as

differences in experience can influence how individuals express opinions, interact, and respond to content in digital spaces.

Cynthia Peacock and Emily Van Duyn (2023) highlight the tendency for different behaviors between men and women in online comment spaces. Men are more likely to actively leave comments, while women tend to read comments without participating. This shows that men are more vocal in expressing their opinions publicly, while women are more passive as readers. These differences may be influenced by social norms, perceptions of harassment risk, or psychological factors related to online interaction. These findings emphasize the importance of gender analysis in understanding netizen communication patterns, including vocal-passive tendencies and participation strategies in comment sections.

This understanding is important in digital sociolinguistics and online communication studies, as it shows how gender identity influences interaction patterns, participation, and the characteristics of netizen comments on social media, including ethical and social aspects in digital discourse.

7. Instagram

a. History and Development of Instagram

Instagram has been one of the fastest-growing social media platforms since its inception. Debora Gilliard, Sally Baalbaki-Yassine, and David Lynn Hoffman (2023) emphasize that Instagram was originally born out of the founders' desire to share photos of their personal hobbies. This process evolved to the point where it secured successful funding, was launched publicly, and was eventually acquired by a large company. This early stage emphasized product development strategies, user expansion, and investor interest. The

early history of Instagram shows how a digital platform can evolve from a simple idea into a global phenomenon, which became the foundation for the platform's social, economic, and technological evolution.

Vanessa Richter and Zhen Ye (2023) highlight Instagram's transformation into a digital work ecosystem. The platform has become a space for content creators, including influencers, to build careers and income. However, there is an imbalance of power between content creators and the platform, as influencers depend on followers, algorithms, and commercial expectations set by Instagram. This demonstrates a complex socio-economic development, where users are not only consumers but also content producers. Instagram acts as an arena for social and economic interaction that influences modern digital dynamics.

Beyond socio-economic aspects, Instagram's history is also reflected in changes to the platform's design and interface. Smamim Seyson and Wesley Willet (2025) state that Instagram's evolution over the past 15 years shows adaptive and responsive design patterns in line with user trends. Changes to features, layout, and interactivity reflect the platform's strategy to enhance user experience, attract engagement, and facilitate content creativity. This indicates that Instagram's technical and visual development is one of the key factors in the platform's growth in popularity and relevance in the global social media sphere. Understanding the history and development of Instagram is important for analyzing user behavior, social interactions, and contemporary digital dynamics, especially in the context of communication studies, social media, and online sociolinguistics.

b. Instagram Features

Instagram is a social media platform with various features that influence user interactions and experiences. Yim Register, Lucy Qin, et al. (2023) emphasize the role of Instagram's algorithm in determining which posts appear and when they are displayed. This algorithm creates uncertainty for content creators who depend on visibility, thereby influencing posting strategies, publication times, and user interaction patterns. The algorithm feature is not merely a technical mechanism, but also a social instrument that shapes the dynamics of communication and user engagement. Thus, understanding the algorithm feature is important in analyzing interaction behavior and communication strategies on digital platforms.

Apart from algorithms, user engagement features are an important element on Instagram. Yu-Hsiang Hsiao and Yi-Yi Lin (2025) highlight that features such as the number of likes, comments, and shares are key predictors of content popularity, especially for influencer marketing. Predictive models show that active user engagement determines the effectiveness of sponsored campaigns and content exposure. This confirms that engagement features not only facilitate social interaction but also determine economic and branding success. In other words, Instagram provides interactive mechanisms that allow users to influence the visibility and social impact of content through digital engagement.

Zofia Saturnus, Cristina Mihale-Wilson, and Oliver Hinz (2024) emphasize sponsored content disclosure as another key feature. Their study shows that advertising labels and sponsorship disclosures influence audience perception, user engagement, and

influencer credibility. These disclosures increase transparency and build trust among followers, resulting in more authentic interactions. This feature shows that Instagram not only provides a visual platform but also regulates social and ethical norms in online interactions. Thus, disclosure features influence communication dynamics and content strategies in the digital ecosystem. Analyzing Instagram features is crucial for understanding communication dynamics, branding strategies, and digital engagement, while also providing insights into how platforms shape user experiences, interactions, and perceptions in the ever-evolving online world.

c. Instagram as a Communication Medium

Instagram has evolved into a significant communication medium in the modern digital realm. Saara-Maija Kallio and Jenni Maenpaa (2025) assert that news media organizations have shifted to this platform to reach young audiences who mostly consume news online. Editorial adaptation to Instagram's visual affordances, including the use of stories and reels, allows media to optimize audience engagement and interaction. These visual features not only enrich the presentation of information but also enhance the effectiveness of journalistic communication. Thus, Instagram has become a strategic tool for conveying information visually and interactively in the context of digital communication.

Beyond its visual aspects, Instagram also functions as a hybrid communication medium that combines information and entertainment. Dominique S. Wirz and Florin Zai (2025) explain that news companies utilize infotainment formats to attract a broad audience, particularly younger users. The use of a combination of news and entertainment allows for more engaging content delivery,

while maximizing user engagement through comments, likes, and shares. This shows that Instagram is not only an interactive social media platform, but also a strategic communication platform capable of effectively conveying messages, influencing opinions, and expanding the reach of information in the digital society.

Furthermore, research shows that Instagram can improve information literacy and user trust in news. Sacha Altay, Emma Hoes, and Magdalena Wojcieszak (2025) found that following news accounts on Instagram for two weeks increased knowledge of current issues, the ability to distinguish between true and false news, and awareness of information validity. These findings indicate that Instagram is not merely an entertainment or visual platform but also supports educational communication that enhances digital literacy. Thus, Instagram is not only an entertainment medium but also an effective communication tool that influences how information is disseminated, received, and understood in modern digital society.

d. Language on Instagram

The language used on Instagram reflects the unique characteristics of digital spaces and online interactions. Elena Manca (2025) researched the linguistic features of English in Instagram posts focused on movies, music, and travel. This study found that the language on Instagram is hybrid, combining spoken and written features. This phenomenon shows that the platform is not only a visual medium but also a linguistic arena relevant to language studies and learning. The flexible and creative language on Instagram reflects digital social interactions, facilitates self-expression, and allowing users to adapt their language style according to the context and audience.

In addition to hybrid language, multilingualism is also a characteristic of communication on Instagram. Aguzrtzane Elordui (2024) studied monolingual and multilingual stylistic behavior among young native Basques. The findings show that Instagram is a linguistic space for affirming identity and cultural diversity. Users combine languages or dialects in posts, captions, or comments, making the platform a reflection of flexible and inclusive linguistic practices. Instagram enables cross-cultural interaction while showing how social and cultural identity can be realized through language choices, writing styles, and online communication settings.

The language style of influencers also shows the linguistic complexity on Instagram. Munaro, Barcelos, Maffezzoli et al. (2024) use a comprehensive approach to identify the linguistic style of influencers, including tone, language complexity, and strategies to attract audience attention through captions. The language of influencers is not only informative but also persuasive and expressive, serving to build relationships with followers and assert digital identity. This style emphasizes the flexibility of language as a communication tool and socio-economic strategy on the platform, while also showing how language on Instagram becomes an instrument of interaction and branding in the digital context. Therefore, Instagram has become a relevant linguistic arena for sociolinguistic research, multilingual studies, and digital communication analysis, while also demonstrating the flexibility, creativity, and role of language in shaping dynamic online interactions.

e. Comments on Instagram as Research Data

Comments on Instagram have become an important source of data in digital media research. Douglas Farias Cordeiro, Mari Vallez et al. (2025) assert that comments serve as indicators of user activity, through the analysis of more than 9,000 posts from January to December 2023. This study evaluated posting frequency, user engagement in the form of likes and comments, hashtag usage, profile mentions, and geographical coverage. The findings show that comments are not merely passive responses, but play a role alongside other indicators in understanding audience interaction patterns. Therefore, comments are crucial data for mapping user behavior and communication dynamics on Instagram.

In addition to being an indicator of interaction, comments also serve to assess user influence on Instagram. Sachin Kumar et al. (2024) emphasize that the influence of popular users is often determined by the level of engagement with posts in the form of likes, comments, and shares, in addition to the number of followers. This indicates that comments have significant quantitative value in measuring an account's reach, popularity, and authority. Thus, comments can be used as a metric for evaluating social influence, allowing researchers to understand the patterns of communication, opinions, and interactions that shape digital reputation and social status on the Instagram platform.

Comments also have economic and digital marketing relevance. Sanches and Ramos (2025) highlight that comments are part of interaction metrics related to business performance on social media. Their research examines the impact of metrics such as reach, impressions, interaction rates, and virality rates on revenue growth.

The results show that comments are not merely social data, but contribute to economic value analysis, marketing strategies, and content effectiveness evaluation. Thus, comments are not just text or passive responses, but a multidimensional data source relevant to sociolinguistic, digital media, and platform economics research. Instagram provides a space for comments to function as a rich and multidimensional research instrument.

C. Gender Identity

1. Understanding Gender Identity

Gender identity is an important concept in sociolinguistics and gender studies, as it concerns how individuals perceive themselves within a social and cultural framework. Wichaidit et al. (2023) state that gender identity refers to a person's inner sense of being male, female, a combination of both, or neither. This definition emphasizes that gender identity is spectral, not rigid, and transcends traditional binary categories. This shows that gender experience is broader than just male and female, but includes a variety of dynamic and contextual self-identifications.

In line with this, Real et al. (2024) assert that gender identity essentially refers to a person's inner sense of themselves as male, female, or something else. This definition emphasizes that gender identity is an internal construct that does not always correspond to external labels. Real et al. (2024) underscore that gender identity cannot be reduced to biological aspects alone, but is a deep psychological experience that determines how a person understands and expresses themselves. Therefore, gender identity is an important aspect in the discourse on human rights, diversity, and inclusivity.

Herrmann et al. (2023) add that gender identity is a person's

innate sense of being male, female, or an alternative gender. This confirms that gender identity is fundamental, inherent to the self, and not merely shaped by external influences. This perspective provides an understanding that gender identity is an integral part of an individual's existence, thus requiring recognition and respect. Therefore, understanding the meaning of gender identity is very important in efforts to build a more inclusive, fair, and respectful society of human diversity in various areas of life.

2. The Concept of Gender Identity

The concept of gender identity is an important part of understanding the social, psychological, and cultural dynamics that influence how individuals define themselves. Gulgoz, Edwards, and Olson (2022) show that studies on gender development generally still use binary and discrete measures of identity. However, recent literature shows that not all individuals identify with these binary categories. Gender identity is more accurately understood as a flexible continuum. This understanding emphasizes that gender is not limited to male and female, but encompasses a more spectral diversity of self-identification.

In addition, Mammadli et al. (2024) highlight the significant risks of gender identity conversion efforts. Their findings reinforce previous research identifying the harms associated with exposure to conversion practices, or gender identity conversion efforts (GICE). This study confirms that such interventions are detrimental to transgender and non-binary individuals, regardless of their mental health condition prior to the conversion attempt. This shows that gender identity cannot be forced to conform to binary norms. Instead, coercion through conversion poses a great risk to the psychological well-being, self-esteem, and long-term mental health of the individuals who experience it. These findings

highlight the importance of understanding gender identity in social interaction.

Furthermore, Watson et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of an intersectional approach in understanding gender identity. This study explores the well-being of adolescents at the intersection of ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, and gender identities, particularly in relation to mental health and experiences of bullying. The results show that gender identity does not stand alone but is influenced by various other social factors. Thus, an intersectional perspective provides a broader framework for examining the impact of gender identity on the lives of individuals and specific social groups. Therefore, understanding gender identity in a more inclusive manner is crucial for creating a social space that is fair, supportive of well-being, and respectful of the diversity of human identities, including in communication practices and social interactions.

3. Gender and Language

The relationship between gender and language emphasizes how language use can influence perceptions, identities, and social interactions. Sevilla Requena (2024) asserts that misgendering is a form of microaggression that reinforces gender binaries through the use of incorrect pronouns, names, or gendered language towards transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. This misuse of language can reinforce gender-based discrimination, demonstrating that language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a social instrument that can reinforce stereotypes and exclusion. Thus, understanding the relationship between gender and language is important for creating inclusive communication.

Del Popolo Marchitto (2025) emphasizes the role of language

ideology in shaping metapragmatic expectations and judgments of gender-related politeness. Language ideology influences how society judges linguistic behavior, determines norms, and shapes expectations for interactions between men and women. Understanding this ideology helps explain how gender bias is embedded in everyday communication practices. This study shows that language is not neutral, but rather a means of shaping social interpretations, influencing judgments of politeness, and reinforcing existing gender structures in society, including through face-to-face interactions and online communication.

Lenhart and Heckel (2025) found that the use of gender-fair language in elementary schools influences girls' cognitive representations and self-beliefs in traditionally masculine stereotyped occupations. The results show that girls exposed to gender-fair language have higher perceptions of their own abilities and career aspirations. These findings confirm that language plays an active role in shaping individuals' identities, perceptions, and beliefs from an early age. Therefore, language is not only a tool for communication, but also a medium for shaping gender awareness and social empowerment. This understanding is important for building inclusive communication, reducing bias, and supporting the empowerment of all gender groups in society.

4. Communication Patterns of Men and Women

Male and female communication patterns show differences in interaction strategies, emotional expression, and ways of responding to social situations. Briggs, Gardner, and Ryan (2023) assert that women tend to react more negatively when faced with demeaning explanations, when their voices are not acknowledged, or when they are interrupted, especially if the perpetrator is male. This behavior is considered an

indication of gender bias. These findings highlight women's sensitivity to power dynamics in interactions. These differences show that gender influences perceptions and responses to communication, and determines how individuals express themselves, maintain their social position, and navigate interpersonal relationships in various contexts.

According to Alotaibi (2025), male and female linguistic patterns also differ in word choice and expression. Quantitative analysis shows that men more often use words that indicate uncertainty, while women tend to choose reinforcements and expressions of helplessness. These differences confirm that gender identity influences how individuals convey information and shape interactions. These communication patterns reflect not only psychological differences but also social ones, as each gender adapts their language style according to the context, communication goals, and social norms that apply in both online and offline environments.

Soubki, Choi, and Rambow (2024) add that female Wikipedians exhibit higher levels of politeness than males. Women use face-work to maintain their self-image, demonstrate politeness, and adjust their interactions to online social norms. This strategy reflects their attention to interpersonal relationships and sensitivity to the social effects of their communication. These findings confirm that women tend to use collaborative, empathetic communication and maintain harmony, while men emphasize authority or certainty, revealing gender-based differences in communication patterns. Understanding these patterns is important for sociolinguistic studies of gender, as it helps explain how gender identity shapes communication, interaction strategies, and social perceptions in both online and offline contexts.

5. Gender Identity in the Digital Space

The digital space has become an important arena for individuals to express their gender identity through language and online communication practices. Shaivya Singh (2024) states that digital platforms allow users to challenge traditional norms and create new linguistic practices. This shows that online interactions provide opportunities to express gender identity more flexibly. Users can explore various ways of speaking, writing, and interacting without being constrained by traditional social norms. Thus, digital spaces are not only a medium of communication but also a means of creatively and inclusively constructing and affirming gender identity.

Colosi (2023) adds that sexual and gender minorities face challenges in the online context, including discrimination or social exclusion. However, social media still provides a significant space for support, acceptance, and interaction with individuals who have similar experiences. Digital platforms allow them to feel understood, accepted, and socially connected. Language, symbols, and online communication styles become tools for asserting identity, communicating preferences, and building communities. This confirms that digital spaces have a dual role: as an arena for identity expression and as a place for social interaction that supports gender inclusivity through communication and language use.

Makhrukh Nawaz Butt et al. (2025) highlight the role of education and digital materials in shaping gender understanding. This study emphasizes that the style of gender identity communication in online interactions, especially in the context of education, can influence social perceptions and gender norms.

The language used in educational materials and online forums

helps shape young people's understanding of gender and how to express it safely. Thus, digital platforms are not only a medium for social communication, but also an educational arena that influences the construction of gender identity, social awareness, and acceptance of inclusive norms. This understanding is important in sociolinguistic studies of gender, as it shows that gender identity is not static and can be shaped, negotiated, and reinforced through language and interaction in digital spaces.

D. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework serves as a theoretical guide that describes the logical relationship between concepts, theories, and key variables in the research. Through this framework, researchers can systematically explain how these elements are interrelated in answering research questions. This framework helps clarify the direction of the research and provides a strong theoretical basis for focused and coherent data analysis. Thus, the conceptual framework not only strengthens the theoretical foundation of the research, but also provides a clear understanding of the researcher's line of thinking in connecting relevant theories with the empirical context being studied.

Based on this description, the conceptual framework of this study is as follows:

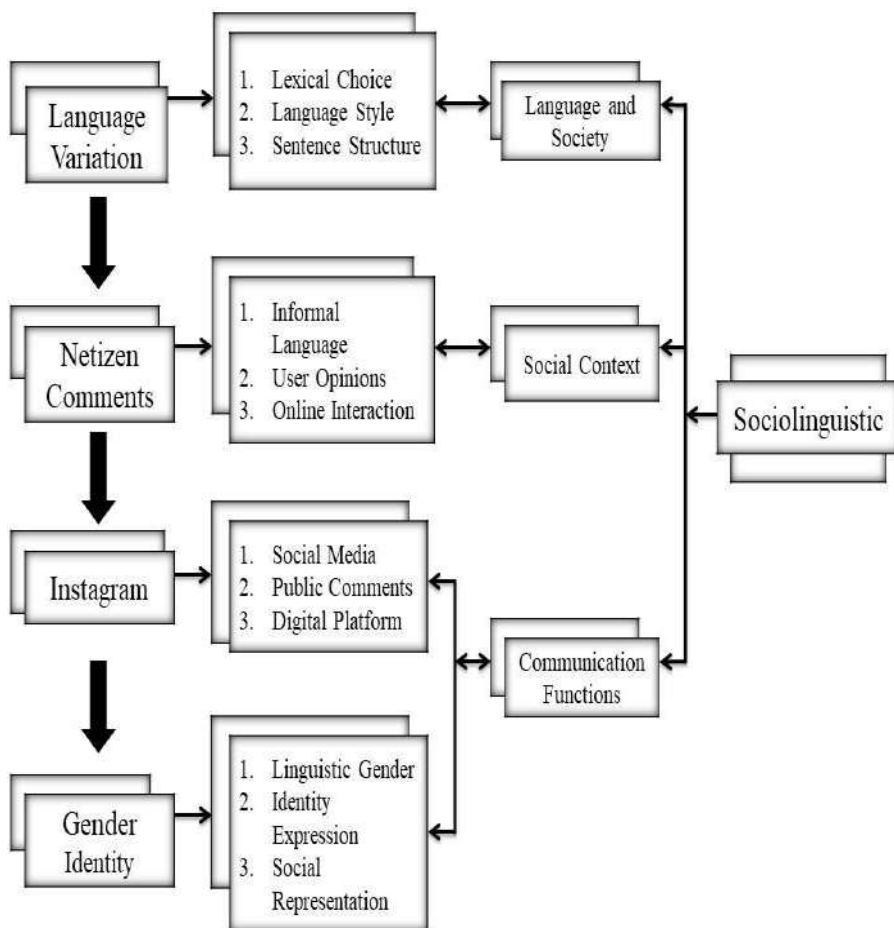


Figure 2.1
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model of this study departs from the field of sociolinguistics, which is the theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguistics emphasizes that language use is always influenced by social context and has specific communicative functions. Thus, language is not only seen as a symbolic system, but also as a reflection of social identity and interactions between members of society. In the context of this study, sociolinguistics provides a framework for examining how communication on social media, particularly Instagram, reflects the social roles and gender identities of its speakers.

From this sociolinguistic framework, the study then highlights the concept of gender differences as an important variable that influences language use. Gender differences are examined to understand how male and female netizens use language differently in Instagram comments. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify differences in language use between male and female netizens in Instagram comments.

Furthermore, Instagram was chosen as both a social context and a medium for data collection because this platform provides a space for public interaction through open and spontaneous digital comments. As a social media platform based on images and text, Instagram is an arena where users freely express their opinions, identities, and communication styles. Thus, this platform is a rich source of data for analyzing language practices and gender expression in the digital realm.

The next part of the conceptual model describes netizen comments as a concrete form of language use in online interactions. Netizen comments reflect informal language, user opinions, and diverse online interactions. Through the analysis of these comments, researchers can identify patterns of communication between men and women, including differences in word

choice, forms of expression, and ways of conveying opinions and emotions in the digital public sphere.

Finally, from the collection of comment data, the analysis focuses on aspects of language variation, which including lexical choices, style, and sentence structure. This variation shows how male and female users construct their respective linguistic identities. By examining this language variation, the study attempts to answer three main questions.

Overall, this conceptual model describes the researcher's line of thinking, which departs from sociolinguistic theory towards empirical analysis of gender-based language variation in the digital context. The relationship between variables shows a tiered process from theory, social context, to actual language practices, which together explain how gender identity is formed and expressed through language in modern communication spaces such as Instagram.

E. Some Related Previous Studies

Research on language variation based on gender identity in social media is becoming increasingly relevant as user participation in digital platforms such as Instagram increases. The use of language in netizen comments not only reflects linguistic preferences, but also social interactions, identity construction, and gender representation. Modern sociolinguistic studies emphasize the importance of understanding the differences in language patterns between men and women, as well as their impact on audience perception. Focusing on the online context, this study aims to examine how gender differences influence language choice, communication styles, and self-expression in Instagram comments.

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between gender and language patterns on Instagram. Brandao and Denny (2024) found that Instagram Contingent Self-Worth moderates the relationship between social anxiety and linguistic authenticity, suggesting that users with high ICSW decrease their linguistic authenticity when anxious. Ben-Shmuel, Hayes, and Drach (2024) emphasized differences in the framing of financial messages between male and female accounts. Nicolas, Urrutia, and Gonzalez (2023) showed that the use of gender-equitable language increases inclusivity. Iftikhar and Yasmeen (2024) highlighted the influence of social pressure on gender-based self-expression. Limatius (2024) found that multilingual variations related to gender identity affect audience inclusion.

Analysis of language variation on online platforms has been extensively conducted. Grondelaers, van Hout, and colleagues (2023) used a Twitter corpus to examine nonstandard subject forms, emphasizing that expressive context influences distribution. Burnett, Abbou, and Thiberge (2023) introduced the discursive world's method to capture socio-situational relations. Ilbulry, Grieve, and Hall (2024) traced the diffusion of Multicultural London English through 1.8 billion tweets, highlighting the influence of urban centers. Wong Gonzales (2023) developed the Twitter Corpus of English in Hong Kong, linking lexical and morphosyntactic variation to extralinguistic factors. Pignolet, Schmid, and Seelisch (2024) confirm that gender homophily influences the dissemination of content and linguistic variation in comments.

Studies on gender pronoun usage and misgendering highlight the sociolinguistic and psychosocial dimensions of online communication. Singh, Ghosh, and Ekbal (2023) developed GLIdE to detect gender bias in social media comments, while Hossain, Dev, and Singh (2024) compiled the MisgenderMender dataset to support interventions against misgendering practices. Sevilla Requena (2024) identified linguistic patterns of misgendering among transgender and non-binary users. Edmonds and Pino (2023) explain intentional misgendering as an interactional strategy. Jacobsen, Davis, and Burchell (2023) emphasize the emotional impact of misgendering on non-binary individuals.

Research on Instagram captions reveals the relationship between gender, self-expression, and digital communication. Lee and Yuan (2023) show that virtual influencers influence audience acceptance through gender construction. Rialti, Zollo, and colleagues (2024) highlight the influence of promotional captions on attitudes toward brands. Marko (2023) emphasizes the role of emojis in conveying identity and affectivity. Aran-Ramsport, Elexpuru-Albizuri, and colleagues (2024) find that women feel more pressured regarding appearance. Hermanova (2024) shows that the use of affective language builds intimacy in influencer communities, affirming the gender dimension in digital communication practices.

Research related to transgender identity on social media shows that online interactions influence attitudes and engagement. Jolley, Paterson, and Deric (2024) found that parasocial contact with transgender influencers can reduce support for conspiracy theories. Wang, Cheng, and Chemakin (2023) reported high audience engagement with gender affirmation surgery videos. Sanchez- Sanchez, Ruiz-Munoz, and Sanchez-Sanchez (2023) showed that social media remains a space where homophobia and transphobia can still be expressed and circulated. Chakravarthi (2023)

developed a dataset to detect hate speech related to gender issues, while Calabreses, Yu, and Oh (2024) found that negative emotions such as anger and fear increase interaction on transgender-related topics.

Although various studies have highlighted gender and language variation on social media, several gaps remain. Previous studies tend to focus on influencers, captions, specific content, or large-scale corpora without emphasizing netizen comments as a form of everyday online interaction. Moreover, differences in language use between male and female netizens in Instagram comments remain underexplored. Therefore, there is a need for sociolinguistic research that focuses on gender-based language variation in Instagram comment sections.

Most previous studies have prioritized quantitative analysis or large corpus studies, but have not highlighted the social context of netizen comments related to gender identity. Studies of captions and influencers have emphasized visual representation and promotional language, while public comments, which are more spontaneous and expressive, have been less analyzed. Differences in language style between men and women in comments, and their impact on audience perception, remain underexplored. This gap highlights the need for sociolinguistic research that emphasizes gender-based language variation in netizen interactions, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis on social media.

This study offers a new contribution by focusing on language variation in Instagram netizen comments based on gender differences. This approach combines sociolinguistic perspectives, language variation, and online. The study emphasizes differences in language use and communication styles between male and female netizens in Instagram comments. Thus, this research not only fills an empirical gap but also contributes to sociolinguistic studies of language variation in digital communication.

