

## THE USE OF AING WORD BY NON-NATIVE SUNDANESE SPEAKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF FRIENDSHIP

### FENOMENA PENGGUNAAN KATA AING OLEH NON-NATIVE BAHASA SUNDA DALAM KONTEKS RELASI PERTEMANAN

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#### ABSTRACT

The word *aing* as a first-person pronoun is part of a very coarse level of Sundanese that should be used more carefully. Despite this meaning, the word *aing* is often found among students outside the Sundanese region in Bandung. This study aims to explore how the understanding and use of the word *aing* by non-native Sundanese in the context of friendship. Through a generic qualitative approach, this study involved 36 non-native Sundanese students studying in Bandung. Data were collected by distributing a self-report questionnaire in Google Forms consisting of 14 open-ended questions. The study's results are grouped into four themes that explain the understanding of the use of *aing*, the reasons for its use, the use of *aing* in online and offline interactions, and the impact of its use in the context of friendship. Moreover, it is found that overseas students who are from a different region than the Sundanese region understand when and how the word *aing* is used in interactions with their friends. It allows them to feel the positive impact on the friendships they build when using the word *aing* in communication.

Kata Kunci: *aing*, adaptation, friendship, non-native Sundanese, sundanese language.

#### ABSTRAK

Kata *aing* sebagai kata ganti orang pertama merupakan bagian dari tingkatan Bahasa Sunda sangat kasar yang tidak sepatutnya digunakan sembarangan. Terlepas dari pemaknaan tersebut, penggunaan kata *aing* sering kali didapati pada kalangan mahasiswa di Bandung oleh mereka yang bukan berasal dari wilayah Sunda. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana gambaran pemahaman dan penggunaan kata *aing* oleh non-native bahasa Sunda dalam konteks relasi pertemanan. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif generik, penelitian ini melibatkan 36 mahasiswa non-native bahasa Sunda yang sedang berkuliah di Bandung. Pengambilan data dilakukan dengan menyebarkan *self-report questionnaire* berbentuk *Google Form* yang terdiri dari 14 pertanyaan dengan bentuk *open-ended question*. Hasil penelitian dikelompokkan ke dalam empat tema temuan yang menjelaskan tentang pemahaman dalam penggunaan *aing*, alasan penggunaannya, penggunaan *aing* dalam interaksi online dan offline, serta bagaimana dampak penggunaannya dalam konteks pertemanan. Berdasarkan hal tersebut diperoleh bahwa mahasiswa rantau yang bukan dari wilayah Sunda memahami kapan dan bagaimana kata *aing* digunakan dalam hubungan pertemanan. Hal ini membuat mereka lebih dapat merasakan dampak positif bagi pertemanan yang dibangun ketika menggunakan kata *aing* dalam berkomunikasi.

Kata Kunci : *aing*, adaptasi, pertemanan, *non-native* bahasa Sunda, bahasa sunda.

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## INTRODUCTION

While studying at university, many people choose to migrate and explore new environments and cultures. Iskandar (2012) said that a new environment and culture will stimulate individuals to respond and assess their environment so that they are able to adapt, including to the social environment.

In the city of Bandung, one of the most numerous migrant sectors is students (Fadhurrahman, 2017). For example, based on statistical data released by Padjadjaran University, it is known that Banten, DKI Jakarta and Central Java are the three provinces after West Java that contribute the largest number of migrant students (Padjadjaran University, 2020). This shows that some students at a university are not native residents of the area where the university is located or can be called migrant students (Lingga & Tuapattinaja, 2012). Therefore, various natural adjustments are made by overseas students, especially those from regions and cultures that are different from West Java. When traveling, students will interact with various people so that adjustment in the realm of social interactions becomes an important thing that cannot be ignored by students.

In social interactions, mastering the local language for migrants is quite important so that the process of adapting to a new environment is more helpful. As a place to study, campus is

also a place for students to build relationships with their friends. Studying in a local Sundanese language area certainly has an influence on students' relationships, both with students and the surrounding community. With different backgrounds, students' efforts to learn, understand and use the local language can support these relationships.

Sundanese, as a regional language used in the West Java region, has grammatical rules known as Sundanese *undak usuk basa* (Sugito, 2017). For migrant students, knowing that Sundanese has language levels in its use will help them to position themselves in interacting with local residents.

The levels of Sundanese *usuk basa* are known to vary quite a bit. However, based on Maulana's (2021) interview with Gunardi, a Sundanese language expert, generally there are three levels of language, namely rough language, *sedeng* language, and *lemes* language, each of which is used to position oneself with whom the individual is speaking. An example of the use of Sundanese levels can be seen in the use of first person pronouns. Pratama (2020) states that there are several first person pronouns or pronouns to refer to oneself when communicating with other people in Sundanese, namely *abdi*, *dewek*, *kuring*, *kula*, *kami*, and *aing*. Each pronoun has the same meaning, namely 'me' in Indonesian, but is at a different language level.

Highlighting the pronoun aing, currently this word is often used in various situations. Not only by native speakers, the word aing is used generally in daily conversation among speakers of other languages (non-native). The use by non-natives itself is a unique phenomenon because aing is basically considered to be a part of the level of Sundanese which is very rude and inappropriate for use with older or respected people or in formal conversations (Sugito, 2017). Therefore, in practice aing needs to be used by paying attention to the applicable language rules.

To complete this phenomenon, researchers conducted observations and surveys in April 2021 as initial data on Padjadjaran University students regarding the use of the word aing. Researchers found that the majority of students from outside the Sundanese tribe said they were familiar with the word aing and often used the word aing with friends. Furthermore, researchers also found that quite a lot of students use the word aing in daily conversations on campus. Not only that, the use of aing is often found in the conversations of social media users by mixing it in the context of Indonesian sentences. For example, Figure 1 captures an illustration of the use of the word aing in question on the social network Twitter. This proves that aing has been used quite widely outside native language speakers.



Figure 1. Use of the word aing taken in July 2021 on the social networking application Twitter.

Even though the students do not only come from local residents of West Java, students from West Java still use Sundanese as one of the main languages in social interactions, apart from Indonesian. For overseas students, this situation can trigger them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn and use Sundanese in order to expand their friendships during their studies on campus. Dunbar (2018) states that language or dialect is one of the basic things that emerges in friendship patterns that are built in interaction. In other words, language can bridge individuals in building relationships with new people more effectively.

Seeing this, researchers assume that the phenomenon of using the word aing, especially among non-native Sundanese overseas students, is one of their efforts to build friendly relations in the campus environment in Sundanese land. Therefore, researchers want to dig deeper into the description of the use of the word

aing by non-native Sundanese in the context of friendship relations.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Language skills can be one of the factors that accommodate individuals to adapt to their environment. Language helps individuals to quickly and efficiently communicate each other's intentions as well as their beliefs about other people's intentions (Matsumoto & Juang, 2016). Individual behavior in language is described and regulated by at least five parameters — phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic (Matlin, 2012). Among these five parameters, pragmatics is closely related to social relations. Owens (2016) states that pragmatics concentrates on language as a communication tool used to achieve social goals. In other words, pragmatics relates to the way language is used to communicate and requires an understanding of culture and individuals.

The existence of work, study and other transfers to various parts of the world increases the possibility of someone mastering various languages. From this phenomenon the terms native and non-native speakers emerged. A native speaker or native speaker of a language is a person who was born and uses that language as his main language and accidentally or deliberately, his family taught him that language. Meanwhile, non-native speakers or non-native speakers of a language are people who use that language not as their main language, but use another language as their main language (Kamilah, 2014). In this research, the native speakers in question are native speakers of

Sundanese as the regional language of Bandung, while non-native speakers are non-native Sundanese speakers who will hereinafter be referred to as non-native Sundanese.

To determine further regarding the use of the word aing among Padjadjaran University students, researchers conducted an initial survey using an online form, namely Google Form. Through a survey that we conducted on 18-20 April 2021, it was found that 16 out of 31 respondents were non-native Sundanese students who used the word aing in communicating, especially in interactions with friends.

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The use of the word aing is generally closely identified in male friendship groups, although quite a few people who use the word aing are women. Previous research has shown that women tend to be more careful in speaking compared to men, although they will be more assertive or assertive when the person they are talking to is also a woman (Carli, 1990). However, based on the initial data obtained when grouped into gender groups, it shows that of the 22 female respondents, 16 of

them were users of the word aing. Furthermore, this is related to men's tendency towards aggressiveness. Through his publication, Shin (2017) stated that men are more likely than women to communicate assertiveness and emphasize dominance, in friendship characteristics, peers who are physically aggressive and popular are more attractive as friends among men. Friendship relationships tend to exist between similar peers, where in the end these friendships influence the behavior and beliefs of the people involved (Shin, 2017).

## Method

The approach used in this research is a generic qualitative approach. Generic qualitative is a type of qualitative method that is not rigidly tied to philosophical assumptions and formal qualitative methodological frameworks such as phenomenology, grounded theory or ethnography (Caelli *et al.*, 2003). Sampling was selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely sampling selection was based on respondents with certain considerations that were most informative in describing the phenomenon under study (Tenny, *et al.*, 2021). The respondents collected consisted of 36 active undergraduate students from the 2020 - 2018 class at Padjadjaran University. The specific characteristics of students who were respondents in this research were those who had migrated and came from outside the West Java region.

Data collection was carried out during September - November 2021 by distributing a self-report questionnaire in the form of a Google Form. Researchers

submitted a questionnaire consisting of Informed Consent data, Demographic Data, and 14 questions in the form of open ended questions. After the data was obtained, analysis was carried out by grouping the different themes that emerged from the respondents' answers using thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The collected data is analyzed based on its content, and examined using categories created through themes. When coding, data containing similar themes are grouped and defined. Thus, the information obtained from the data is more meaningful (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2020; Gurkan *et al.*, 2021). The coding process was carried out by three interraters so that agreement was obtained regarding the results of the data categorization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographics

The subjects in this research were active undergraduate students with an age range of 17 to 23 years. The majority of them are women. Domicile of residence includes various cities and districts in Central Java, Banten, DKI Jakarta, West Sumatra, West Java. The ethnic backgrounds of the participants were quite diverse, dominated by those from the Javanese tribe. Data regarding the general demographics of research subjects which are presented in detail can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data

Demographic	n
Gender	
Man	6
Woman	30

Age	
17	2
18	8
19	2
20	12
21	9
22	2
23	1
Domicile	
Jawa Barat	22
Jawa Tengah	2
Banten	2
DKI Jakarta	7
Sumatera Barat	3
Ethnic group	
Bugis	1
Batak	3
Jawa	19
Minang	5
Chinese	5
Betawi	2
Melayu	1

### Understanding and practice of using the word aing

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it was found that many non-natives understood the meaning of the word aing. All respondents understood that the word aing is the first person pronoun in Sundanese, like I, me, me, etc. The majority of them also understand that the word aing is included in the level of harsh words in

Sundanese. Due to this understanding, respondents also said that the word aing is more often used for people who are close or peers. This is supported by the respondent's statement as follows.

“The word 'aing' is a word that comes from Sundanese. This word is used to refer to I/me in Sundanese. In fact, this word is a harsh word in Sundanese, but many young people use it to communicate intimately with their peers. (P5)

The above shows one of the pragmatic parameters of using words in a language in social interaction (Sulistyo, 2014). Migrant students as non-natives show knowledge of foreign words which are included in rough language so that they will have a certain impact when spoken depending on the person they are talking to. Answers from all subjects regarding understanding of the word aing were grouped into six categories. In more detail, data on respondents' understanding of the word aing is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Understanding the word aing.

Category	n
First person pronouns	36
Including harsh words	21
Usually used with peers	13
Usually used by Sundanese people	3
Informal word	3
Used when angry	1

Even though they do not come from a native Sundanese speaking tribe, all respondents reported that they, as non-natives, also used the word in interactions with friends (n=36) and some with their family or relatives. The use of the word aing by non-natives, on the other hand, shows that the use of

Sundanese is not only used by Sundanese natives. One of the lecturers in the Sundanese Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Padjadjaran University, Dr. Gugun Gunardi, M.Hum., in Maulana (2021) also said that the use of the word aing by non-native Sundanese as a first person pronoun actually increases the existence of the Sundanese language, especially at the national level.

In terms of use, respondents from outside the Sundanese region also stated that they often used the word aing when interacting with friends as interlocutors, some of them used the word aing to non-native friends, natives, or both as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Interlocutors

Description	n
Friends	36
<i>Native</i>	11
<i>Non-Native</i>	4
Both	18
Did not report	3
Family/Relatives	4
Girlfriend	1

### Reasons for using the word aing

Researchers also explored how the origins of each respondent finally found out that some of them started using the word aing and the reasons they used it in communicating with the person they were talking to. Judging from their background, most respondents knew the word aing from friends (n=28), used it for the first time in college (n=16) for reasons to adapt (n=9) and jokingly

(n=9) as were the answers of several respondents as follows.

"I knew the word 'aing' when I was in college, because I happened to study in the city of Bandung and of course most of my friends were from the Sundanese tribe, so I followed them by using the word 'aing'. (P16)"

"Usually it's because the other person has talked to me first, so I think oh, this is how they get along when they're really close" (P33).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is considered as a means of communication in expressing the goals and intentions that exist in an individual's mind (Hidayat, 2014). Starting from the assessment that the word aing could be a tool for adapting and familiarizing themselves with their circle of friends, non-native students finally decided to use the word aing. In more detail, background data on respondents' use of the word aing is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Background to the use of the word aing.

Category	n
Get to know the word aing through...	
Sundanese language subjects	3
Internet	3
Friend	28
Environment	5
Family	1
First time using when...	
elementary school	5
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	6
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	8
Studying	16

Not sure	1
<hr/>	
Reasons to use	
<hr/>	
Adaptation	9
<hr/>	
Joking	9
<hr/>	
try	1
<hr/>	
Already close to the person you are talking to	3
<hr/>	
Get carried away	2
<hr/>	
Social media	1
<hr/>	
Expressing emotions	3
<hr/>	
Used to	1
<hr/>	
Other people use it too	1
<hr/>	
No answer	8

Behind the background of using the word aing, non-natives also apparently know situations and conditions of interaction where it is not permissible to use the word aing, such as in serious or formal conditions. The choice of spoken words is driven by efforts to adapt both to the need to communicate and the situation at hand (Mahabbati, 2013). Within the realm of friendship, they also usually avoid using foreign words to friends who are not considered close and are not used to saying harsh words (see Table 5).

Table 5. Situations or conditions that do not use the word aing

Description	n
Serious Situation	24
<hr/>	
Interlocutor	17
<hr/>	
Non-native	8
<hr/>	
Don't speak harshly	1
<hr/>	
Not a user of the word Aing	6

Not close	7
<hr/>	
Opposite Sex	1

### Use of aing in offline & online interactions

In recent years, forms of online interaction have increased. In an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus, face-to-face interactions are strictly limited, thus encouraging an increase in the intensity of online communication. Therefore, in this study we looked at and compared the use of the word aing in both interactions, namely face-to-face offline interactions and online interactions via online media.

From the data obtained, the use of aing in online and offline interactions turns out to be no different. Based on intensity of use, most participants admitted that they rarely used foreign words in both offline (n=22) and online (n=21) interactions (see Table 6). If it is linked to previous findings regarding the interlocutor as well

Table 6. Intensity of aing use.

Intensity	Offline	On line
	n	n
Seldom	22	21
Never	5	8
Often	4	6
Sometimes	4	1
Always	1	0

Furthermore, in the situation or conditions of using foreign words in offline and online interactions, the majority of participants used foreign words when chatting (offline: n=29; online: n=28) and when the person they were talking to was appropriate



(offline: n=22; online: n=17) with several respondents explaining further their usage situations (See Table 7). This use of aing by non-natives may be due to the popularity that this word has given rise to as slang in the world of social media. According to Iswatiningsih *et al.* (2021) the slang used by teenagers generally comes from regional languages, apart from foreign languages and Indonesian, as a function of expression, solidarity, togetherness and exclusivity which often occurs in joking situations. According to Dascal (1985), the use of language when joking has certain sociopragmatic characteristics which may only be understood by individuals in certain cultures or classes. So the use of aing in joking situations among migrant students in Bandung is one form of implementing this in the Sundanese environment.

In this situation, the respondent uses aing when the person he is talking to is based on friendship relations. Apart from the fact that aing can only be used with peers, according to Shin (2017) friendship relationships tend to influence the behavior and beliefs of the people involved in them. This explains how respondents chose the situation of using aing as a response to changes in behavior and beliefs resulting from their interaction with the Sundanese environment. This form of change is shown in how respondents choose to use aing only when they are with close friends, friends who understand Sundanese, friends who use aing, or male friends. The use of aing, which is a harsh word among male friends, is explained in Shin's (2017) research that men communicate assertiveness and emphasize dominance in friendship

characteristics. This influences men's views on choosing friends where they feel peers who are physically aggressive and popular are more attractive to be their friends (Shin, 2017). According to Beißert *et al.*, (2019) this also happens because young people's friendship relationships tend to be characterized by similarities, such as the use of dialects or languages, so that the use of certain languages or dialects can increase the possibility of individual acceptance by their peer environment. Dunbar (2018) also states that language or dialect is a basic dimension of friendship patterns that can bridge individuals in building relationships with new people more effectively.

Table 7. Situation of use of aing.

Situation/Condition	Offline	Online
	n*	n*
Chat	29	28
<i>Joking</i>	11	8
<i>Want to blend in</i>	1	-
<i>Discussing ownership</i>	1	1
<i>First time knowing 'aing'</i>	1	1
<i>Stress</i>	-	1
The interlocutor is appropriate	22	17
<i>Close friend</i>	15	15
<i>Understand Sundanese</i>	4	3
<i>Using 'aing'</i>	2	3
<i>Male friend</i>	1	-
Etc		
<i>Angry</i>	2	2
<i>Practice Sundanese</i>	1	2

<i>Upload stories/tweets</i>	-	2
<i>Comment</i>	-	1

Based on the explanation above, the context of using aing in offline interactions is not different from the situation of using aing with all participants answering using aing in non-formal contexts. Further details regarding the context of use of aing are also still dominated when chatting and joking (See Table 8). As for the context of the use of the word aing during online interactions via online media, it was dominated by chatting by 30 respondents. The difference between offline and online contexts is actually caused by the absence of direct or face-to-face interaction. If the offline interaction is chatting online face to face, online interaction is chatting remotely or chatting via online media. This shows that the context of using aing during offline or online interactions only differs in the platform of use, not the context in which the word aing is used.

Table 8. Context of use of the word aing

Offline		Online	
Konteks	n	Konteks	n
Non-formal	3 4	Chatting	30
Chat	3 1	Video call	8
<i>Joking</i>	2	Telephone	7
<i>The situation is suitable</i>	1	Comment	3
<i>Angry</i>	1	Post	2

### The impact of using the word aing in friendship

The initial assumption that is the background for this research is that the

use of the word aing is one of the efforts of immigrant students who are migrant individuals as non-native Sundanese in building friendly relations in the campus environment located in Sundanese land. In this way, the researcher assumes that by using the word aing in existing interactions with friends, the closeness of their friendship relations will be increasingly built. However, the data collected shows that the majority of respondents felt that the use of the word aing had no impact on their friendship relationships. It was stated that most of them were used to the use of the word aing in their environment so they don't feel any influence when using the word aing (n=22).

Apart from that, there were also several non-natives who said that there were differences in the impact they felt when they used the word aing. Some respondents admitted that using the word aing made their relationship feel more intimate, comfortable and relaxed when using the word aing with their friends (n=15). As one of them stated:

"From what I have experienced, usually when friends use the word aing when interacting with me they think we are close. So usually you become more open or feel closer." (P8)

This is in accordance with research conducted by Chairan (2021) on the youth community in Sudiang. The results of his research show that the use of harsh words, taboos and slang are often used to strengthen the community, which proves that these words are also used as markers of the closeness of the Sudiang youth community. It's the same with the word aing, which in Sundanese etiquette is a type of rude language, but it makes

users feel familiar when using the word. Even though all respondents came from non-Sundanese ethnicity, the influence of the environment and culture does not deny the possibility of their adjustments when interacting with fellow students, the majority of Padjadjaran University students come from West Java. This adjustment was also mentioned in the results of research conducted by Arianto (2015) on Social and Social Sciences students at Tadulako University with various respondents from various ethnicities. The results of this research state that there are differences Each individual in a relationship creates adjustments to these differences. The successful adjustment is what makes the relationship closer and more intimate (Arianto, 2015).

The various impacts felt by all respondents were grouped into positive, neutral and negative impacts as written in Table 9.

Table 9. Impact of Using the Word Aing

Perceived impact	n
Positif	15
Neutral	22
Negatif	2

Answers from several other respondents felt that the use of the word aing actually felt rude and gave a bad impression, especially when the person they were talking to was not too close to the respondent (n=2). As one of the respondents stated:

"Perhaps, for friends who are not too close, they will think we are rude in choosing language" (P29)

Differences in the impact felt by respondents could arise due to differences in different backgrounds

(Husna, 2020). The more often a person is exposed to an environment that uses foreign words –which are known as rude words – as part of daily communication, the easier it will be for him to accept them. On the other hand, if exposure to the use of aing is very limited, then he will feel that the use of the word aing is offensive

## CONCLUSIONS

This research resulted in the finding that the majority of all respondents who were non-native Sundanese students understood the meaning of the word aing, namely the first person pronoun from the rough Sundanese language level. College is the beginning of most students using foreign words in communication. Students show the intensity of using the word foreign at a rare level by paying attention to the person they are talking to, the situation and conditions they are facing. However, there were no differences in situations found in online and offline interactions involving the use of foreign words in friendship. Apart from that, in general, neutral and positive impacts dominate over negative impacts arising from the use of the word aing in friendly interactions.

The results of this research provide information and descriptions regarding the behavioral patterns of using words from languages other than the individual's main language. Future research can further explore the use of certain words or language by non-natives or see how native speakers view similar phenomena in different locations and subjects.

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