

## UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE BIAS IN TWITTER STATUS

By

Agung Suhadi

[agungketupat@yahoo.com](mailto:agungketupat@yahoo.com)

**University Muhammadiyah Bengkulu**

*Received: March 2, 2019,  
Resent back, March 9, 2019  
Resent back: March 28, 2019  
Revised: April 3, 2019*

*reviewed: March 3, 2019  
accepted: March 21, 2019  
accepted: April 2, 2019  
published: April 4, 2019*

### Abstract:

Through social networking sites, many users or writers convey the strict message and statement in the platform of their twitter for whom those are addressed. This study was to analyze the use of language bias in worldwide twitter status; how its form and what is the underlying motive behind the words used. The researcher only focused on the “Trending Topic” from worldwide twitter status during February 2018 by taking up 25 twitter status as samples. The result of analysis obtained that there were six categories of language bias which are used in twitter statuses such as age, sex (gender), race, social class, and traits. Semiotically, all above upon deliver were visible strictly words, but all of the words subtle conveyed some important values for readers in terms of five categories above like to be an independent person, respect and not underestimate others. In short, by understanding the clues words of language bias in social media, readers can understand easily for whom the message or statement are addressed and not easy to give a negative response as users of social media.

**Keywords:** *Bias, Language, Social Media, Twitter Status.*

## INTRODUCTION

The ways or forms of human communication have significantly developed along with the advances in technology. One of the forms of human communication is delivered through Twitter, where users write up statement, information, news, or critics on the platform of twitter statuses. Jian (2000) argues that Twitter service becomes one of the forms of

communication in social networking sites. Similarly, as explained by Barber (2014) whoever said more than 200 million monthly active users of worldwide. The presence of social media service, for instance, Twitter, is believed able to help people easier for communicating each other in various information, thoughts or ideas.

Moreover, Lunenburg (2010) and Gumperz (2007), they argue within communication activity, people not only transmit information but also will learn the form of values as posted by other users. They further explain the purpose of communication for transferring information, exchange of thoughts, messages, speeches, visuals, signals, writing, and behavior as well.

However, now, it is due to the twitter has been widespread internationally, many users have used cross-language differences, sarcasm and different style in giving their statements, some are confused for whom the messages or statements are being addressed. As quoted in Harford (2007), several frameworks for detecting sentiments and opinions in social media have been developed for different application purposes [...] and multiple languages are used in twitter, there is no systematic analysis about the differences across the language used. They have examined 2.8 million tweets collected over 28 hours. Regarding these closely relate to the semantic meaning of words used.

The language should express meanings, which can be understood by others. Nevertheless, meanings exist in human minds and express what is in human being minded through the spoken and written forms of language (Bagha, 2011, p.1411). All above upon are usually known as "bias". The bias of language is often used by Twitter users, which refers to the contents an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group particularly a way which is considered as unfair treatment (Berant at.all, 2012). With more vividly as defined by Robert (2007), this is as a tendency of people who usually results for unfairly treating. The word of "bias" itself contents words or actions negative connotation or the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way.

The use of the word "bias" refers to something that is uneven or unbalanced. These angles point out by Alice (2011, p.5), "unbalance or unfair representation in language", Nordquist (2017), the term of language bias are considered prejudiced, offensive, and

hurtful, which are often presented based on age, sex, race, religion, social class, or certain physical or mental traits. There are some clues can help automatically detect bias words; phrases and rewording to eliminate the bias (Cristian, 2012,p.2). This involves “the prejudice, and discrimination process in the form of opinions without looking at relevant facts (Finegan, 2015).

Furthermore, regarding language bias as has delineated above, Mills (2008) in “*Language and Sexism*” classified into six categories such as age, sex, race, religion, social class, and mental traits. *First*, the language bias based on age refers to the forms of discrimination against individual or group are based on the basis of age, for instance, child, young, teenager, parents and old person. *Second*, language bias based on sex or gender. This is usually the form of discrimination due to sex or gender (male and female). *Third*, language bias in race involves the stereotypes or attitudes that effect on the way of someone to view others like skin color, physical characteristics, hair types and color of skin, and status. *Fourth*, bias in religion refers to how person or group are exiled because of their belief as Moslems, Christians, Hinduisms, or atheists. *Fifth*, social class bias involves individual attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices are set up to benefit from the upper class. *Finally*, language bias in mental traits which encompasses for distinguishing quality or characteristic, typically of someone.

### ***Research Questions***

This study aims to analyze how the forms of language bias are used in twitter statuses and what kind of motif behind words are being addressed. Therefore, the research questions are (1) “*What is the semantic meaning of words used in the twitter statuses,* (2) *What is the underlying motif of words that have posted?*”

## METHOD

### *Design*

The design of this study is a qualitative study in which the data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Further, it is behind the work of phenomenology so that the theory applied was *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

### *Participants*

The subject of this study was some users of Twitter who had chosen "Trending Topics" twitter statuses during 8 days of February 2018. The main focus of this study was to interpret what is the meaning of bias language that has been posted on the platform of twitter status and to understand the underlying motif of words posted.

### *Instrument*

The researcher functions as instrument aided by a table of bias meaning posted on Twitter. Therefore, the research instrument used by the researcher is the researcher while the data source was taken from the selected twitter statuses during February 2018 purposively.

### *Data Collecting Technique*

The researcher spent eight days to observe the language bias posted and used by certain users of Twitter. It was aimed to know how the posted language is used semantically, to understand the underlying motive behind posting the bias of language in twitter statuses. The researcher classified and grouped or categorized the forms of language bias as based on the theoretical framework by linguists scholars.

### *Data Analysis Technique*

To analyze the data, the researcher used semantic analysis which concerns on syntactic structure, phrases, clauses and sentences as used in twitter statuses. All of the data were classified based on the types of bias in language. And then the researcher will interpret the semantic meaning of language bias as used in twitter statuses and will be

strengthened by concepts of scholars i.e. *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (Smith & Osborn, 2004).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Result*

This section discusses the results of analysis based on two research questions as have proposed in the previous section; (1) to explore the meaning of language bias in selected twitter status during February 2018, (2) to interpret the meaning of words used for whom are being addressed. Based on the results of tweets that have observed there were 25 twitter status which is considered as trending topics which divided into six categories of language bias, such as age, sex, race, religion, social class, and traits. These categories are vividly discussed in the following, as follows.

### *Bias Language on Age*

This term refers to the forms of discrimination against someone or group, which is the basis of age. As has observed from the platform of twitter status, there were three forms of language bias based on age category. These happened in different situations (on February 2, 6, and 7, 2018) and described in the following tweets:



(Tweet 1, retrieved on 2 of February 2018)

Some tweets above clearly reveal the form of language bias based on age. The users put their tweets for taking the target of younger around the age of 25 years. Yet,

what is exactly motif behind of words posted, “*you’re 25 years old and still live with your parents, its a shame*”. From this short sentence implies the form of discrimination or puts subtle allusion amongst 25 years younger whom a lot depends on their parents, not mature yet, and still live with their parents. This also occurs in the second tweet below:



(Tweet 2, Retrieved on 6 of February 2018)

The second tweet also describes the bias of language based on age. The user puts an interesting word in his twitter status, “teenager in the 90’s [...] 4k video games, 3d porn”. The voice of this tweet declares how the life of teenagers in 90’s who that life teenage playing all the time without gadget and internet be different with teenagers nowadays who always playing with a gadget and access everything that they are not allowed. The writer wants to send the message that teenager should be playing like a teenager in the 90's and do not obsessed with the phone cell. Looking at the updated status above can be concluded that as an affective meaning because the writer conveys his feeling about a teenager in the 90's.



(Tweet 3, Retrieved on 7 of February 2018)

From this twitter shows the form of language bias based on age by using the “teenager” as tweet 2. Here, the writer conveys the “diet culture in society”, he is being criticized everyone who lives freely without paying attention to his/her obsession. He further says toward everyone makes her/his body slim and beautiful, but never wonder about the effect of the diet that is being done. Shortly, this twitter tells readers about the affective meaning for teenagers who are taking the diet culture.

### ***Bias Language “Sex”***

The language bias based on sex or gender refers to the form of discrimination, which classifies between male and female. Three statuses contain language bias in sex that can be seen in the following quotations:



**(Tweet 4, retrieved on 3 of February 2018)**

The language bias from this status where the writer uses “girl”. As mentioned above its voice clearly discredits the true girls. It is as if the true girls must follow the bad styles freely with bad habits like smoking, drunk and nightclubs. On the contrary, for ladies who do not follow the bad habitual as above are considered not slang or outdated. Even though this seems biased, but it can be as an affront form for true ladies who do not carry out the bad habits. Thus, another bias language in sex also occurs in the following quotation:



(**Tweet 5**, retrieved on 03 of February 2018)

The use of the word “many men” is the dominant bias language from the status above, the writer focuses on how men can get heart broke because they were not kind men in the past. This status declares that every man who should improve themselves and strong men to avoid them from a broken heart. From this status extremely conveys his opinion about men who have ever undergone heartbroken. This is almost similar to the language bias in the following quotation:



(**Tweet 6**, retrieved on 03 of February 2018).

In this twitter the form of language bias is conveyed through every man in this world like curves and like to play, in other words, he says that the true man is someone who wants to try everything and not being bored as a person. From the status, it can be as an affective meaning.

### ***Language Bias “Race”***

Race bias is the attitudes or stereotypes that affect an individual’s understanding, actions, and manner and distinguished from others by physical characteristics, such as hair type, a color of eyes and skin, stature. Race category is found from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> until 6<sup>th</sup> of February. This can be seen in the following citation:



**(Tweet 7, retrieved on 06 of February 2018).**

The use of the word “American” by the writer to convey how Americans, in particular, the president Donald Trump who had like to see China’s problem and the writer only focuses on Americans and Donald Trump. The writer tells American people especially the president Donald Trump are not being rude for seeing china's problem. This refers to the meaning that nation described by supporting the sentence. From another language bias is explained below:



**(Tweet 8, retrieved on 01 of February 2018).**

This twitter shows about “African man” who always do lie. It becomes the bias of language because extremely point out the ‘African man’. This can be a form stereotype or negative label that result to discriminate the race. The writer extremely asks the African men who always lay and other African men do not do the same things. The meaning of this status indicates as an affective meaning because she shows her feeling or attitude about African man.



(Tweet 9, retrieved on 02 of February 2018).

The bias languages in this status are “Americans” and “drug companies” where the writer questioning an accusation of the drug in medicated. The writer conveys that people over medicated but they are still sick to criticize Americans people naturally. The writer just wants to inform everyone who comes to check up and medicated being well and must be health more than before.

### ***Bias Language “Social Class”***

Language bias in social class refers to individual attitudes, behaviors, a system of policies, which set up to benefit for high class and hierarchical social categories. The researcher found these forms in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 as stated in the following quotation:



(Tweet 10, retrieved on 04 of February 2018).

The status above reveals the form of language bias based social class. As mentioned above the tweet of “rich people with their knowledge” which indicates rich people and their money. The writer tells readers that rich people think their money as an indicator of knowledge. This implies that they are stupid people who only think about their money, but not for knowledge. From this tweet subtly gives a satire toward people who have money, but they were confused with their money, unable to manage it because of lack of knowledge.



**(Tweet 11, retrieved on 05 of February 2018).**

Another form of language bias in social class as mentioned from the twitter (11) where the writer uses the word “poor people” which seem compares between poor people and judge rich people. Because he says that poor people more generous, this is as if rich people are wicked than poor people who are generous. From the status seems to voice that poor people are more generous, on the contrary, it is visible underestimate toward rich people.

### ***Bias Language “Traits”***

Regarding the term above, the traits as typical of someone, quality or characteristic, is used to distinguish the quality of someone belong to others (Finegan,

2015). The researcher found the status regard to the traits category in 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February as described in the following quotation:



(Tweet 12, retrieved on 01 of February 2018).

The language bias in term of traits is described from the “people competition”. This explains who hates the competition between other people in e society and makes their own criteria about beautiful and handsome people. Moreover, girls who are the most famous, but the categories how the best look of one person. The writer wants to convey that the beauty or handsome can be measured by certain criteria, every people are beautiful by his or her own way and no need to compare to others. Furthermore, another bias language in traits can be seen in the following citation:



(Tweet 13, retrieved on 04 of February 2018).

The writer conveys her feeling about how she treats others with bad action. Her words are visible in any competition, she underestimates with the kindness of others that makes her bad. In short, this tweet tells readers for giving some respect to each other.

### *Discussion*

This study is intended to analyze how the forms of language bias are used in twitter statuses and what kind of motif behind words are being addressed. The results turn out that some categories of language bias were found; language bias based on age, sex, race, social status, and traits. These categories imply their hidden intention based on each category leading to a form of discrimination toward someone or a group of people. Therefore, it is beneficial to compare the current study with the prior finding or theories to see how this study differ from the existing shreds of evidence.

According to Alice (2011, p. 5), bias language is one action in communication, which refers to the discrimination to others. Some analysis as having discussed above are the descriptions of language bias language which vividly described the form of discrimination or unfair against others.

The results of this study found that there were five categories in term of language bias, they are language bias in age, sex, race, social class, and traits. This means that the findings were in line with the prior evidence. Further, all above categories are used to take readers attention on the platform of Twitter, and not all are negative sense, but allow readers to understand the underlying motif behind of each tweet. Some writers are visible negative voices, but this actually for readers to be able to take a message from the words are being conveyed through their twitters specifically relate to the form of bias in language.

As have discussed in the previous parts, some writers want readers to take a message behind the content of twitter status, for instance, bias in the age that teenagers should be a mature person, not a lot depend on parents. Bias in sex, some writers give readers an important value that modern girls are not associate with bad behavior like smoking, drunk or nightclub. This is also similar as described in the race category where some writers give an opinion to keep respect each other. Some important values also

occurred in social class and traits, both give a sense for each person feels more generous, underestimate or treat others with bad attitudes.

### CONCLUSION

This study has been to analyze the form of language bias in several twitter status during February 2018. Out of 25 twitter status, it was found that there were five categories of language bias, they are language bias based on age, sex, race, social status, and traits. These convey their intention based on each category above which emphasis on the form of discrimination toward someone or a group of people. By learning these, the readers are easy to catch up on what is the underlying motive behind the posting of words or phrases on the platform of Twitter.

### BIO-PROFILE

**Agung Suhadi** is as an English lecturer at the English Education Study Program, Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. His research interests are teaching literature, linguistics, and literature. His corresponding email [agungketupat@yahoo.com](mailto:agungketupat@yahoo.com)

## REFERENCES

- Alice. Friye. (2011). *Avoiding Bias in Language*. Department of Psychology  
The University of Massachusetts. Lowell.
- Bagha, Karim Nazari. (2011). A Short Introduction to Semantics. *Journal of  
Language Teaching and Research*. Vol (2), 1411-1419.
- Barber, Pablo. (2014). Understanding the political representativeness of Twitter  
users. *Social Science Computer Review*. (1), 2.
- Berant, Jonathan., Ido., Dagan, Meni Adler., and Jacob Goldberger. (2012). Efficient  
tree-based approximation for entailment graph learning. *Proceedings of ACL*,  
117–125.
- Christian, C. (2001). *Gender and Language: Towards a Feminist Pragmatics*.  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Finegan, Edward. (2015). *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Australia: Cengage  
Learning.
- Gumperz, J. J. (2007). *Language in Social Groups*. Stanford, CA: Stanford  
University Press.
- Harford, James R. (2007). *Semantics a course book*. Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press.
- Jian, Wenying. (2000). The Relationship between Language and Culture. *ELT  
Journal*, Vol. (54), 328-334).
- Lunenburg, Fred C. (2010). *Communication: The Process, Barriers, and Improving  
Effectiveness*. Sam Houston State University, vol.1, 1-11).
- Mills, Stuart. (2008) *Language and Sexism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University  
Press.
- Nordquist, Richard. (2017). Biased Language Definition and Examples. *Glossary of  
Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms*.
- Robert, M. Entman. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power.  
*Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 163–173.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Doing  
social psychology research*, 229-254.