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Sementara and the Flexible and Strategic Cultural Notion of Temporariness in Bahasa Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In Bahasa Indonesia, the term *sementara* is often translated as temporary, provisional, or transient, yet its meaning dynamically shifts depending on context rather than adhering to a fixed grammatical category. Beyond its role as a conjunctive particle or noun, *sementara* functions as a strategic linguistic tool, allowing speakers to navigate fluid social and pragmatic spaces. This paper explores how *sementara* enables the creation of temporary spaces that facilitate agency, circumventing rigid societal expectations and constraints. Rather than serving merely as a rhetorical device, *sementara* is employed functionally and opportunistically, allowing users to manipulate events and negotiate risks in daily discourse. Through these strategies, speakers maintain social equilibrium while innovating within restrictive environments. Adopting a dual theoretical-practical approach, this study integrates linguistic theory with discourse analysis of written and oral samples to examine how *sementara* is articulated in real-world interactions. By positioning *sementara* within broader frameworks of resilience and adaptability in Southeast Asian linguistic and cultural practices, this research highlights its role in shaping social interactions. The study concludes that *sementara* is not merely a descriptor of impermanence but a dynamic mechanism for negotiating change, fostering innovation, and accessing opportunities that might otherwise remain restricted. This article underscores the term's significance as both a linguistic and cultural tool that reflects and reinforces adaptability in response to external challenges.

Keywords: Bahasa Indonesia; Provisionality; Sementara; Temporariness

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1. Introduction

The Indonesian term *sementara* plays a vital role in the linguistic and cultural framework of Bahasa Indonesia. Commonly translated as “temporary,” “provisional,” or “ephemeral,” *sementara* captures a range of meanings that reflect its semantic and grammatical versatility^[1, 2]. It can function as a noun to signify impermanence or as a conjunctive particle to denote simultaneity, such as “while” or “during.” This adaptability allows *sementara* to mediate temporal and relational nuances, making it an essential tool for navigating the complexities of everyday life in Indonesia.

Despite its significance, *sementara* has received limited scholarly attention as an independent subject of study. Existing research often groups it within broader discussions of conjunctions or focuses primarily on its grammatical categorization, leaving gaps in understanding its distinctive contributions to Indonesian discourse^[3, 4]. Unlike previous research that largely classifies *sementara* as a temporal marker or a rhetorical device, this study highlights its role as a strategic mechanism for mediating actions, navigating constraints, and circumventing fixed societal roles^[3, 4]. By adopting a dual theoretical-practical approach, this research integrates linguistic theory with discourse analysis of both written and spoken data^[5] to demonstrate how *sementara* functions as a social and cultural tool that enables individuals to adapt to circumstances and manage the challenges of everyday life.

The study also positions *sementara* within the broader concept of provisionality, a fluid and ambiguous construct often defined as “serving for the time being”^[6] or “arranged or existing for the present, possibly to be changed later”^[7]. Much like *sementara*, provisionality embodies a transient quality that is intentionally envisioned as temporary, adaptable, and open to change. It serves not only as a linguistic structure but also as a social strategy that individuals employ to create space for flexibility and resilience.

Although *sementara* is deeply embedded in Indonesian linguistic and cultural contexts, its strategic and pragmatic functions share similarities with words in other languages. One compelling parallel exists with *ahorita* in Mexican Spanish, a diminutive form of *ahora* (“now”) that has evolved to express a wide spectrum of temporal meanings – from “right now”^[8] “soon” to “eventually,” or even “never,” depending on the context. Much like *sementara*, *ahorita* allows speakers to manage expectations, create ambiguity, and tactfully

delay action without outright refusal. In social interactions, it serves as a buffer that acknowledges a request while postponing commitment. This linguistic mechanism is particularly valuable in cultures that prioritize social harmony and indirect communication, much like Indonesia and Mexico.

By comparing *sementara* with *ahorita*, this study highlights how different languages develop strategic linguistic mechanisms that allow speakers to navigate uncertainty, delay action without repercussions, and maintain flexibility in commitments. These linguistic strategies suggest broader cross-linguistic patterns in which cultures with similar social dynamics develop comparable ways of using language to regulate social interaction and time-based commitments.

2. Materials and Methods

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the word *sementara* and its role in producing meaning across various discourses by examining both theoretical and practical perspectives. The objective is to explore the contexts and conditions shaping the use of *sementara* and the intentions behind its articulation in both written and oral communication.

Conducted between June–July 2024 and February 2025, the study involved 40 respondents from diverse backgrounds, including university professors, students, and office workers, all residing in Jakarta and Surabaya. To achieve a well-rounded analysis, the research employed a combination of theoretical review, practical investigation, and written data analysis.

The theoretical component involved a review of existing literature on conjunctions in both Indonesian and English^[8, 9], with a focus on definitions and uses of *sementara* and related conjunctions in Indonesian. This analysis provided a foundational understanding of the linguistic framework and semantic range of *sementara*, offering insights into how the word operates within various grammatical contexts.

The practical investigation engaged respondents through structured interviews designed to evaluate their comprehension of *sementara*, its synonyms, and their ability to construct sentences using the term. Responses were recorded using a mobile application and later transcribed orthographically for detailed analysis. This approach enabled an empirical exploration of *sementara*’s usage in everyday communi-

cation, shedding light on its practical applications.

Additionally, written samples were collected from social media platforms, including posts containing personal messages (e.g., statuses or updates) and public information (e.g., announcements or news). These texts were analyzed to understand how users conveyed nuanced meanings through *sementara* and interacted with others in comment sections. The data included posts from two social media influencers, young professionals, and university students. Patterns in the usage of *sementara* across different contexts and user groups were categorized and analyzed for further insights.

Strict ethical guidelines were followed for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and their anonymity was preserved throughout the research process. These measures ensured the integrity and ethical compliance of the study. All materials, data, and protocols will be made available to readers, with any restrictions disclosed, to maintain transparency and accessibility.

This integrated approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of *sementara* as a dynamic linguistic element and highlighted its multifaceted role in shaping communication across diverse contexts.

2.1. Exploring the Linguistic and Semantic Properties of Sementara

This study builds on the methodological framework for understanding *sementara* by delving into its grammatical and semantic properties^[10]. The aim is to demonstrate how practical and theoretical insights derived from collected data highlight the linguistic versatility of *sementara* in real-life contexts. This integrated approach bridges its academic and practical significance, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of its role as both a linguistic element and a reflection of broader social interactions.

In linguistic studies, the analysis of *sementara* is often approached through its classification within word classes, a fundamental concept in grammatical systems. Word classes, or parts of speech, are determined by a word's form, function, and meaning, facilitating clear and effective communication. According to^[11], parts of speech represent groups of words sharing similar formal behaviours, although these behaviours can vary across languages. Indonesian words have been categorized into thirteen classes and, alternatively,

into fifteen classes^[5]. A simplified system in Indonesian Grammar^[6] identifies seven categories, including verbs, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, and particles.

The Great Indonesian Language Dictionary^[7] categorizes *sementara* as a particle—a word type that typically cannot be inflected or derived and conveys grammatical rather than lexical meaning^[12]. According to^[7], *sementara* carries four primary meanings: (1) “while” or “during,” (2) “at that time,” (3) “temporarily” or “not forever,” and (4) “some of them.” These nuanced meanings illustrate the word's adaptability and contextual relevance.

2.2. Grammatical Behaviour of Sementara

Sementara exhibits remarkable grammatical flexibility, fulfilling various roles depending on context. One of its primary functions is as a conjunctive particle denoting simultaneity, connecting events that occur at the same time^[11]. For instance, the sentences *Lalu saya menangis, dan memegang tangannya, sementara kereta api telah bergerak maju* (Then I cried and held her hand, while the train moved forward) and *Ratri menggigit bibir, sementara sang suami berpikir keras* (Ratri bit her lip, while her husband was deep in thought) illustrate its use in coordinating simultaneous actions involving different actors.

In addition to simultaneity, *sementara* conveys meanings like “meanwhile” or “at that time,” emphasizing either temporal relations or contrasting ideas. Examples include *Batian terkekeh melihat wajah Alona yang berubah galak. Sementara, Alona hanya menatap lelaki di sampingnya* (Batian giggled at Alona's stern expression. Meanwhile, Alona stared at the man beside her) and *Belum diketahui penyebab kebakaran, sementara kerugian ditaksir miliaran rupiah* (The cause of the fire is unknown, while the loss is estimated to reach billions of rupiah). Here, *sementara* functions as a coordinative conjunction^[9], linking equal sentence units.

Sementara also occasionally functions as a quantifier, expressing an indefinite amount. For example, *Sementara titik-titik pasar tumpah yang ikut andil dalam kemacetan akan dibuatkan rekayasa lalu lintasnya* (Some unorganized markets causing traffic jams will have traffic rerouted) and *Sementara proyeksi BI soal pertumbuhan ekonomi sebesar 5,2%–5,6%* (While Bank Indonesia's projection for economic growth is 5.2%–5.6%). These examples highlight its versatility in adapting to different grammatical roles.

2.3. Word-Class Ambiguity

Although *sementara* is predominantly categorized as a conjunction, it occasionally functions as a noun when used to mean “temporarily” or “not forever.”^[12] noted that nouns typically serve as subjects or objects of clauses and are often paired with modifiers like *bukan* (“not”). Interestingly, *sementara* can also occur with *tidak* (“no”), as in *tidak sementara* (“not temporary”). For example, in *Ini data sementara yang kami miliki* (This is the temporary data we have), *sementara* operates with both noun and conjunction^[8] characteristics, reflecting its unique grammatical behaviour.

2.4. Broader Implications

The multifaceted grammatical and semantic roles of *sementara* underscore its richness and adaptability in Indonesian grammar. As a particle, conjunction^[13, 14], quantifier, and occasionally a noun, *sementara* demonstrates its capacity to express simultaneity, temporal relations, contrariness, and quantification. These attributes align with broader discussions of conjunctions in linguistics. Myers-Scotton^[15] observed the tendency among Indonesian speakers to rely on simple, repetitive words, often without distinguishing between formal and informal contexts. This habit underscores the importance of studying words like *sementara*, which encapsulates linguistic depth and flexibility.

Authors have linked the semantics of temporal and spatial relationships to philosophical concepts such as Zeno’s paradox, emphasizing the complexities of continuous change^[16]. Similarly, highlighted conjunctions as essential tools for constructing coherent communication, while proposed theories that emphasize both inherent characteristics and contextual meanings of words like *sementara*.

Other studies^[5–7] further illustrate the importance of conjunctions^[13] in narrative structure, textual cohesion, and

cross-linguistic comparisons. These findings highlight *sementara* as not only a linguistic tool but also a reflection of broader social and cultural dynamics in Indonesian discourse^[14].

3. Results

This section examines how Indonesian speakers understand and use the word *sementara* in everyday communication. As outlined in the introduction, this study is supported by data collected through interviews with 40 informants. These interviews aimed to explore the informants’ comprehension of the word *sementara*, including its meaning, synonyms, and usage in sentence construction.

Each respondent was asked three basic questions about *sementara*:

1. Their understanding of its meaning.
2. Their knowledge of its synonyms.
3. Their ability to construct sentences using the word.

The responses were recorded using a mobile application and later transcribed orthographically for analysis. The full transcription is available at the end of this essay.

The informants provided a range of answers to the questions, reflecting diverse interpretations of the word *sementara* and its synonyms. Overall, most responses related the meaning of *sementara* to concepts of time or duration, often emphasizing its association with something temporary, brief, or short-lived. Detailed insights are shown in **Table 1** below, followed by **Figure 1** which provides the distribution of interpretation/usage of *sementara*. Afterwards, **Table 2** provides details of various synonyms of *sementara*, followed by **Figure 2** which details the synonym/usage frequency of *sementara*. Lastly, **Table 3** elaborates examples provided by respondents using the word *sementara*, followed by **Figure 3** that shows the frequency distribution of *sementara* usage categories.

Table 1. Interpretation of the Word *Sementara*.

Respondent Number	Interpretation of <i>Sementara</i>
1	To wait or for a short while
2	Having the quality of being temporary
3	To postpone; related to a time interval
4	Occurring within a specific time span
5	The duration an object/event is usable
6	A short period of time
7	An event characterized by a brief duration

Table 1. *Cont.*

Respondent Number	Interpretation of Sementara
8	Indicating a temporal reference
9	At a certain time; for some time
10	For a moment
11	Temporarily occurring; with a sequel expected
12	Not permanent; within a defined time frame
13	Temporary; subject to a time limit
14	For a short time; not permanent
15	Something that does not last indefinitely
16	Later
17	All this time
18	To wait for a certain period
19	Chosen temporarily for now
20	Wait for a moment
21	Not permanent; subject to a time frame
22	Something that may be replaced in the future
23	Brief; not permanent
24	Temporary; applicable only at that time
25	Impermanent; for a short duration
26	Only for this time
27	To compare
28	For a brief period
29	To indicate two simultaneous actions
30	To describes a temporary situation
31	To contrast two actions happening at the same time
32	To connect two independent actions occurring at the same time
33	To introduce a shift in focus to another topic
34	To indicate an action taking place during another ongoing condition
35	To indicate that a status is not permanent
36	Used as a transition phrase
37	To express a temporary arrangement
38	To connect simultaneous actions
39	To introduce a new but related topic
40	To describe an action occurring while waiting

Table 2. Synonyms for Sementara.

Respondent Number	Synonym for Sementara
1	Momentary
2	At the time when
3	Later
4	Temporary; not lasting long
5	A little while; impermanent
6	Sometimes
7	Awhile
8	For a while
9	At the time when
10	Not fixed
11	Only one time
12	Substitute
13	Not eternal; not forever
14	Short while
15	Brief
16	Not long
17	(No response provided)

Table 2. Cont.

Respondent Number	Synonym for Sementara
18	During
19	A few
20	Let's do this one first for now
21	Previously
22	Not long
23	(Recording was stopped on request)
24	Instant
25	This time
26	Not permanent
27	Only now
28	While
29	Meanwhile
30	Temporarily
31	Meanwhile
32	Temporary
33	Meanwhile
34	At the same time
35	Temporary
36	Meanwhile
37	Tentative
38	Meanwhile
39	Temporary
40	Provisional

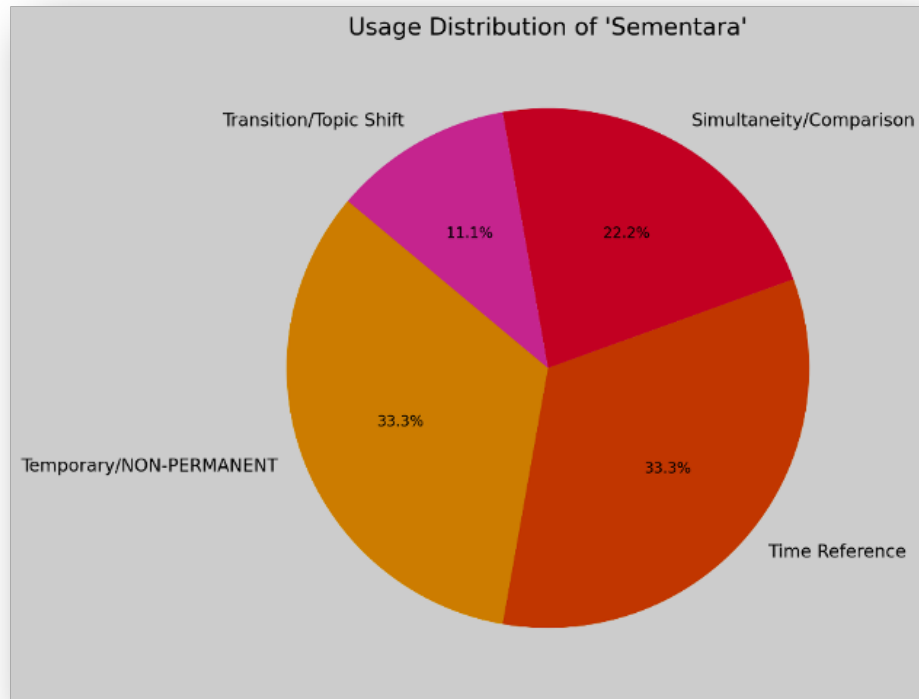


Figure 1. Interpretation/usage of sementara.

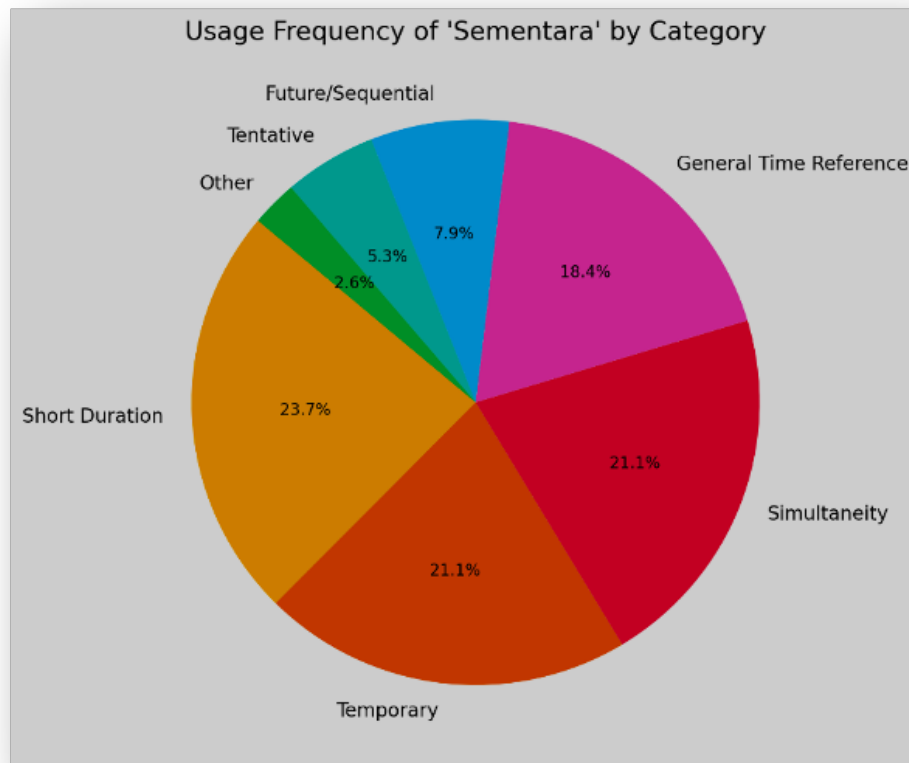


Figure 2. Synonym/usage frequency of sementara.

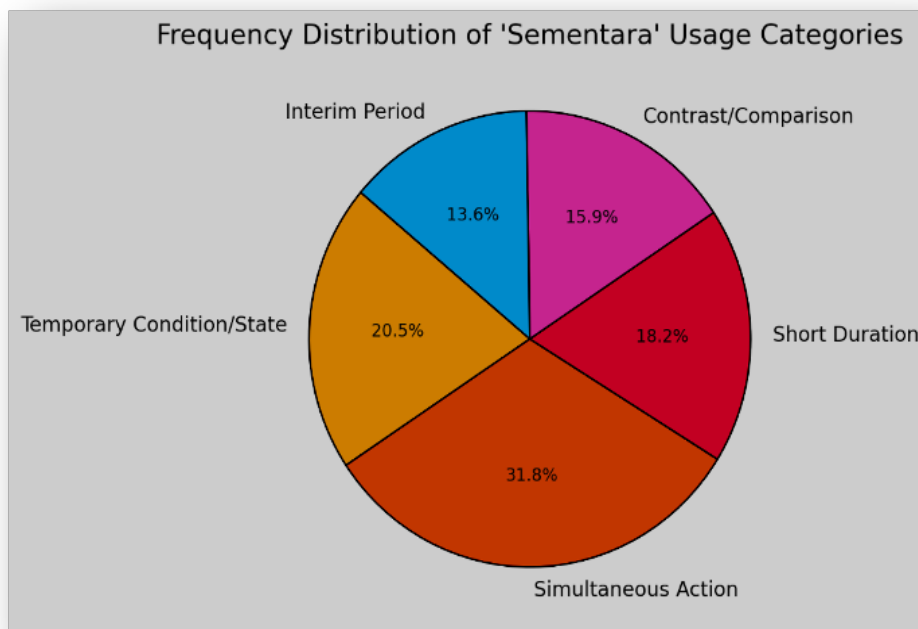


Figure 3. Usage categories of sementara.

Table 3. Examples Provided by Respondents Using the Word Sementara.

Respondent Number	Sentence Example
1	I cook for a while , then I study.
2	While waiting for Ani, I play the guitar.
3	Please wait here for a while .
4	My house is temporarily uninhabitable.
5	I want to go on Sunday, while my dad does not.
6	For now , I am not working yet.
7	Ridho is ill, while Dudi is dancing.
8	I am inside this room alone, while they are outside together.
9	While she is asking me a question, I am listening to music.
10	Mother goes to the market, while I stay at home.
11	My father works temporarily at my friend's parents' company while waiting for another job.
12	I cannot join this Bahasa Indonesia class. Meanwhile , I will go shopping today.
13	This policy is temporary . When it gains support, it will be changed.
14	I am working on my Bahasa Indonesia assignment, while my friend is playing.
15	While preparing tools for my assignment, I will begin working on it.
16	While my mother goes shopping, I clean the bathroom.
17	In the meantime , she sits on a chair.
18	For now , today's lecture ends here.
19	For a while , use what's available. When you can afford a new one, replace it.
20	Doni left his motorcycle with my sister temporarily . Once he finishes his errands, he will pick it up.
21	(No sentence; the informant requested to stop).
22	While I am sitting here, a lecturer is teaching in the next room.
23	In the meantime , I am sitting in room 501.
24	I want to work for a company only for a limited time .
25	Meanwhile , I am being interviewed.
26	I am washing the clothes while my little sibling is playing soccer.
27	Please wait for a moment while we verify the data from Mr. Jonathan.
28	I am only going out for a short time .
29	While Indonesia's National Football Team has only won three titles, Vietnam has already won five times.
30	For the time being , the bookstore is closed because new book stock is not yet available.
31	Meanwhile , group B conducted experiments using ornamental plants.
32	Siska is playing on her phone, meanwhile Ririn is washing clothes.
33	Sulaiman is busy cleaning the yard, while his younger sibling is running around with their cat.
34	Meanwhile , the Chairman of the Company said...
35	By its temporary nature, we do not aim to create something that will exist longer than it should.
36	The word 'di' as a prefix is written together, while as a preposition it is written separately.
37	I will stay in Jakarta for a while before moving to Surabaya.
38	You can wait in the waiting room while I talk to the doctor.
39	This job is only temporary , but I hope it can become permanent.
40	The government is providing temporary aid for the disaster victims.

Exploring the Meaning of Sementara: Interviews with Respondents

Interview 1. Lanny (Lecturer, 43 years old)

Interviewer: Erni

Erni: Ms. Lanny, I'd like to ask you about the meaning of the word sementara.

Lanny: Ummm... it means... only for a short time, ee... not permanent...

Erni: Uh-huh... uh-huh...

Lanny: And brief.

Erni: Brief. Okay. If I ask you to provide a synonym for the word sementara, what comes to mind?

Lanny: Brief.

Erni: Brief, is that right?

Erni: Okay, one last request. Could you create a sentence using the word sementara?

Lanny: Eee... sementara... sementara... Why is it that I only recall its use as a conjunction? Sementara... Can you pause for a moment, please? (The respondent requested some time.)

Erni: Alright, Ms. Lanny, please try creating a sentence using the word sementara.

Lanny: This policy is temporary. Once there is enough support, the policy will be revised.

Erni: Got it. Is that all?

Lanny: Yes, that's all.

End of Transcription

Interview 2. Daniel (University Student, 20 Years Old)

Interviewer: Erni

Erni: So, Daniel, I have a favour to ask. Could you please explain the meaning of the word *sementara*?
Daniel: The meaning?
Erni: Uh huh.
Daniel: I think it signifies the period during which an event or object can be used or is applicable—essentially, its duration.
Erni: Okay, so it relates to how long something can be used or lasts.
Daniel: Yes, it implies that it cannot be used indefinitely.
Erni: The second question: what do you think is the synonym for the word *sementara*?
Daniel: Brief.
Erni: Brief. Anything else?
Daniel: Impermanent.
Erni: Impermanent. Got it. Now, the last question: can you make a sentence using the word *sementara*?
Daniel: Umm... Maybe, “Right now, my mobile phone cannot be used for a while.”
Erni: Okay, anything else?
Daniel: Umm... “My house can’t be occupied temporarily.”
Erni: Great, thank you for your time, Mas Daniel.
Daniel: You’re welcome.

Interview 3. Ridho (Employee, 25 Years Old)

Interviewer: Erni

Erni: Alright, Ridho, thank you for meeting with me. Can I ask you to explain the meaning of the word *sementara*?
Ridho: *Sementara* is usually interpreted as “briefly” or “not forever.”
Erni: Not forever. Is there any other meaning?
Ridho: Another meaning of *sementara* is “not long.”
Erni: Not long?
Ridho: Yes, we can first say it means “not long” and then “very briefly.”
Erni: Very briefly.
Ridho: Yes, approximately that’s it.
Erni: Alright. Now, if I ask you, what would you say is a synonym for *sementara*?
Ridho: *Sementara* could mean “for just a moment.”
Erni: For just a moment. Okay. Finally, can you make a sentence using the word *sementara*?
Ridho: While I am sitting here, a lecturer is teaching in the room next door.
Erni: Great. Thank you, Ridho.
Ridho: You’re welcome.

4. Discussion

The findings from this study provide a nuanced understanding of the word *sementara* and its multifaceted roles within Indonesian grammar. By integrating theoretical and practical perspectives, the study offers insight into how *sementara* functions both as a linguistic tool and as a reflection of broader social dynamics. These findings align with and expand upon previous studies, offering both confirmation of established linguistic frameworks and new avenues for exploration.

The data reveal that most respondents interpret *sementara* as referring to something brief, temporary, or impermanent, consistent with its primary lexical meanings as outlined

in^[1]. However, some responses diverged significantly from these norms, associating *sementara* with meanings like “to postpone,” “to compare,” or “that which has been chosen.” These deviations underscore the influence of individual interpretation and context on word meaning, as suggested by its pragmatics theory, which emphasizes the role of background knowledge and context in shaping linguistic comprehension^[14].

When tasked with identifying synonyms for *sementara*, respondents provided varied answers, including “for a bit,” “impermanent,” and “not long,” as well as less conventional suggestions like “sometimes” and “later.” These results highlight the semantic and pragmatic adaptability of *sementara*, reinforcing its categorization as a particle with diverse appli-

cations. Unlike previous research that views *sementara* as a fixed grammatical category, this study reveals how its meaning dynamically shifts depending on social and linguistic context. The fluidity of *sementara* is not merely lexical but also extends to its strategic deployment in discourse, where speakers adjust its usage to align with intent, audience, and situational demands. The association of *sementara* with the word *beberapa* (“a few”), a non-definitive quantifier, is particularly intriguing, as it supports the word’s inclusion in multiple grammatical categories, as noted in the study^[1].

The sentence-construction task further illuminated the contextual flexibility of *sementara*. Most respondents used the word to express simultaneity, as in “*I am washing the clothes while my little sibling is playing soccer.*” Others employed it to denote brevity or short duration, as in “*I’m only going out for a short time,*” while some conveyed the timing of an event, as in “*Meanwhile, I am being interviewed.*” These findings align with Santosa’s exploration of internal and external conjunctions^[3]. Notably, none of the responses utilized *sementara* in its quantifier role, suggesting that this usage may be less intuitive in everyday communication, supporting the observations of Muslim and Nazrudin^[17, 18].

Beyond its grammatical function, this study highlights *sementara*’s role in creating “in-between” spaces — temporary linguistic and social zones that allow speakers to navigate constraints without fully committing to fixed categories or expectations. This aspect of *sementara* aligns with the broader sociolinguistic concept of “*in-betweenness*,” where individuals use language to suspend obligations, defer decisions, or create ambiguity in complex social interactions^[19]. In this sense, *sementara* is more than a descriptor of temporality; it is a strategic tool for negotiating agency, enabling speakers to remain flexible within structured environments^[20]. This ability to create provisional spaces further underscores its function as a linguistic mechanism for adaptability and resilience in everyday discourse^[21].

Prior linguistic research has predominantly treated *sementara* as a conjunctive particle that marks simultaneity or temporariness, often limiting its analysis to structural definitions. However, this study demonstrates that *sementara*’s meaning is not static; rather, it is highly adaptable and contingent on speaker intent, discourse register, and socio-cultural context. By reframing *sementara* as a functional and opportunistic linguistic tool, this research illustrates its instrumen-

tal role in navigating uncertainty, negotiating risks, and managing social expectations. Speakers use *sementara* not only to describe reality but also to manipulate it — delaying commitments, hedging risks, or maintaining strategic ambiguity to maximize flexibility. This makes *sementara* a particularly powerful linguistic resource in environments where certainty is limited, and adaptability is key. This perspective advances the study of Indonesian discourse by demonstrating how linguistic choices serve as adaptive strategies in constrained environments.

In the broader context of linguistic studies, these findings contribute to our understanding of how language evolves to accommodate diverse communicative needs. The flexibility of *sementara* mirrors the dynamic nature of Indonesian language and culture, reflecting its speakers’ adaptive strategies in navigating temporal and relational complexities. This adaptability also aligns with Verschueren’s discussion of semantic relationships, emphasizing the interplay between language, meaning, and context^[14].

The study’s findings underscore the importance of investigating particles like *sementara* to enhance our understanding of linguistic systems and their real-world applications. The results suggest several directions for future research. First, a deeper exploration of *sementara*’s role as a quantifier could provide insight into why this function is less intuitive for speakers. Second, a comparative analysis of *sementara* with its equivalents in other languages could offer a cross-linguistic perspective on its semantic and grammatical features. Third, expanding the study to include respondents from different regions and linguistic backgrounds in Indonesia could shed light on regional variations in the usage and interpretation of *sementara*.

Finally, future research could examine the pedagogical implications of these findings, particularly in teaching Indonesian as a second language. Understanding the complexity and versatility of *sementara* could help learners grasp its nuanced meanings and applications, fostering more effective communication in diverse contexts.

Ultimately, this study reinforces the idea that linguistic structures are not passive descriptors but active tools that speakers wield to manage uncertainty, regulate social expectations, and create opportunities. By bridging theoretical frameworks with empirical data, the research underscores how sementara functions as a crucial linguistic and

cultural tool for adaptability, positioning it within broader frameworks of resilience and innovation in Southeast Asian discourse practices.

5. Conclusions

The article highlights the exceptional versatility of the Indonesian term *sementara*, showcasing its capacity to operate across multiple grammatical roles, including particle, conjunction, quantifier, and occasionally noun. Its meanings, ranging from “temporary” to “while” or “during,” and even “some of them,” illustrate its adaptability in diverse contexts, enabling the expression of nuanced temporal, relational, and quantitative concepts. This linguistic flexibility underscores its critical role in structuring communication and reflects the depth of the Indonesian language.

Beyond its grammatical functions, *sementara* serves as a cultural and linguistic tool for adaptability, embodying the concept of **provisionality** — a central mechanism for navigating uncertainty and transience in modern urban life. Speakers strategically employ *sementara* not only to describe temporary states but to create discursive spaces where social expectations can be deferred, adjusted, or negotiated. Provisionality, as reflected in *sementara*, equips individuals with strategies to manage temporal and situational challenges effectively, allowing them to adapt to dynamic and unpredictable environments while preserving social and cultural coherence.

The findings align with established linguistic frameworks, such as traditional word-class classifications and knowledge-based theories of meaning, which emphasize the contextual and interpretative nature of language. By integrating insights from prior research on semantics, conjunctions, and discourse structure, the study situates *sementara* within broader discussions of language adaptability and cohesion.

In advancing linguistic research, this study moves beyond structural descriptions of *sementara* and demonstrates how it serves as an active resource for agency, resilience, and problem-solving. Emphasizing its role in shaping adaptive communication strategies, the research contributes to broader discussions on linguistic flexibility, social navigation, and the dynamic interplay between language and culture in Southeast Asia.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, R.M.; methodology, R.M. and H.T.; software, R.M.; validation, R.M. and H.T.; formal analysis, R.M.; investigation, R.M. and H.T.; resources, R.M. and H.T.; data curation, R.M.; writing—original draft preparation, R.M.; writing—review and editing, R.M. and H.T.; visualization, R.M.; supervision, R.M.; project administration, Rafel Martinez.; funding acquisition, R.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Singapore University of Technology and Design (protocol code IRB 24-281, approved on March 16, 2024).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created in this study. All data supporting the reported results are included within this article, and there is no additional access to public datasets.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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