Which self? Pronominal choice, modernity, and self-categorizations

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Abstract

This article examines a recent shift in the choice between two singular forms of first person pronoun in Indonesian, namely, aku *and* saya*. More specifically, it seeks to explain motivating factors behind the recent tendency to use* aku *in public where it was previously considered unacceptable. By contrasting two temporally disjunctive public renditions of this pronoun, the article demonstrates not only that these renditions invite two different interpretations, but also more importantly, that the social expectation associated with* aku *is shifting. It is argued that theoretical constructs such as intimacy and formality, when viewed as opposing concepts, are inadequate for explaining the choice between the pronouns. The recent use of* aku *by celebrities in television interviews suggests that a pronoun conventionally associated with intimacy and informality can also be used strategically to assert individuality; moreover, while celebrities are a modern social phenomenon, variation in their pronominal choice is not explicable solely by an appeal to modernity. The article proposes that the recent shift to* aku *and the variation between* aku *and* saya *can be sufficiently explicated by considering these pronouns as linguistic representations of personal and social self-categorizations, respectively.*

1. Introduction

The interconnection between person-referring terms and social relations has captured the attention of linguists for decades. Numerous studies have been devoted to the description of how uses of such terms are reflective of the ways in which members of a speech community view their position relative to each other and what that community deems to be appropriate or nonappropriate choices for various situations. The majority of these studies, including Brown and Gilman's (1972) pioneering study on

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T/V distinction, focus their attention on the use of second-person forms used as address terms and demonstrate that term choice is contingent upon such social variables as social distance, formality, and other variables related to the speaker's background, such as age, sex, and social status. Address terms draw a great deal of interest because choices people make to call each other indicate how they perceive, are perceived, or wish to be perceived by others. In other words, they represent an important part of the strategies people use in constructing their sociocultural identities.

Much less attention, however, has been afforded to the ways that people refer to themselves, particularly through pronouns. Yet studies that deal with first-person pronouns demonstrate that, like address terms, the choice of first-person pronoun also reflects one's social position, either a position perceived by the speaker or by others. For example, in a study of the variation between English "I" and "me," Wales (1996: 85–109) shows that the choice between these forms in subject position is viewed as being reflective of the speaker's educational and social-class background and of their knowledge about the distinction between standard and nonstandard English, respectively. In another study on Japanese, Backhaus (2002; quoted in Coulmas 2005: 48) found that the use of the pronoun *boku* by female high-school students in the 1990s was seen as a deliberate act of defiance. *Boku* is a pronoun generally associated with male speakers (Tanaka, p.c.), and although young girls may use it among themselves, they are soon instructed to drop it once they enter the workforce.[1] These brief examples suggest that the choice of self-referring terms may be motivated by such factors as one's social background and the desire to assert oneself by violating the norm.

This article is concerned with two singular forms of first-person pronoun in Indonesian: *aku* and *saya*. The pronoun *aku* is commonly described as an intimate and informal pronoun and hence it is generally associated with interpersonal domains. *Saya*, on the other hand, is generally described as a neutral and formal pronoun and is considered the appropriate choice for public contexts. Yet recently *aku* has been used in television interviews by a group of speakers characterized by their sociocultural functions, namely celebrities, which creates interest for several reasons. First, although it contradicts the prevailing norm, it has escaped public criticism and is received with relative acceptance. The acceptance, I would argue, correlates with the recent emergence of the group as a modern social category. By selecting *aku* when speaking in public, celebrities bring a term that is conventionally assigned to the domain of interpersonal into a public domain, thereby blurring the distinction between these domains and raises questions about the perceived distinction

between the two pronouns.[2] Second, though celebrities' use of *aku* is related to an aspect of modernity, namely, personal autonomy as manifested in linguistic choice, variation in the choice of form is not explicable solely by appealing to this notion. Third, by virtue of celebrities being well-known individuals, their use of *aku* creates a potential for emulation by others, which in turn might invite a public reassessment of the current norms.

Some of the questions that arise are as follows. What are the possible motivations for the different choices of pronoun? Is it simply random stylistic variation? Is it a deliberate challenge to the norms? And considering that both *aku* and *saya* are self-referring terms, are there any differences with regard to the notion of "self" that each term represents, and if so, what are these differences?

This article calls into question the adequacy of such notions as "intimate" versus "formal" — which are often employed contrastively in sociolinguistics to describe pronoun choice — for describing the distinction between *aku* and *saya*, respectively. Particularly problematic is when these notions are viewed as two opposing concepts. The assumption that what is intimate cannot also be formal fails to accommodate a pronoun that is characterized as one but is used within the context of the other. For example, *saya* is considered a formal pronoun but is used in television interviews to talk about personal, intimate matters. I would suggest that with respect to these pronouns, notions such as "intimate" and "formal" are secondary to considerations of self-concepts. In the account proposed here, I consider *aku* and *saya* to be linguistic representations of self-categorizations. Both *aku* and *saya* are self-referring but they represent different self-concepts. The use of *aku* reflects a perception of the self as being different from other members of one's group — group being understood as a community of speakers with whom one aligns or from whom one differentiates oneself in various contexts. *Saya* represents a social self-concept in which one perceives similarities with other group members. Variation in the use of the pronouns by different or the same speakers (inter- or intraspeaker, respectively) reflects the flexibility of self-categorizations.

This study is based on data from interviews with celebrities in nine television broadcasts, totaling six hours of airtime, collected between December 2005 and January 2006. The programs that comprise these broadcasts are known by various names, e.g., "infotainment," "celebrity news/gossip," and so forth. It might be objected that the data are relatively small and therefore the generalization drawn might be of little weight. However, this potential objection may be mitigated when the following consideration is taken into account. All commercial television channels

in Indonesia (currently nine in total) have one or more daily programs devoted to celebrity news/gossip, ranging from a total of thirty minutes to two and one-half hours of airtime daily, yet the number of celebrities and, indeed, the number of items reported is limited. Consequently, the programs tend to repeat and elaborate on the same news and the same interviews. Therefore, though quantitatively small, I consider the amount presented here to be representative.

2. Formality, neutrality, and intimacy

Formality, as aptly pointed out by Trudgill (1983: 106–107), is not an easy concept to define because it subsumes other concepts such as familiarity, politeness, and so forth. Trudgill suggests that the formality of a situation correlates with the style of language being chosen — "style" being understood as the linguistic variety that is associated with the relative formality or informality of the speech situation. Thus in ceremonial events speakers would choose a formal style, whereas in casual chats such a style would be deemed inappropriate.

Indonesian speakers have at their disposal several self-referring terms to suit different speech styles. Besides *aku* and *saya*, speakers also employ the colloquial, Hokkien-derived pronoun *gua* (and its variant, *gue*), proper name, and kin terms (e.g., mother to child: *Mama pergi dulu ya*, 'I'm going now, ok'). As mentioned, *aku* and *saya* have been described as informal and formal pronouns, respectively. According to Mintz (1994: 77), as an informal pronoun, *aku* can be used between adults and children, or between equals who have a close relationship or share a similar social status (also see Sneddon 1996: 160; Kaswanti Purwo 1984: 57). Mintz states that informal pronouns are not neutral, in the sense that by using them, one may inadvertently offend the addressee. He therefore cautions foreign-language learners against using *aku* when talking to native speakers. *Saya*, by contrast, is described as an informal pronoun, neutral in social connotation, and is the polite form to use by any speaker in any situation. However, Mintz also adds that *saya* could cause offense "if a speaker and his listener have come to use informal pronouns as part of their relationship." In other words, a shift from an established use of pronoun to *saya* can potentially cause an upset.

Mintz's description is problematic on several grounds. First, it undermines its own terms of description. To Mintz, *aku* and *saya* are distinguishable in terms of informality and formality, respectively, the distinction being understood in terms of neutrality (*aku*, being an informal pronoun, is not neutral, while *saya*, a formal pronoun, is neutral).

Neutrality, in turn, is understood in terms of the potential to cause offense. Yet, if the use of *aku* and *saya* can potentially offend, then the terms of distinction cannot apply, for if we follow the reasoning, neither of the pronouns is neutral. Second, while it is true that *saya* is potentially less offensive, it does not follow that it is neutral in the sense that it can be used by any speaker in any situation. Children, for example, are highly unlikely to use this pronoun with their parents. I was recently informed of an adult who habitually uses this pronoun with her parents and friends because she considers it to be the appropriately polite term. However, this "anomaly" has become a cause of frequent ridicule by friends, which suggests that using *saya* with one's parents, although possible, is not socially recognized as a common practice. The third problem is that, although it is correct that *aku* may create offense, Mintz fails to account for why it is potentially offensive. Moreover, the potential for causing offense is not exclusive to informal pronouns, because, as he notes, *saya* can also do the same, though the contributing circumstances might be different.

As with formality and neutrality, distinguishing *aku* and *saya* in terms of intimacy is problematic. *Aku* is generally characterized as an "intimate" form, "used to children and between equals who have a close relationship with each other" (Sneddon 1996: 160–161). According to Sneddon, in contrast with *aku*, *saya*, though often said to be neutral, usually indicates the absence of an intimate relationship. This observation is not entirely true, though, because as Kaswanti Purwo (1984: 57) notes, both pronouns are common between intimates.

A summary of the distinctions postulated by previous studies is given in Table 1.

In sociolinguistic texts, "intimacy" is often contrasted with "formality" (see, e.g., Fishman 1972: 54, 76; Trudgill 1983: 102, 104, 122; Coulmas 2005: 95). Though these concepts are generally considered in relative terms, it is not often assumed that an intimate term can also suggest formality, and conversely, that a formal term can also indicate intimacy. In other words, a term is either relatively formal or relatively intimate, but not both. However, intimacy, relatively considered or not, cannot satisfactorily distinguish *aku* and *saya* for the following reasons. First, although this notion is commonly used to define a type of speech

Table 1. *Summary of* aku *and* saya *in terms of neutrality*

	Neutral	Not neutral	Used by intimates
Aku	—	✓	✓
Saya	✓	—	✓

participant relationship, it is often assumed that it is self-explanatory and therefore does not require a clear definition in terms of how it is realized linguistically in the language concerned. Kaswanti Purwo (1984: 60) states that both *aku* and *saya* are used by intimates but *aku* marks intimacy while does *saya* not. But what does this statement actually mean? If both pronouns are common among intimates, should they not be both considered as intimate terms though perhaps with a difference in their distribution? The relevant question here is surely not which term marks intimacy and which does not, but rather, how intimacy is linguistically expressed, the answer to which would include the two pronouns but is not limited to them.

According to Chelune et al. (1984: 13), intimacy is a concept that almost everyone knows but is not easy to define: ''Almost everyone knows what intimacy is, but as soon as one must point to specifics, the concept becomes either elusive or bogged down in idiosyncratic trivialities.'' To them, intimacy is a cognitive appraisal of certain behaviors, ''a subjective appraisal, based upon interactive behaviours, that leads to certain relational expectations.'' Four important points are identified concerning the cognitive appraisal of intimacy:

1. Intimacy is based upon the exchange of private, subjective experiences, and therefore involves the ''innermost'' aspects of oneself.
2. Intimacy is ''transactional'' in that importance is given to the process of ''sharing'' as well as to what is shared.
3. Intimacy is a positive relational process that entails both mutuality and self-differentiation.
4. Prior experiences influence our current perceptions of intimacy.

Intimacy thus involves a mutual exchange of experiences that furthers mutual understanding. On the basis of these points, Chelune et al. (1984: 14) define intimacy as ''a relational process in which we come to know the innermost, subjective aspects of another, and are known in a like manner.''

This relational model is also supported by Laurenceau et al. (2004), who suggest that intimacy is an interpersonal and transactional process involving two main components, namely, self-disclosure and partner responsiveness. Self-disclosures may be factual (pertaining to personal facts or information) or emotional/evaluative (communicating personal feelings and opinions), the latter being claimed as the closest to the experience of intimacy and the kind that promotes intimacy because ''they allow for the most core aspects of the self to be known, understood, and validated by another'' (2004: 63). Intimacy, then, is characterized not purely by a mutual interpersonal exchange but also by the depth of the

exchange that results from, in particular, emotional self-disclosures. This view is also shared by Jamieson (1998), who suggests that close relation and privileged knowledge are not sufficient conditions for intimacy. To Jamieson (1998: 9), it is deep knowing and understanding that are particularly important.

Though *aku* is indeed used by people in intimate relationships, there remain questions concerning other aspects of its use that do not correspond with this characterization. First, considering that not only *aku* but also *saya* is used between intimates, the question concerning their distinction remains unanswered. Second, the use of *aku* is not limited to such relationships. It is not unusual for people to use this term with someone they have just met and whom they perceive to share a similar status. In other words, *aku* is also used to initiate intimacy. Conversely, people who may have privileged knowledge of others but do not engage in mutual emotional self-disclosures may also use this term with each other (e.g., colleagues). Third, people in intimate relationships may shift between *aku* and *saya* and the factors triggering the shifts may vary, e.g., greater familiarity with one's interlocutor (Kridalaksana 1974).

Previous descriptions, though noting that both pronouns are used by intimates, generally assert a "one-to-one mapping" approach in which each pronoun is mapped onto a set of variables. *Aku* is mapped onto "informal and intimate," and *saya* onto "formal (non-intimate) and neutral." While this may capture the pronouns' frequent use, this kind of approach fails to capture the overlap between the pronouns in the domain of intimate relationships, and also, as will be shown, in the public use by celebrities.

3. First-person pronouns as self-categorizations

Borrowing an approach from social psychology, I propose that *aku* and *saya* represent the conception of a personal self and a social self, respectively. This does not imply that self-concepts in Indonesian are expressible exclusively by these pronouns; rather, they are expressible by multiple terms, for, as mentioned, there are also other terms for "I," such as *gue*, proper name, and kin terms.

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987; Haslam 2001; Onorato and Turner 2001, 2002, 2004) is an approach that views the self not as a fixed or stable set of mental structures or schema but rather as a fluid concept that is necessarily social and context dependent. The theory argues for the interdependence between personal and social identities, identities being understood as cognitive representations of the self that take the

form of self-categorizations. Self-categorizations are defined as cognitive groupings of oneself and other members of a psychological group perceived to be similar to oneself in comparison to other groups (Onorato and Turner 2001: 156). Personal identity (the personal self) is a self-definition that gives salience to the perceived difference between oneself and other people in a group (e.g., "you are different from me, though we are Australians"). It suggests a perception of the self as "me" and of the others in the group as "not me" and represents a categorization in which intragroup (interpersonal) differences are perceived to be greater than intergroup differences (e.g., Australians and non-Australians). Social identity (the social self), on the other hand, gives salience to perceived similarities with fellow group members, in comparison with other groups; it is an assertion of "us" (our group, the in-group) as opposed to "them" (the group we compare ourselves with, the out-group). It is a self-categorization in which intragroup differences are perceived to be smaller than intergroup differences.

Both the in-group and out-group therefore provide the context for comparison between oneself and others. These groups represent shared higher-order identity (e.g., "we Australians"). Which in-group or out-group is perceived to be relevant for a self-categorization depends on the relative accessibility of that categorization to the perceiver and the "fit" between the comparison and the category specifications (2001: 158). The relative accessibility of a group category reflects one's past experience, present goals, motives, values, and needs, and also "the active selectivity of the perceiver in being ready to use categories which are relevant, useful, and likely to be confirmed by the evidence of reality." Comparative fit accounts for the grouping of people perceived to be more similar to each other as a focal category as contrasted with dissimilar others. Thus in a relevant comparative context, people will be categorized as distinct groups when intragroup differences are considered smaller than intergroup differences, and as distinct individuals when intragroup differences are greater. The category specification fit refers to the matching between "our normative beliefs about the substantive social meaning of the social category" and the instances under consideration. Thus our categorization of people as a particular group (e.g., celebrity) as opposed to people outside of the group (noncelebrity) must be based on what we perceive as greater differences between the two groups than between each other in the same group (comparative fit), and also on our beliefs on what can be characterized as that group (e.g., celebrities are famous).

Self-categorization is thus a dynamic process, in that it represents context-dependent self-definition. One may define oneself as a celebrity in the professional context, but even within this context, one may give

salience to one's personal identity ("I am different from other celebrities") rather than social identity (e.g., "I am part of the female-celebrity group, different from the male-celebrity group"). This view of the self is amenable to my attempt here at explicating *aku* and *saya*. I hope to demonstrate that, first of all, the idea that self-concepts are fluid can be shown to explain variation in pronoun choice. The fact that some speakers choose *aku* while others choose *saya* within the same speech situation suggests variation in the way that people choose to project their identities; some assert their personal identity while others emphasize their social identity. In addition, intraspeaker variation suggests that self-concepts are not stable even within the same speech situation. Discourse-related factors such as a shift in topic may trigger pronoun shifts, and hence shifts in self-conception. In the following, I show that while neither one of the two self-categorizations is more primary than the other, how one chooses to represent one's identity linguistically in a particular context brings some social consequences in that the choice may invite criticism from others. In other words, personal choice may conflict with societal norms.

4. *Aku* as an expression of individualism and egotism

It is not an exaggeration to say that nearly every Indonesian high-school student is familiar with the poem *Aku* 'I/Me', written by Chairil Anwar in 1943, two years prior to the declaration of Indonesia's independence. This poem is arguably the most famous and memorable rendition of the self-referring pronoun in a poetic form. It is also probably the most readily cited (though seldom in its entirety) by educated Indonesians when asked about the meaning of this pronoun. Since its inclusion in the high-school literature syllabus in the 1960s, the poem has been a mainstay and has been instrumental in shaping an understanding of the pronoun as an expression of individualism and egotism. The poem is cited in full in Example (1).

(1) *Aku*, 'Me' (Chairil Anwar, March 1943; my translation)
1 *Kalau sampai waktu<u>ku</u>*[3]
2 *'<u>Ku</u> tak mau seorang 'kan merayu*
3 *Tidak juga kau*
4 *Tak perlu sedu sedan itu*
5 *<u>Aku</u> ini binatang jalang*
6 *Dari kumpulannya terbuang*
7 *Biar peluru menembus kulit<u>ku</u>*
8 *<u>Aku</u> tetap meradang menerjang*

9 *Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari*
10 *Berlari*
11 *Hingga hilang pedih peri*
12 *Dan aku akan lebih tidak perduli*
13 *Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi*

1 When my time comes
2 I want no one to sway me
3 Not even you
4 Spare all those cries
5 I am a wild beast
6 Driven from its herd
7 Though bullets may pierce my skin
8 I'll keep charging on
9 With wounds and pain I shall run,
10 Run
11 Until the pain dissipates
12 And I will care even less
13 I want to live another thousand years

According to Goenawan Mohamad (1995), as a title, *Aku* has a striking quality unsurpassed by any other in the history of contemporary Indonesian poetry. It startles its readers, snapping them away from the idea that *saya* is the only possible term of self-reference in public. Chairil's use of the pronoun, says Goenawan, evokes a sense of *menyamaratakan* 'equalizing', of putting everyone on the same footing, and of turning the linguistic representations of social hierarchy upside down (referring here to the hierarchy as measured by age, social status, and social distance). Tanner (1972: 130) in a study on Indonesian address terms argues that in Indonesian one has to consider the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of social variables when choosing a term. The vertical dimension relates to the respect–disrespect continuum, measured by age and social status (including marital status), while the horizontal relates to the formal–intimate continuum, as measured by the degree of familiarity, sex, ethnic, religious, and/or educational background.

Chairil's poem has indeed been read as a disregard for these societal distinctions, and as such, it has become an enduring example of the use of *aku* as an expression of individualism and egotism. High-school students are taught to interpret the poem along this line. Yet as competent speakers they are familiar with this pronoun from their own use with friends and from most works of contemporary literature and popular fiction. Why should Chairil's *Aku* be given this particular reading? Why does a term that is commonly identified with friendship and intimacy

invite an interpretation that is far removed from the sense of closeness and accessibility that such notions evoke? The answer is perhaps that the interpretation of a linguistically manifested personal identity by a public figure cannot be severed from public perception of that figure and what the public holds to be the norms.

The poem is an articulation of Chairil's personal identity, of the categorization of the self as distinct from the group — group here referring to the Indonesian society in general, or in particular, the Indonesian literary circle. It is an assertion of self-differentiation. The following lines are particularly illustrative:

(1)′
5 *Aku ini binatang jalang*
6 *Dari kumpulannya terbuang*

5 I am a wild beast
6 Driven from its herd

But if the poem is merely an expression of self-categorization, and if self-categorization is a common process, why has the poem invited a negative interpretation? According to Goenawan Mohamad (quoted in Keane 2003: 521), the reason is because the authoritarian regime in Indonesia headed by ex-president Suharto (1966–1998) created a climate in which individualism was made to be dangerous. Keane suggests that, although this may be true, it does not explain why *aku* is viewed negatively. He claims that the reason may lie in its association with some aspects of modernity. To Keane, *Aku* represents the modernist notion of personal autonomy, manifest in a sense of agency in relation to the language — a sense that one could shape it in the direction of one's wish. Thus the conscious choice of the term suggests a desire to break away from existing social relations and to claim a public persona that is distinct from "some presupposed prior self" (2003: 521).

Though it seems that Chairil's use of *aku* exemplifies a cutting loose of one's ties with social relations — for Chairil's prominence has been indeed built on his reputation as a poet who, by breaking poetic conventions at the time (see Jassin 1996), breathed a new life into contemporary Indonesian poetry — the association between the term and the modern idea of personal autonomy, while it may define his use, does not necessarily explain other uses, e.g., by close friends and celebrities. Surely the interpretation of *Aku* as being such is not purely tied to the linguistic manifestation of the modern self and its self-empowering ability to manipulate the language, but also as crucially, to the construction of Chairil's poet identity, which includes a disregard for poetic conventions

and a bohemian lifestyle (1996: 38–40; Raffel 1962: xiii–xxii), as well as to his audience's recognition that his use of the term in a public context is a divergence from the idealization of *aku* as being the term for intimates. Moreover, if indeed it could be argued that there is a "supposed prior self," how this self is constituted calls for a further explanation. Chairil's poem is undoubtedly an expression of his individual identity but not an individual severed from social relations as the idea of the autonomous self may imply. Rather, it is one who asserts a difference through a comparison with other members of his society.

In a sense, the poem is a form of self-disclosure, which is characteristic of intimacy, but it is a publicly expressed one that strongly amplifies a personal desire to not be associated with the group. This factor, coupled with Chairil's lifestyle already mentioned, and the norm which stipulates that *saya* is the appropriate term for public contexts, contribute to an interpretation that has prevailed to the present day. The fact that the poem is a mainstay in the literature syllabus indicates its acceptance as a statement of poetic difference — that is, difference in terms of theme and convention (as concerns diction and metrics) from the trend at the time, which idealized natural beauty and rhyme — but not necessarily an acceptance of Chairil's assertion of his personal self.

Thus the acceptance or rejection of a pronoun is determined by an interaction between the society's perception of the individual using the term — a perception based on their normative expectations of what constitutes the social category (category specifications) — and their recognition of the individual's divergence from such expectations. Public individuals receive greater scrutiny than private individuals partly because of the potential influence that they may have on other members of society. Linguistic choices made by such individuals may be viewed as having the potential not only to invite criticism but also be emulated by others. In the following I examine celebrities' use of *aku*, which, though similar to Chairil's in terms of its being a public expression of personal identity, has not invited the same interpretation. I argue that the difference in the reception of this usage is attributable to recent developments in Indonesian society, which includes the emergence of celebrities as a social group. The use and interpretation of the pronoun cannot be separated from these individuals as public figures who continually seek to build and maintain a fan base.

5. Celebrity as a modern construction

Studies on celebrities generally concur that "celebrity" is a modern construction. The category refers to well-known individuals who are products

of cultural and economic processes manifest in advertising, promotion, and publicity (Marshall 1997; Rojek 2001; Tolson 2001; Turner 2004). According to Marshall (1997: 43), "the essential nature of the celebrity is individuality, unique identity." The celebrity is an example of "hyperindividualism," characterized by "the intensification of the concerns of the personal and the psychologization of greater areas of life" (1997: 59). The construction of celebrity is formed by both the dominant culture and of the audiences. And indeed, it coincides and correlates with the formation of the audience as a social category (1997: 61).

Celebrity–audience relationship is one where the celebrities are "intimately" known by the wider public. Gossip about celebrities generally revolves around details of their personal lives, the purpose of which, according to Turner (2004: 107), is not to idealize or elevate them — for gossip features not only those spoken of with admiration but also with derision — but rather to "serve an assimilating and normalising function, providing a means of integrating the celebrity and the stories about them into one's everyday life." Thus media exposure provides an avenue for the audience to view celebrities as ordinary human beings like themselves and to imagine them as part of their extended families. But the view of being ordinary is not one that is projected only by the audience. As Tolson (2001) argues, some celebrities themselves work on projecting that image. Self-disclosure by celebrities often involves stories about their experiences in mundane ways, given extraordinary qualities by virtue of their fame.

The celebrity construction thus incorporates two important aspects: the amplification of individuality, personal attributes, and events, and the celebrity–audience relationship. It is within the concern of a celebrity to put to the fore a personal identity that marks them apart from other celebrities and enables them to be identified as a unique figure. *Aku* is an expression that highlights that individuality. Some celebrities amplify this aspect more than others, as evidenced by their choice of *aku*. By selecting this pronoun, they are able to create an impression of closeness and friendliness — one that is not solely aimed at the interviewer, for when celebrities talk, they are aware of the audience who will view the interview and that they are familiar to this public. Their speech is thus aimed also at the viewing audience whose presence is always assumed. One journalist suggested that the reason celebrities choose *aku* is because they are familiar with the journalists who interview them. However, when probed about her own recent telephone interview with a celebrity whom she had never met, this journalist admitted that the celebrity used *aku* throughout the interview while she herself used *saya*. Thus familiarity is not a necessary condition in the selection of the pronoun.

The presence of celebrities has been permeating various spheres of Indonesian society in recent years. Commercial television channels mount daily entertainment programs devoted to celebrity gossip. As media-savvy individuals, celebrities also played a significant role in the 2004 Indonesian presidential election campaign, both as candidates and candidate supporters. Political parties sought them for endorsement. They participated in debates and discussions, were involved in fundraising, and also stood as candidates (Lindsay 2005). Celebrities are not limited to entertainers such as actors and singers, but also religious leaders whose frequent appearances on television have afforded them popularity akin to that associated with entertainers. Indeed, many entertainers have also assumed the role of religious leaders and successfully diffused both roles. For celebrities, television has been an effective vehicle for gaining and maintaining popularity.

Curiously, celebrities' use of *aku* has been received with little interest and nonchalance. Unlike Chairil's poem, it has not invited any public criticism or debate. In casual conversation a person has described it as *sok dekat, sok teman* 'as if they're close to you, as if they're your friends'. Another speaker simply commented that *selebritis kan memang gitu, egonya gede* 'celebrities are just like that, they have big egos'. These comments in fact reveal an important point about celebrities' use of *aku*, namely, that it signals the desire to appear friendly while asserting their individuality. Worth mentioning, though, is that some informants pointed out with obvious disapproval a growing tendency among university students also to use *aku* when speaking to lecturers, which they considered plain rude and unacceptable. This disapproval seems to be motivated by the fact that the use contradicts the common expectation that in institutional contexts such as a university, in which the student–lecturer relation is asymmetrical, students are expected to assume their social rather than personal identity. *Aku* as an expression of the personal self is thus considered inappropriate. Yet the choice might also indicate the students' desire to assert their individuality. Celebrity–audience relationship, by contrast, does not imply such an asymmetrical relation.

6. Pronoun choice and variation

Of the 40 celebrities being examined, *aku* and *saya* are the most frequently chosen terms, as shown in Table 2. Due to space, only these pronouns are examined, terms under the category "Other" are not discussed.[4]

This table shows that almost the same number of speakers (with the difference of only three speakers) uses either *aku* or *saya* consistently,

Table 2. *The distribution of* aku *and* saya *in the interviews*

Choice of pronoun	Number of speakers
Aku	14 (35%)
Saya	17 (42.5%)
Aku and *saya*	3 (7.5%)
Other	6 (15%)
Total	40 (100%)

while three speakers use both pronouns within the same interview. Worth mentioning here is that age, which has been claimed to be one of the most important considerations in pronominal choice in Indonesian (Kaswanti Purwo 1984: 62; Aziz 2003), does not seem to be a determining factor here; both pronouns are employed by celebrities of various ages, from those in their teens to those in their late forties.

Examples of *aku* and *saya* are given in Examples (2) and (3), respectively. In Example (2), 20-year-old singer Agnes Monica, responding to a question about why she is still single despite no lack of admirers, is saying defensively that having a boyfriend is not her priority.

(2)

1 *Cuman maksudnya di sini adalah jangan*
2 → *.. jangan .. jangan mentang-mentang aku nggak punya pasangan,*
3 *terus jadi hal-hal yang jelek gitu loh,*
4 → *maksud aku gitu.*
5 *Jadi, ya .. banyak hal di dunia ini,*
6 → *di .. di hidup aku*
7 → *yang masih bisa aku kejar selain dari*
8 → *.. aku punya cowok .. gitu.*

1 What (I) mean here is don't[5]
2 → .. don't .. don't think that just because I (*aku*) don't have a partner,
3 then (I) am into bad things,
4 → that's what I (*aku*) mean.
5 So, there are many things in this world,
6 → in .. in my (*aku*) life
7 → that I (*aku*) can still attain other than
8 → .. me (*aku*) having a boyfriend .. right.

In Example (3), 27-year-old female singer Inul Daratista, who was catapulted into fame several years ago due to her provocative dance moves, is here defending herself from the accusation by some Muslim clerics that her dance moves are the cause of rapes.

(3)

1 *Sejak Adam dan Hawa itu sudah muncul*
2 *e. . homo,*
3 *udah muncul lesbian,*
4 *udah muncul pemerkosaan dan lain sebagainya.*
5 → *Apakah juga karena saya,*
6 *pada saat itu belum lahir kan.*
7 *Ya jangan disalahkan dong.*
8 → *Jangan . . jangan disalahkan saya sebagai kambing hitam.*

1 Since Adam and Eve there were
2 er . . homosexuals,
3 there were lesbians,
4 there were rapes and so on.
5 → Is it all because of me (*saya*),
6 (I) wasn't even born then, was I?
7 So don't blame (me), alright.
8 → Don't . . don't use me (*saya*) as a scapegoat.

One question that might be posed concerning the distribution of *aku* and *saya* in Table 2 is that, if celebrities are characterized by their individuality, should *aku* not be a preferred choice? Here it is to be borne in mind that "celebrity" as a social category is a recent phenomenon, and the recent public use of *aku* coincides with its emergence. The variation between speakers hence reflects this social change. That *aku* is employed by nearly as many speakers as *saya* in fact attests to its growing currency among the group's members, which marks a new, collective trend in the use of this pronoun.

Another question might arise regarding intraspeaker variation, for example, why speakers shift between the pronouns in the same interview, and how this variation relates to self-categorizations. The data suggest that this type of variation is motivated by different factors. Here I discuss three such factors, namely, a shift in topic, a sense of ambivalence or uncertainty of expression, and accommodation. The first type of shift is exemplified in Examples (4) and (5). In Example (4), recently divorced 23-year-old singer Enno Lerian uses *saya* when responding to a question about her singing career following the divorce. She then shifts to *aku* in Example (5) as she reflects on the personal nature of her latest album.

(4)

1 *Oh nggak ada perubahan di karir.*
2 → *Yang pasti kan emang sebenarnya karir saya emang di nyanyi.*
3 → *Saya pengen meneruskan karir saya di nyanyi,*

ya mungkin saatnya sekarang, kayak gitu.
Sekarang udah
e . . selain nyanyi bareng sama
e . . nyanyi-nyanyi sama feature-nya sama band-band,
→ *trus saya juga lagi nyiapin album, kayak gitu.*
Ya . . mudah-mudahan emang ini salah satu caranya supaya
. . supaya . . tetep eks-
. . maksudnya supaya
. . supaya nglatih manggung juga, kayak gitu.

Oh there hasn't been a career change.
→ You know that my (*saya*) actual career is in singing.
→ I (*saya*) want to continue my (*saya*) career in singing,
well maybe now is the time really.
(I) have
er . . beside singing with
er . . singing with some bands,
→ I (*saya*) am also preparing an album, right.
Well . . hopefully it is really one of the ways that
. . that . . I can cont-
. . (I) mean so that
. . so that (I) can also have some practice in going on stage, right.

(5)

Tema-tema yang diambil juga
e . . banyak yang seperti yang aku hadapin, kayak gitu.
Misalnya tentang anak,
aku juga masukin satu lagunya buat anak
. . tentang cinta, tentang hidup, kayak gitu.

The themes chosen are also
er . . many are based on what I (*aku*) have experienced, right.
For example about children,
I (*aku*) also included one song about children
. . about love, about life, right.

The shift in pronoun here is triggered by a shift in topic, from a professional to a personal one, and correlates with a shift in self-categorization, from a social ("me as a singer") to a personal identity ("me as a recently divorced, young mother"). The shift suggests that self-categorization is fluid, in that within the same speech situation a speaker may not embrace a single, stable identity.

The second type of shift is exemplified in Example (6). Here 27-year-old actor Donna Agnesia is expressing her hope that her relationship

with boyfriend Okan will last. Notice that three shifts occur; the first is from *saya* to *aku*, followed by a shift back to *saya*, and ends with a shift back to *aku*.

(6)

1 → *Ini laki-laki yang saya cari untuk menjadi pendamping hidup, gitu kan.*
2 *The right person gitu buat*
3 → *.. buat aku untuk*
4 *.. untuk saat ini deh,*
5 *mudah-mudahan sampai selamanya.*
6 *Tinggal cari aja,*
7 *the right person*
8 *and the right time-nya kapan.*
9 *Entar apalagi sudah .. sudah .. sudah*
10 *e .. usia, sudah merasa matang, mantep gitu kan.*
11 *Mau cari apa lagi, gitu kan,*
12 *cuma pengen cari orang yang bisa diajak berbagi dan sepertinya ya*
13 → *.. aku merasa saya sudah mendapatkan itu,*
14 *ya tinggal pasrahin aja.*
15 *Kita punya rencana,*
16 *mudah-mudahan Tuhan juga*
17 *e .. bisa apa ya .. bisa*
18 *.. kehendak Tuhan samalah dengan keinginan aku*
19 *dan rencana aku nantinya sama Okan gitu.*

1 → This is the man I (*saya*) want for my husband, right.
2 The right person for
3 → .. for me (*aku*) for
4 for the time being,
5 and hopefully forever.
6 You just have to find
7 the right person
8 and the right time for you.
9 And when you feel you have .. have .. have
10 .. reached the right age, and feel ready and sure, right?
11 What else do you want, right,
12 other than find a person you can share your life with and well
13 → I (*aku*) feel that I (*saya*) have found that,
14 and so just see what happens.
15 We have our plan,
16 and hopefully God can also
17 .. can also what is it ..

18 → .. that His will matches my (*aku*) will,
19 → and my (*aku*) plan to marry Okan, right.

It is tempting to dismiss these shifts simply as random because there does not seem to be a discernable factor triggering them. However, there is an alternative explanation that takes into account the position of the speaker as a celebrity, namely, that the variation suggests the speaker's ambivalence about her desire to appear friendly and intimate on the one hand, and her awareness of the norm on the other. The uncertainty as to which is to be made paramount results in both pronouns being employed with no particular pattern or distinction, resulting in the diffusion of personal and social self-categorizations.

The third type of shift indicates an uncertainty of expression that results from accommodation, as exemplified in Examples (7)–(9). Here, well-known entertainer Dorce is interviewing Joshua, one of the four child singers turned teenagers who are guests in the program. Throughout the earlier part of the interview, Dorce addresses Joshua by his name, and Joshua also self-refers using his name, which is a common practice in Indonesian adult–child interaction. The use of proper name by the adult and the child constitutes a recognition by both parties of their age difference. The other three teen guests in the show, however, consistently use *aku* despite being addressed with proper names. Toward the end of the show, Dorce shifts to *kamu* when addressing Joshua, as shown in Example (7) — *kamu* being a second-person equivalent of *aku*. Joshua responds by a momentary shift to *aku*, as in Example (8), followed by a return to proper name, as in Example (9).

(7) Dorce (D)
1 D: *Ok, kalo boleh liat di sini,*
2 → *Jo ini kayaknya penutup deh*
3 *dari penyanyi-penyanyi anak-anak ya kan,*
4 → *karena memang di era setelah Jo itu*
5 *nggak ada lagi*
6 → *.. penyanyi anak-anak yang bisa berkarya kayak kamu,*
7 *semua .. main filem, sinetron, trus*
8 *.. rekaman.*
9 → *Itu gimana kamu liatnya?*

1 D: If we have a look here,
2 → you (*Jo*) seem to be the last
3 of child singers, aren't you,
4 → because really in the period after you (*Jo*)
5 there has been no other

6 → .. child singers who can do what you (*kamu*) can,
7 everything .. from acting in films, TV serials, and
8 .. produce records.
9 → How do you (*kamu*) see this?

(8) Joshua (J)
1 → J: *Aku sangat berterimakasih pada Tuhan karena aku tuh*
2 *.. istilahnya bontotlah*
3 *.. paling terakhirlah yang .. yang*
4 → *.. pokoknya setelah aku tuh,*
5 *sayang banget acara anak-anak nggak ada di tivi,*
6 → *jadi kesempatan untuk penerus aku itu*
7 *.. Padahal kita seneng banget ya kalo ada penerus.*
8 *Tapi .. kesempatan untuk mereka tampil itu*
9 *.. dikit banget, dikit banget .. ya kan.*

1 → J: I am (*aku*) grateful to God because I am (*aku*)
2 .. if you like, the youngest
3 .. the last .. who .. who
4 → .. well after me (*aku*),
5 there has been unfortunately no children shows on television,
6 → so the opportunity for those following me
7 .. Actually we're very happy if there are those who will continue.
8 But .. the opportunity for them to appear (on television) is
9 .. very slim .. very slim .. right?

(9)
1 → J: *Walaupun sekarang Joshua sudah gede,*
2 → *tapi tetep aja Joshua di-*
3 *.. dibesarkan dari dunia entertainer anak kecil itu, gitu.*
4 → *Jadi .. Joshua merasa kasihan sama yang*
5 *.. penerus-penerus itu.*

1 → J: Although I am (*Joshua*) now older,
2 → it remains that I (*Joshua*) was
3 was raised in the children entertainment world, right
4 → So .. I (*Joshua*) feel sorry for those who
5 .. want to follow.

The shift from proper name to *aku* and back to proper name again suggests that self-categorizations are flexible. Here, shifts in categorization correlate with term shifts as induced by accommodation of the speech style of the present others (in this case, of the interviewer and other interviewees).

It is an interesting question whether the rise of *aku* among celebrities is attributable to modernity. If we consider that "celebrity" itself is a modern category, and the use of the pronoun coincides with the group's emergence, indeed it would seem to be the case. Yet we have seen that there is a great deal of variation between speakers. If we consider *aku* as being representative of modernity, how is *saya* to be accounted for? Would we want to say that those who consistently use it are "less modern"? And on what would that assumption be based? Also, how is intraspeaker variation to be explained? Might a speaker who shifts between *aku* and *saya* be considered as being inconsistent in their orientation to modernity? My view is that the rise of *aku* reflects the greater salience that is being afforded to individualism, which is one aspect of modernity (Taylor 2002). However, this does not mean that individualism is the only aspect that speakers assert when they refer to themselves. The use of *saya* attests to the fact that social identity is also of importance. The uncertainty of pronominal choice, as indicated in intraspeaker shifts, might be interpreted in two ways: (i) that it suggests a diffusion between personal and social identities, and/or (ii) that it indicates that a collective change in pronominal choice is underway and therefore the use of both pronouns is indicative of an intermediate stage (I am drawing a parallel here with a common process in grammaticalization). In either case, what motivates pronominal choice is more complex than simply modernity. And even if one pursues the argument for modernity, the nature of the relation between linguistic choice and modernity requires a further exposition.

7. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the untenability of the assumption that *aku* and *saya* map neatly onto two discrete sets of social variables. Viewing the pronouns in terms of flexible and context-dependent self-categorizations has enabled the contradiction between formality, neutrality, and intimacy to be reconciled and for different-speaker and same-speaker variation to be explicated. I have considered the use of *aku* as a strategy of asserting personal identity, but not as an autonomous self, for when celebrities speak and refer to themselves, they always have in mind the audience who, though not always co-present, are taken into consideration. Their use of *aku*, though divergent from the norm, is strategic: by choosing this term they are able to establish a public persona perceivable as friendly and accessible but at the same time assert their individuality. *Saya* is an expression of the social self-concept, the self that is part of a collective identity and idealized as the one preferred in public contexts.

The interpretation of *aku* as being offensive and individualistic thus becomes comprehensible only when one considers it against the societal view that asserting personal identity in public is undesirable.

It might be conjectured that the frequent exposure of celebrities' speech styles on television would have some impact on the wider community in that they might spur the public use of *aku* beyond the domain of visual media. Celebrities would then serve as a bridging context for the extension of this pronoun's use domain. In other words, they would provide the pragmatic condition that enables the spread of a new use that highlights the assertion of individual identity in public. However, this is only one among several possible scenarios. The indication that university students have begun to use the pronoun when speaking to lecturers seems to suggest that the development might be simultaneously occurring in several domains. Research is currently underway to investigate this institutional use. The questions remain in which other domains this is occurring, and whether the assertion of personal identity in domains where it was previously considered undesirable is attributable simply to modernity or are there other factors that might be at play.

This article has focused on *aku* and *saya* but has not dealt with other terms. Future research would need to illuminate not only the relations between the pronouns and these terms, but also how they all relate to self-categorizations. In addition, as some terms such as *gua*/*gue* are associated with different language varieties, issues of varieties would also require consideration.

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Notes

1. I am grateful to Lidia Tanaka for this information.
2. "Domain" is a theoretical construct referring to societally recognized functions (Fishman 1972: 51).
3. *-ku* is an encliticized form of *aku*, indicating possessor. *Aku* can also occur as a shortened free form *'ku* (e.g., in line 2), sometimes procliticized as *ku-* (e.g., line 7). *Aku* following a noun phrase also indicates possessor.
4. Under the category "Other" are proper names, *gue*, and variation between *aku* and these terms.
5. The subject "I" is often ellipsed in Indonesian clauses.

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