

The Language of Sadness: How Teens Express Sad Emotions Through Words

Ajeng Mahesa¹, Alya Amelia², Ifan Rakhman³, Nabila Nurmalih⁴, Rahma Adiba⁵, Whilky Rizkyanfi⁶
^{1,2,3,4,5}(Psikologi, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia)

⁶(Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia)

e-mail: ajeng.mahesa65@upi.edu, alyamel@upi.edu, ifan77@upi.edu, nabilanurmalih@upi.edu,
rahmaadiba@upi.edu, wilkysgm@upi.edu

Abstract—This study aims to understand how adolescents express their sadness, both through language as verbal communication and through nonverbal communication. This research focuses on analyzing the expression of sad emotions through language using a psycholinguistic approach, determining the frequency of sad language use, identifying factors that often trigger the use of sad language, and comparing the use of verbal and nonverbal communication in expressing sad emotions. The data collection method of this research is descriptive-qualitative from a survey in the form of a questionnaire distributed to teenagers aged 12 to 21 years through social media. Respondents to the questionnaire were as many as 107 adolescents, with details of 21.5% early adolescents (12–15 years), 32.7% middle adolescents (15–18 years), and 45.8% late adolescents (18–21 years). Among them, 38.3% were male and 61.7% were female. The results showed that there are various languages used by adolescents to express sad emotions, and adolescents tend to use nonverbal communication more often than language as verbal communication to express their sad emotions.

Keywords— *Adolescents, Sad Language, Psycholinguistic, Expression of Sad Emotions.*

Abstrak—Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami cara remaja mengekspresikan kesedihan yang dirasakannya, baik melalui bahasa sebagai komunikasi verbal maupun melalui komunikasi nonverbal. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis ekspresi emosi sedih melalui bahasa menggunakan pendekatan psikolinguistik, penentuan frekuensi penggunaan bahasa sedih, identifikasi faktor yang sering memicu penggunaan bahasa sedih, dan perbandingan penggunaan komunikasi verbal dan nonverbal dalam mengekspresikan emosi sedih. Metode pengumpulan data penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dari survei berupa kuesioner atau angket yang dibagikan kepada remaja berusia 12 hingga 21 tahun melalui media sosial. Responden kuesioner didapatkan sebanyak 107 remaja dengan rincian 21,5% remaja awal (12–15 tahun), remaja madya 32,7% (15–18 tahun), dan 45,8% remaja akhir (18–21 tahun). Diantaranya 38,3% berjenis kelamin laki-laki dan 61,7% berjenis kelamin perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat beragam bahasa yang digunakan remaja untuk mengekspresikan emosi sedih, dan remaja cenderung lebih sering menggunakan komunikasi nonverbal dibandingkan bahasa sebagai komunikasi verbal untuk mengekspresikan emosi sedihnya.

Kata Kunci— *Remaja, Bahasa Sedih, Psikolinguistik, Ekspresi Emosi Sedih.*

1. Introduction

The adolescent phase is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is characterized by various changes, starting from physical, psychological, social, and emotional development. One dominant psychological aspect is the ability to express emotions. Peak emotionality or high emotional development occurs during adolescence (Fitri, 2017). Adolescents, in carrying out their developmental tasks, often encounter many emotional problems. Emotions are psychological symptoms that affect cognition, behavior, attitudes, and certain forms of expression (Hude, 2006). There are six basic emotions experienced by every individual, namely anger, fear, disgust, surprise, happiness, and sadness. Of these six basic emotions, sadness is one that often appears in adolescents when performing developmental tasks. The emotion of sadness is a feeling that arises in individuals due to a mood that is poignant, sad, gloomy, melancholy, self-pitying, and despairing (Goleman, 1997). Sad emotions are felt by individuals when stimuli are disappointing, hurtful, causing the emergence of feelings of hurt, and feelings of failure.

Individuals can express emotions through both verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication involves conveying the content of a particular message clearly through language, while nonverbal communication involves conveying messages through tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language (Bowden, 2010). Nonverbal communication is more often found in everyday life to identify human emotions, as nonverbal communication often occurs automatically. In contrast to verbal communication, some individuals sometimes find it difficult to express emotions using language.

The nature of language serves as a primary means of communication for humans. It is employed to convey ideas, concepts, and emotions using symbols in the form of organized sounds (Noermanzah, 2029). Linguists agree that there are four roles of language, namely as a tool for expression, a medium of communication, a tool of

social integration and adaptation, and a tool of social control. While cultural diversity across countries leads to language variations, each country typically possesses its own national language. The presence of a national language alleviates concerns regarding socio-cultural backgrounds and linguistic differences during communication (Nurhayati, 2023). Beyond its role as a communication tool, language holds significant importance in various aspects of human life, including education, economy, culture, health, and psychology.

Psycholinguistics is a scientific field that integrates psychology with linguistics. It is defined as the study of the mental processes experienced by humans through the lens of language use (Harras, 2016). From this statement, it can be inferred that psycholinguistics examines the psychological processes occurring when individuals use language during communication, as well as how humans acquire language skills. Psycholinguists focus on understanding what happens when individuals speak; for example, they explore emotional aspects of language. Emotional relations in language refer to spontaneous expressions rooted in feelings.

Previous researchers have shown interest in language as a means of expressing emotions. After reviewing several studies, it is evident that some align closely with this research. The first study, titled "Penggunaan Bahasa dalam Mengekspresikan Emosi Kegembiraan Siswa Diniyah Takmilyah Awaliyah Pasca Gempa (Kajian Psikolinguistik)" conducted by Mochamad Farid Kostawa (2023), aimed to explore how language is used to express happiness among DTA students affected by the earthquake in Cianjur Regency. The study revealed that students expressed joy through traditional games, words, and body movements. Notably, the research subjects had experienced a disaster, potentially influencing their expressions of joy. Additionally, Nurfauziyah et al. (2023) conducted research published in the *Sinestesia Journal*, titled "Ekspresi Kecewaan pada Anak Usia 2 Tahun: Kajian Psikolinguistik" which examined how two-year-old

children express and understand emotions of disappointment. This research has an impact that encourages future research to use psycholinguistic analysis. This study stands out for its unique focus on subjects and methods of expressing emotions, diverging from previous research. The research conducted by the author brings innovation by examining the expression of sadness and how language is used to express it in adolescents. It is anticipated that this research will offer fresh insights into how adolescents utilize language to express feelings of sadness.

Using a psycholinguistic approach, this research will study the relationship between psychological processes and language use in the context of expressing emotions. The objectives of this study are: 1) Analyzing the form of language use in the expression of sad emotions in adolescents through a psycholinguistic approach; 2) Knowing the scale frequency of sad language use; 3) Knowing the sadness factors that often cause the emergence of sad language use; 4) Knowing the comparison of the use of verbal and nonverbal communication when adolescents express sad emotions. The researchers provide the boundaries of this study, namely adolescents aged 12-21 years. According to Santrock (2018), adolescents aged 12-21 years are divided into 3 phases, namely early adolescence (12-15 years), middle adolescence (15-18 years) and late adolescence (18-21 years). By understanding the sad language of adolescents, it can help develop more effective communication strategies between adolescents and adults, as well as create a supportive environment for adolescents to express feelings in a healthy way.

2. Methods

The research conducted used a qualitative descriptive analysis method. The qualitative descriptive analysis method is a type of research with a focus on understanding the status of human groups, conditions, objects, frameworks of thought or events with the aim of making integrated, factual, and accurate descriptions of the facts being

studied (Fadli, 2021). According to Hasyim Hasanah (2016), research with qualitative descriptive methods focuses on discussing and describing existing phenomena, both human engineering and natural, and emphasizes the quality, characteristics, relationships, and relationships between the two. Emphasizes the quality, characteristics, and relationships between observed events.

Data collection was carried out using a survey by distributing questionnaires through social media with teenage subjects aged 12–21 years. The questionnaire is in the form of questions to find out the use of language in adolescents as an expression of sad emotions felt. The type of questionnaire used in this study is a mixed questionnaire, which includes closed questions as well as open questions. Open-ended questions to describe the context of experienced sadness and examples of the use of nonverbal communication to express experienced sadness. Closed questions were used to determine gender, age, language used when sad, frequency of use of sad language, sadness factors, comparison of the use of verbal and nonverbal communication when sad, and forms of nonverbal communication used when sad. The measurement scale used in the frequency of sad language use section is the Likert Scale. Likert Scale is a form of assessment carried out to collect information to determine or measure data that is both qualitative and quantitative. The data collected later aims to understand opinions, attitudes, or individual perceptions of observed phenomena (Sugiyono, 2014). The Likert scale is a psychometric scale that is widely used in survey research and its use is common in questionnaires. It is designed so that respondents provide answers at various levels for each object being measured. The answer options in this study consist of very, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative descriptive data analysis, which is one of the techniques used in qualitative research data. The answers from respondents in the questionnaire will

be presented based on each question using a qualitative descriptive method.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

The questionnaire was distributed through social media and 107 respondents were obtained, including adolescents aged 12 to 21 years. A total of 23 early adolescents with a percentage of 21.5% (12–15 years), 35 middle adolescents with a percentage of 32.7% (15–18 years), and 49 late adolescents with a percentage of 45.8% (18–21 years). Among them, 41 teenagers are male with a percentage of 38.3%, and 66 teenagers are female with a percentage of 61.7%. Based on the data obtained, there are various words and languages used by adolescents to express sad emotions, which are part of verbal communication.

No	The Language Used	Number of Respondent	In Percent age form	Context Example
1	Capek	30	28 %	Tired of living, having too much to think about and too much work to do
2	Mau nangis	24	22.4 %	Sensitivity to small things due to dramatic emotional changes
3	Aku salah apa?	7	6.5 %	Feeling unfairly treated. Being shouted at by others.
4	Yaudah mau gimana lagi	25	23.4 %	There is a mismatch between expectations and reality, and

disappointment in oneself and others.

5	Gapapa	15	14 %	Feeling of failure.
6	Other	6	5.4 %	Feeling lonely and missing someone

Table 1. Data on the words adolescents use to express sadness

From the table above, the most common use of language used by teenagers to express sad emotions is the word "Capek" with contexts/occurrences, such as tired of life, too many things to think about, and a lot of work/tasks to do. It was obtained that the language was used by 30 teenagers whose adjectives filled out the questionnaire with a percentage of 28%. Then from the data obtained, there is the use of other languages, such as "mau pulang", "bodo amat", "kenapa aku kayak gini?", "sialan", "sedih", and "kenapa sih?".

These languages/words can be classified based on word types or in the development of Indonesian grammar, experts call them word classes.

No	Word	Word Class	Context
1	Capek	Adjective	"Capek" is a common adjective in the standard language.
2	Mau nangis	Verb	"Mau nangis" means to want to cry, which is a verb.
3	Aku salah apa?	Interrogative	"Apa" is a word that describes the sentence as a verb

4	Yaudah mau gimana lagi	Adjective	“Yaudah mau gimana lagi” describes a state of resignation, which is an adjective
5	Gapapa	Adjective	“Gapapa” in standard language “tidak apa-apa” describe the state of a person including adjectives
6	Mau pulang	Verb	“Ingin pulang” belongs to the verb
7	Bodo amat	Adjective	“Bodo amat” or “masa bodoh” belongs to the adjective
8	Kenapa aku kayak gini?	Interrogative	“Kenapa” belongs to the interrogative word
9	Sialan	Interjection	“Sialan” belongs to the derived interjection word
10	Sedih	Noun	“Sedih” included in nouns according to KBBI
11	Kenapa sih?	Interrogative	There is the word “kenapa” which is a question word

Table 2. Word class

From the data above, each language used by teenagers has different word classes with different uses. This means that the use of sad language in adolescents does not adhere to only one word class, such as adjectives, but can also belong to other word classes.

Next was a question about how often the words were used to express sad emotions by each adolescent. This question aims to determine the frequency of using sad language. By using the frequency option on the Likert Scale.

No	Frequency	Number of Respondent	In Percentage form
1	Very often	21	19.6 %
2	Often	50	46.7 %
3	Sometimes	33	30.8 %
4	Rarely	3	2.8 %
5	Never	0	0 %

Table 3. Data on the frequency of the use of sad language

The highest data obtained was 50 teenagers with a percentage of 46.7% who chose the frequency option often and the lowest data obtained was no teenagers who chose the frequency option never. It can be concluded that teenagers often use the words/sentences in the previous table to express sad emotions.

The questionnaire then asked about the factors that often cause sad feelings in young people, so that they would say the words/sentences listed in Table 1.

No	Factor	Number of Respondent	In Percentage form
1	Disappointment	38	35.5 %
2	Feeling hurt	25	23.3 %
3	Feeling of failure	34	31.8 %
4	Hurt	5	4.7 %
5	Other	5	4.7 %

Table 4. Data on the factors that cause sadness

The highest number of respondents, 38 adolescents, chose the option of disappointment with a percentage of 35.5%. There are also other factors that cause the emergence of sad emotions in adolescents, such as being tired, having a lot of thoughts and feeling empty. From these data it can be concluded that the factor that often causes the emergence of sad emotions in adolescents is disappointment, which causes adolescents to utter the sad language contained in Table 1.

This study also collected data on the use of non-verbal communication in adolescents as an expression of the sad emotions they felt. A total of 66 adolescents with a percentage of 61.7% felt that it was difficult to express sad emotions through speech, while 41 other adolescents with a percentage of 38.3% did not feel that it was difficult to express sad emotions through speech. Then 82 adolescents with a percentage of 76.6% felt that non-verbal communication appeared more often when expressing sad emotions, while 25 other adolescents with a percentage of 23.4% felt that the use of language appeared more often when expressing sad emotions. From these two data it can be concluded that adolescents feel that nonverbal communication is more frequent and easier to use to express their sad emotions.

Data was also collected on the types of non-verbal communication used or that emerged when people found it difficult to express sad feelings through language.

No	Jenis Komunikasi Nonverbal	Number of Respondent	In Percent age form	Example of Expression
1	Voice tone	23	21.5 %	Decreased voice volume
2	Facial expression	38	35.5 %	Depressed, loss of smile and crying

3	Body gestures	21	19.6 %	Playing with fingernails and looking away from others
4	Increased use of speech	25	23.4 %	-

Table 5. Data on types of nonverbal communication used as an expression of sad emotions

The type of non-verbal communication that often appears, either intentionally or unintentionally, when young people experience sadness is facial expressions. Examples given by most respondents were loss of smile, gloom and crying. A total of 38 adolescents chose the option facial expressions as a type of non-verbal communication with a percentage of 35.5%.

3.2. Discussion

Language is a medium of communication whose main function is to convey messages or meanings from one person to another, but language also has another function, namely as a means of self-expression. This research focuses on language as an expression of sadness in adolescents. The data obtained shows that adolescents have a variety of sad language and are influenced by different factors. As listed in Table 4, sad emotions are felt by individuals when they receive stimuli that disappoint, hurt, hurt feelings and other feelings.

Language as a verbal communication tool is often supported by non-verbal communication, which includes facial expressions, body movements, tone of voice and other body language that can clarify or even replace the verbal message conveyed. How adolescents express their sadness through verbal and non-verbal communication is the subject of this study. Based on the results of the study, adolescents often use the word "capek" in verbal communication to express sad emotions. This usually happens when adolescents feel tired of

life, have a lot of thoughts, and have a lot of work or tasks to do. The fact that adolescents are often confronted with situations that do not meet expectations shows that disappointment is the factor that most often causes adolescents to express sad emotions, as can be seen in Table 4 of the results of this study. The word "capek" belongs to the class of adjectives. Sad emotions are, of course, closely related to adjectives, one of whose functions is to describe the mood or feelings felt by individuals, but the research results in Table 2 show that adolescents use language with different word classes, from adjectives to interrogatives.

According to Alqatinah Pohan (2015), nonverbal communication is more honest to express what you want to express or feel because it is spontaneous, nonverbal communication is more widely used than verbal communication, and nonverbal communication is permanent and will always exist. This can be seen in the data from the questionnaire. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that nonverbal communication is used more often by adolescents to express sad emotions than verbal communication because most of the respondents find it difficult to express emotions through language. In a study conducted by Reed and DeScolio (2017), it was found that drooping eyelids, sad eyes, dropping the corners of the lips so that there is no visible smile, and tilting the inner eyebrows are characteristics of individual facial expressions when sad. In line with the results of this study, the facial expressions displayed by adolescents when sad are the loss of the smile from the face, gloom and crying. Crying is an expression of sadness that people have shown since birth.

Overall, this study provides a useful understanding of how adolescents display perceived or experienced sadness, and what causes adolescents to experience it. The results of this study can be used to help adults, including parents and mental health professionals, to better understand and help adolescents manage their emotions. It can also be used to inform interventions and programmes to help young people learn to manage their emotions better.

4. Conclusion

Emotions can be expressed in a number of ways, one of which is through the use of language as both verbal and non-verbal communication. As a means of communication, language is used to convey messages or meanings to others. Based on the results of the research on the use of language in expressing sad emotions in adolescents, it can be concluded that in verbal communication, adolescents often use the word "capek", which is an adjective, to express the sad emotions they feel. However, the use of sad language in adolescents is not restricted to one word class, but there is language with different word classes. The two most common conditions in which adolescents use the word are when they feel tired of life and when they feel disappointed by reality, which does not meet their expectations. This study also found that young people use non-verbal communication more often than verbal communication to express their sadness. This is supported by the results of the questionnaire, in which most adolescents mentioned gloomy facial expressions, the absence of smiles and tears, and changes in the volume of the voice to be weaker/smaller when speaking when feeling sad.

5. Reference

- Bowden, M. (2010). *Winning Body Language: Control the Conversation, Command Attention, and Convey the Right Message-without Saying a Word* (1st ed.). McGraw-Hil.
- Fadli, M. R. (2021). Memahami Desain Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. *Humanika, Kajian Ilmiah Mata Kuliah Umum*. 21(1). 33-54.
- Fitri, N. F., & Adelya, B. (2017). Kematangan emosi remaja dalam pengentasan masalah. *Jurnal Penelitian Guru Indonesia - JPGI*, 2(2), 30-39.
- Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional Intelligence* (1st ed.). Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Harras, K. A., & Bachari, A. D. (2016). *Dasar-dasar Psikolinguistik* (1st ed.). Bandung: UPI PRESS.

Comment [WU1]: References

Comment [WU2R1]: Referensi usahakan yg 3 tahun terakhir yang mutakhir

- Hasanah, H. (2016). TEKNIK-TEKNIK OBSERVASI (Sebuah Alternatif Metode Pengumpulan Data Kualitatif Ilmu-ilmu Sosial). *Jurnal at-Taqaddum*. 8(1). 21-46
- Hude, M. D. (2006). *Emosi: Penjelajahan Religio-Psikologis tentang Emosi Manusia di dalam Al Qur'an* (1st ed.). Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Kurniati, D. P. Y. (2016). *Komunikasi Verbal dan Nonverbal*.
- Kostawa, M. F. (2023). Penggunaan Bahasa Dalam Mengekspresikan Emosi Kegembiraan Siswa Diniyah Takmilyah Awaliyah Pasca Gempa (Kajian Psikolinguistik). *Jurnal Insan Pendidikan dan Sosial Humaniora*, 1(1), 203-211. <https://doi.org/10.59581/jipsoshum-widyakarya.v1i1.627>.
- Noermanzah. (2019). Bahasa sebagai Alat Komunikasi, Citra Pikiran, dan Kepribadian. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Bulan Bahasa (Semiba)*. 306-319
- Nurfauziah, Najibah, & Putra, D. A. K. (2023). Ekspresi Kekecewaan pada Anak Usia 2 Tahun: Kajian Psikolinguistik. *Jurnal Sinestesia*, 13(1), 701-709. <https://sinestesia.pustaka.my.id/journal/article/view/267>.
- Nurhayati, I. A., Khoer, M. F. S., Maharani, S. N., Rizkyanfi, M. W. (2019). Peranan Bahasa Indonesia Dalam Membantu Kelancaran Berkomunikasi Pada Mahasiswa Pendidikan Ekonomi Di Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. *Kampret Journal*, 2(3), 94-97. <https://plus62.isha.or.id/index.php/kampret/article/view/114>.
- Pohan, A. (2015). Peran Komunikasi Verbal Dan Non Verbal dalam Hubungan Manusia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Dakwah dan Komunikasi*. 6(2). 5-22.
- Reed, L. I., & DeScolio, P. (2017). The Communicative Function of Sad Facial Expressions. *Evolutionary Psychology*. 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704917700418>.
- Santrock, J. W. (2018). *Adolescence* (17th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Sugiyono. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.