

**PORTMANTEAUS IN INDONESIA'S FAMOUS PEOPLE NAMES: IDENTITY AND POWER**

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**Abstract:**

Indonesia can be considered as the most productive country that creates and uses portmanteau. The blending habit is practised in the people's everyday life, and it covers almost all aspects, from the government programs up until people's names. Apart from simplification reason, there are some other senses that may come together with the portmanteau, among others: the memorability logic, the handy label concern, and the power it bears. This research was aimed at the usage of portmanteau by Indonesian famous people and the power gained through those names. It uses the blending and neologism theories for the portmanteau's formation and Fairclough's power representation and Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis theories. A qualitative research method was used in order to understand the problem deeply and thoroughly. The results are that the usage of portmanteau names give some advantages to the bearer including values, respects, and powers.

**Keyword:**

portmanteau, names, Indonesia famous people, identity, power



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**INTRODUCTION**

Ruben Onsu, an Indonesian TV presenter, filed a lawsuit to a businessman, Jessy Handalim, at Central Jakarta District Court on 25 September 2018. Onsu accused Handalim for the usage of his popular name – Benu – as the name of his restaurant. Apparently, Handalim has already got the brand certificate for the said brand on 7 June 2018<sup>1</sup>. Onsu, who then planned to open his own restaurant chain, supposedly wanted to use that name as a brand, but got disappointed when he found out about Handalim's action. He claimed that 'Benu' is his portmanteau, taken from the last syllables of the words in his name, Ruben Onsu. After several months, on 13 March 2019, Onsu claimed that the quarrel has been settled and called to have the right for the brand<sup>2</sup>.

Several years ago, a famous international celebrity couple, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie got married. This couple was quite a phenomenon since they always made a news, there were always something new to their activities, both personal and professional, things that the media would call a feat. They were so great as a team, a super couple, the media made a portmanteau – Brangelina – from Brad and Angelina.

But those cases are different in a sense that Onsu gave the portmanteau to himself, while those couples got the name from the media. The other difference is that Benu is a name from one person, while Brangelina is a two-people-name. The purpose is believed to be different too; while Onsu made

<sup>1</sup> Based on the World Intellectual Property Organization data (integrated with the Brand Directorate DJKI data), Jessy is the holder of the Benu Brand's name number IDM000622427 which was registered on 3 September 2015.

(<https://surabaya.bisnis.com/read/20181126/439/862982/sengketa-merek-ruben-kekeh-pemilik-benu>)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.msn.com/id-id/hiburan/celebrity/gugatan-ruben-onsu-soal-merek-benu-berakhir-secara-kekeluargaan/ar-BBUI1hb?li=AAfupOr>

'Bensu' for his own branding (self-branding), 'Brangelina' was a media creation<sup>3</sup>, something that was manufactured as a new level of celebrity, down at the office of People Magazine in 2005. Their 'merger' was taken as a new dawn that set a new standard, a new brand, and a joint venture that really set the course of pop culture in the world. When Brad and Angelina were finally divorced in 2016, their fans and the world mourned, and it practically ended a prominent pop culture. Of course there are some other super couples, such as 'Bennifer' (Ben Afflect-Jennifer Lopez) or 'Kimye' (Kim Kardashian and Kanye West), but somehow they resemble some different eras and also some different kind of connections with the fans.

The rapid progression of social media has a large contribution to the development of portmanteau, mostly because that massive loads of message traffic produced by their users (Cook, 2012). The social media has also changed the way people write their message, where they, "... use linguistic modes and features appropriate to their particular context which is similar to spoken and written language" (Mustafa, Kandasamy, & Yasin, 2015). People tend to spend a short amount of time in arranging their messages. This kind of habit, thus produces a 'new' kind of communication where the participants develop an original way to deliver and convey the messages. That kind of communication is also includes blending, neologism, and portmanteau.

Indonesia can be considered as a country that rich with portmanteau. The people are fond of making portmanteau for almost everything, from food to programs, from places to organization, up to people names. For example, they have 'sukro' (snd. *suuk di jero*/peanut inside a shell) for food, 'Bandros' (Bandung Tour on Bus) for program, 'Gatsu' (Gatot Subroto) or 'Benhil' (Bendungan Hilir) for places, 'Panwaslu' (Ind. *Panitia Pengawas Pemilu*/National Election Watch Committee) for organization, and 'Bensu' (Ruben Onsu) for name.

There are also some unique name's portmanteau that was created from a made-up name. This is possible because some – if not many – artists in Indonesia uses aliases or stage-names, for example: the late Julia Perez (Yuli Rahmawati) that used 'Jupe' as a portmanteau, Cici Panda (Veronica Felicia Kumala) or 'Cipan' and Fitri Tropica (Fitri Rakhmawati) or 'Fitrop'. Name portmanteau are also used by people from other fields, ranging from sports until politics. There are names like 'Djanur' (Djadjang Nurjaman/football coach), and 'Ropang' (Roni Pangemanan/former Football player/Commentator) for sportsmen, and 'Jokowi' (Joko Widodo), 'Aher' (Ahmad Heryawan), 'Setnov' (Setya Novanto) for politicians.

In politics, this trend continuous into the names of pair of candidates, from mayor until governor. There was RINDU for Ridwan Kamil and UU Rukmana (2018's candidates for West java's Governor), AMANAH for Tb. Hasanudin and Anton Charliyan Hasanah (also 2018's candidates for West java's Governor), BERSYUKUR for *Bersama Yulius Nawawi dan Kuryana Aziz* (Candidates for Ogan Komering Ulu, South Sumatera's Regent) and many more. Those portmanteaus are quite catchy and easy to remember because they actually have their own meaning: *rindu* means to yearn, *amanah* is trust, and *bersyukur* is (to be) grateful.

The names portmanteau of famous people in Indonesia are cosidered to be unique and seems to cross the ideal rules of the portmanteau making, but we think that they have something behind them. Those names would also involve another thing, like the brand value that would increase their popularity among the people. The increasement of popularity would also go in accordance with the escalation of their other interests, such as business(es), relations, and political status, thus power increasement. The researchers would like to explore the relation between the usage of portmanteau on the famous people's names and the power that they produce. We would also like to know how those famous people exploit that power for their own benefit.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive means that the researcher uses words to explain other words. Qualitative descriptive method was taken as the research method

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/09/brangelina-brad-pitt-angelina-jolie-divorce-vanessa-diaz-interview-celebrity-marriage-nicknames/501050/>

since we thought that it is suitable with the data and the purpose of the research. The research would take the data categorically and analyzed as detail as possible to reveal richer information to solve the research questions. The research also covers some information from literature study and other sources. The works of Fairclough and Wodak were used as a base point of view in language/power relations and critical discourse analysis.

There are several steps taken in doing this research, namely: 1) to collect Indonesian portmanteaus as many as possible; 2) to categorize those portmanteaus into some categories (e.g. programs, unit/organization, food, places, names); 3) to choose the name portmanteaus (famous people only); and 4) to analyze and to find out about those portmanteaus and power relation. The final result should show us the relation's strength which was based on the information analyzed. Since the qualitative research does not involve numbers, the strength of the power will only be known from the impact of the names portmanteaus given on the news and other media.

The data was collected mostly from the news and information on the internet and other sources which were then separated based on its categories. The researchers found 22 Famous Indonesian name portmanteaus which were consist of 17 celebrities, 3 politicians, and 2 sportsmen.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The idea behind the making of portmanteaus might be different, but somehow contains a similar red line, to simplify and make them easy to remember. Though the required pattern to make a portmanteau becomes loose and loose, some of the requirements are still obeyed and followed, such as: 1) Portmanteau needs to sound like a 'normal' word; 2) it should feel natural and easy to pronounce; 3) it should be 'ear-catching' and unique; and 4) it clearly resemblance the object it represents. (Bednárová-gibová & Studies, 2014) (Hosseinzadeh, 2014) (Deri & Knight, 2015)

Beliaeva (2014) says that since long time ago, the form of blending is unpredictable, but then she continued, that many recent studies of blends (Gries, 2004) shown that the structure of blends is much more predictable than it might seem at first sight. They argue that portmanteau can be formed by adding or blend 1<sup>st</sup> syllable and 1<sup>st</sup> syllable (ex. Fitrop), or 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable and 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable (ex. Bensu), or even, an alphabet from the 1<sup>st</sup> name with 1<sup>st</sup> syllable of the second name (ex. Aher/Ahmad Heryawan), or vice versa, and many more. Thus, she concluded that a blend is a lexical item formed by merging together two (or more) source forms, so that 1) only part of their orthographical and/or phonological material is preserved, and 2) they have not been formed by concatenation of morphs.

Beliaeva might have the same idea with Gries who talked about how phonological and structural differences creates a blend and explained it using semantics point of view, but at the end, Griece pointed out, along with some works (by Kubozono and Berg), that the famous portmanteau word, for example - 'brunch' - is a bad portmanteau. One might argue that 'brunch' is an ideal portmanteau; it blends perfectly, it is easy to pronounce, it blends like the most of other common portmanteaus, and it is also ear-catching, in a sense of easy to remember, but it actually is not. It only takes the first two alphabets of the first word (breakfast), and the four last alphabets from the second word (lunch). It is not equal. It is nor perfectly balance and fair (22,2% of the first word, and 80% of the second word). And yet, people still use it.

Below are some of portmanteaus with all of their forming words. All of the portmanteaus below are not blended perfectly (as we can se it at the 'explanation' section), but then somehow, just like 'brunch', people are still using them on a daily basis.

Table 1. Portmanteaus Origin and Explanation

PORTMANTEAU	ORIGIN	EXPLANATION	
		1 <sup>st</sup> word	2 <sup>nd</sup> word
Brunch	breakfast+lunch	1 <sup>st</sup> two alphabets	last three alphabets
Meld	melt+weld	1 <sup>st</sup> alphabet	last three alphabets
Blog	web+log	last alphabet	word
Carjack	car+hijack	word	last syllable

Cosplay	costume+player	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable
Cyborg	cybernetic+organism	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable+an alphabet after	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable+an alphabet after
Internet	interconnected+network	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable + 2 <sup>nd</sup> syllable	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable
Spork	spoon+fork	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> alphabets	3 last alphabets

The conclusion for those blending patterns is that if it comes to portmanteau, then there is no certain rules that can be applied. It can be considered as a convention of make-up word that is accepted by the people. It might also be considered as a form of blending with a more loosen-up rules, a neologism with a hint of coinage. Fradin (2013) said, *“However, as blends do not fit the regular patterns of word building morphology, they will not be detected by an automatic processing system.”*

We are not going to talk further about how a blend (portmanteau) is formed. We would like to focus our study on how a portmanteau name (and also a portmanteau pseudonym, in this matter) can give power to the holder. For those who work in the entertainment industries (actors, actresses, presenters, etc.), a pseudonym is taken as a common phenomena. A lot of Indonesian actresses are using pseudonyms for their careers, such as the 90s star-actress ‘Ayu Azhari’ who was actually born ‘Siti Khadijah Azhari’, the now politician, action actor ‘Dede Yusuf’ who was born ‘Yusuf Macan Effendi’, the late famous musician ‘Chrisye’ who was born ‘Krisman Rahardi’ to name a few. The reason behind those stage-names are vary, starting from the names are too long (some names may consist of 5 words)<sup>4</sup>, up until the security reason (Ross, 2014). But most of all, the pseudonyms are used to make them easy to remember and taken as one of their selling points.

Pseudonyms is the first step in making the ‘new’ identity. It is a concept that was created, conciously or not, forms another identity for the benefit of the bearer. In addition to self-concepts, people also know themselves in other ways: They have self-images and self-feelings, as well as images drawn from the other senses-a sense of what they sound like, what they feel like tactically, a sense of their bodies in motion. (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2018)

If we talk about names, we should start with the identity of the bearer. According to Howarth, (2011), identity is *“An individual’s sense of who they are in relation to others around them. This simultaneously incorporates a sense of belonging and shared knowledge and a sense of difference and individuality. Different forms of identity and so different types of social groups lead to different communicative genres.”* This theory is also supported by Oyserman et al., *“Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is”*. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become.

The way people communicate and present themselves are built by several key factors that includes gender, social class, religion, and race. the rapid development of the media and information also creates another supplement of the construction of the identity. The construction of identity may lead one into another identity as we can see in today’s social media. People seem quite comfortable with their ‘other’ identities. Security factor, self-achievement, and mischievous intentions are some of the things that lead them to use their other-created identities.

People can do many extraordinary things with language. From pragmatics point of view, language bears a ‘force’ that can do things beyond the meaning behind it. It has a form of energy that in its turn, forms into a power that enrich those who have it. The power may take some forms, such as the expertise, reward, legitimate, referent, coercive, and charisma powers, but the final goal is clear: to enhance people’s quality of life. Zhang, Wu, & Zhang, (2013) mentioned that, *“... the language is alive, and under some specific contexts, language can stimulate unlimited ‘energy’. With this powerful language vitality, new words have constantly emerged, and increasingly enriched people’s life.”*

Name and/or pseudonym portmanteau, without a doubt has a strong relationship to the bearer’s charisma. It strengthen the identity of the person, it gives a confident and spirit, and in a larger

<sup>4</sup> <https://ter-paling.blogspot.com/2012/02/100-nama-asli-artis-indonesia-ternyata.html>

sense, might present a new identity that adds a new meaning to the real personality. Personal names, aliases, or stage names can be approached from a perception or psychological point of views. *Names are an important part of an individual's language and personal vocabulary, and as such of that individual's own self.* (Helleland, 2012)

There is another purpose that a name portmanteau can give, an identity, as Helleland said that, "... *there is an intimate relationship between a person's self and her or his name, and other names to which the person may feel attached, ...*". But identity also becomes more and more valuable in this internet era. The openness of the media can become a tool for somebody to gain as much of information of a person. At social media, accountability is more than an avenue for punishment; accountability is about creating the social context in which people can negotiate the social conditions of appropriate behavior (Boyd, 2012). For famous people, this is where portmanteau may come in handy. A portmanteau can cover their real identity or at least mislead those information seekers.

There are some creativity processes behind those pseudonyms and/or portmanteaus. One might relate it to the performance on the stage such as Zaskia 'Gotik', in which a blending from '*goyang itik*' referring to her dancing style, another might relate it to the other famous person like the magician (now also a presenter) 'Deddy Corbusier' which was taken from a famous Swiss-French architect, *Le Corbusier*, or one might takes it from their origin, like the singer 'Evie Tamala' (born Cucu Suryaningsih), in which the word '*Tamala*' is an abbreviation from her origin, 'Tasikmalaya', West Java. Thus, those creative people were doing fact-making in order to create a more reliable fact-to-believe, and generally, once they use their pseudonyms, those names stick to their personality and somehow become a fact which people (read: their fans) believe to be their true names.

For famous people, it boost their '*recognizability*'<sup>5</sup> to the public, and thus increase their popularity. Fitri Rakhmawati, for example, after she uses her stage name – Fitri Tropika – she then also goes with a portmanteau, 'Fitrop', a blending of that stage name of hers, in which she even uses it as her Instagram address. And the people seems to like it. Although she seems not to cover up her real name, she would still be called, said, and written down as both Fitrop and Fitri Tropika by the people. The word 'Fitrop' comes up as many as 'Fitri Tropika' if we search it on Google. We might then argue that in a sense of popularity, Fitri Tropika or Fitrop is more famous than Fitri Rakhmawati, her real name.

The story of Ruben Onsu on the first paragraph is also a good example on how the name portmanteau can be so powerful. Onsu even has to involve a court just to have the right to 'Bensu', a portmanteau – that he claimed – to be a blending form of his name<sup>6</sup>. A well-known portmanteau can be really an advantage for the person who has it. It can be used as a brand for businesses (just like Onsu once was), a career booster, a mean to 'touch' new fans and public, and a self-advertisement. It was revealed that the real reason Onsu accused Handalim was that Onsu wanted to register his own restaurant chain that includes: Bensu, Bensu Sosis, Bensu Bakso, Bensu Nugget, Geprek Bensu, Bensu Otak-otak, dan Bensu Drink + Paintings. Onsu realizes the power of that name.

The President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo is also using name's portmanteau, Jokowi. It is actually not a campaign material since the name was coined by a French businessman back in the 90s, when he was still in a furniture business. The Frenchman, Bernard Chane, was confused by so many 'Joko' that he knows, thus decided to call his business partner 'Jokowi'<sup>7</sup>. Turns out that the portmanteau gives a fortune for his career, not only as a businessman, but also as a politician. The name was used in his campaign as the Mayor of Solo, Central Java back in 2004. He won the election and led the city for 7 years (2005-2012). He then asked to run for Jakarta's Governor in 2012 and won. After only led the capital city for 2 years, he was appointed to run for the president candidacy in 2014. He won.

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<sup>5</sup> recognize-ability: the ability to be recognized; a portmanteau coined by the writers (?)

<sup>6</sup> In which, in Handalim's claim, 'Bensu' means '*Bengkel Susu*', a Milk Garage.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20190414173655-4-66633/ternyata-begini-asal-mula-panggilan-jokowi>

His portmanteau is not only unique and easy to pronounce, but also sticks around the people's head. The name was used by some people to increase their business income. One coffee place in Balige, Toba Samosir, North Sumatra, 'Warung Kopi Partungkoan' unofficially changed its name into 'Jokowi Cafe' after the president visited it<sup>8</sup>. The number of customers are increasing significantly since then. There are also 'Jokowi fishing', 'Jokowi Restaurant', and 'Bakso Jokowi' to name a few. Although those names have no relation to the president personally, the owners took the advantages that come with the name.

From sport area, there is 'Coach Djanur', a former Persib Bandung's head coach who led the football team achieve the 2014 Indonesian League Championship. The word 'djanur' (old Ind. spelling, now 'janur') means 'young coconut leaves', the one that still has yellowish-green color and has not fully spread. 'Janur' also understood as a traditional ceremonial art (marriage sign post, traditional presentation, etc.) which its main part is from young coconut leaves. The name's portmanteau is taken by the people as a sign of hope, and a kind of premonition that the man was merely a representation of a new spirit that is about to spring and gives many advantages for the people. That pseudonym portmanteau contributed to the rise of the team and the popularity of the coach.

Those portmanteaus for once become a representation of the people with those names. They serve to be an interpretation of how the name bearers of the reflection and constitution of reality. Those names bear the power. The relation of the name and power should be taken as an active and constitutive practice, and cannot be taken as a neutral relation; there are always something to gain. *Representation is a consciously constructed image, formed to suit society's social and political purposes.* (Helander, 2018)

Name's portmanteau connects the owner of the name with the people surround him. The larger the scope, the larger the power it can produce. There are some factors such as gender, ethnicity and social classes in the society that can make the power be produced and reproduced for the benefit of the bearer. The media or people with power and identity are in an excellent position to influence people's knowledge formation (Dijk, 2004).

For artists, their name portmanteaus may lead to give the assumption of the extra skills and knowledge of arts and the media environment. As if, for example, all of the artists' actions – as long as they are concerning art – should be considered as true and artistic, because of their title. These assumptions then lead to the fact the their fans would approve and agree to the artists' assets and privileges. That would be called an ideology (Fairclough, 2001).

Ideology has a close association with power based on the social relation and distance. The exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language. (Fairclough, 2001) (Howarth, 2016). But the relative positive or negative qualities of portrayals do not exist within texts themselves, but rather the social hierarchies, disparities, and power relation to which they refer and support (Shaw, 2010), thus we should be agree with (Wodak, 2014) that claims that language and language choice are thus strongly influenced by ideology.

The name and/or pseudonym portmanteau will boost the person's personal image in which in its turn will broaden his/her social relation. The broader the relation, the bigger the influence he/she can make because of the power that comes with it. The power will then help the person to shape his/her own ideology, which in turn can also influence the people around, especially the fans.

The power the of course has a very close relation with the media. Fairclough mention that producers (of the media) exercise power over consumers in that they have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented, and (as we have seen) even the subject positions of their audiences. This power is not restricted to the influence of the media on their audiences, but also involves the role of the media within the broader framework of the social, cultural, political, or economic power structures of society (Dijk, 2004). Thus, the name/pseudonym and/or portmanteau create power and with the help of the media become ideology which then influence the people in general.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tagar.id/sejak-dikunjungi-jokowi-warung-ini-dikenal-sebagai-warung-kopi-jokowi>

## CONCLUSIONS

Name or pseudonym portmanteau is not only giving advantages to the bearer in the forms of value, respect, and popularity, but also holding a kind of power. The power gives the bearer a different social status and position, that makes him/her has some advantages that can improve both of their professional and personal lives (ex. business, relations, and politics). The power will also shape a kind of 'new' identity that will not cancel the 'old' one, but in fact, goes along and add its quality. This 'new' identity will then cover the 'old' one and becomes the 'real' identity used by the bearer. Ideology associates closely with power because of the significance agreement in one particular society and they are used as a tool for constituting the social relations and the gap of power.

We realize that there are a large area that has not been covered in this research, and thus we encourage other researchers to make researches about this kind of relation, for example, the relation between the name abbreviation and the power, such as: SBY (for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono), BP (Bambang Pamungkas), and DP (Dewi Perssik).

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