

THE EXISTENCE OF THE INDONESIAN LANGUAGE AMID THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SLANG AMONG TEENAGERS

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ABSTRACT

Language is a basic tool for human social interaction, but as time goes on, the skills of young people in using proper Indonesian language have started to change. This study aims to look into the growing use of slang, both from local words and borrowed from English, among teenagers and its effects on the presence of the Indonesian language. Using a descriptive qualitative approach from various literature and sociolinguistic observations, this study identifies that slang is formed through different morphological patterns such as abbreviations, acronyms, word shortening, puns, and shifts in meaning. The main reasons behind this phenomenon include the rapid impact of social media, the need for self-existence, and the desire to create closeness within peer groups. Even though slang can boost language creativity, its dominance poses a threat to the preservation of standard Indonesian, leads to difficulties in formal communication, and lowers the quality of grammar. Therefore, it is important to make proportional efforts to limit rather than eliminate and to instill language awareness from an early age so that the national identity of the nation remains preserved.

Keywords: Indonesian Language, Slang, Teenagers, Sociolinguistics, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the main tool for communication among people. It helps us express our thoughts, feelings, wishes, and share information with others, whether it's one person or a group. As social beings who cannot live without helping each other, humans rely heavily on language to communicate, cooperate, and identify themselves within a community. Language is basically a system of sounds that is arbitrary, which means there isn't always a direct, logical connection between the symbol and what it represents.

In Indonesia, the Indonesian language plays an important role as the language of unity and the national language, which was declared during the Youth Pledge on October 28, 1928. This language serves as the official means of communication in education, legal texts, national documents, and everyday conversations. In its use, the way we speak should follow the correct grammar rules and also match the cultural values of the local community. However, even though it is an official language, Indonesian is not rigid; it keeps growing and changing along with advancements in science, technology, and cross-cultural interactions.

Nowadays, the ability of the younger generation, especially teenagers, to use proper and correct Indonesian is showing a significant decline. One of the main causes is the widespread use of “slang language” or slang. Slang is a collection of words or terms that have special, unique meanings, sometimes deviating from or even opposite to their common meanings, and are used exclusively by certain subcultural groups. Actually, this phenomenon is not new. In the 1980s, this form of language modification was better known as “prokem” language, which was initially used as a secret code so that conversations within the group could not be understood by outsiders.

Adolescence itself is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, marked by physical, mental, emotional changes, and the discovery of social identity. During this phase, teenagers tend to form exclusive groups and develop abstract thinking styles, one of which is manifested through the creation of a “secret language” for communication among

themselves. The use of slang is not intended to completely eliminate the Indonesian language, but rather to make it more casual, which unfortunately often ignores norms of politeness and grammatical structure.

Furthermore, globalization has brought the influence of foreign languages, especially English, which has now become very popular as slang among Indonesian teenagers. The introduction of borrowed vocabulary and English abbreviations has added complexity to the linguistic dynamics in Indonesia. This trend is heavily amplified by digital spaces, where geographical borders dissolve, allowing linguistic contamination to occur at an unprecedented speed. If allowed to dominate without proper literacy awareness, this phenomenon is feared to erode the existence of the Indonesian language. Therefore, this article is written to examine in depth the types of slang circulating among teenagers, the sociolinguistic factors behind its use, and its significant impact on the sustainability of the Indonesian language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is written using a descriptive qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach focuses on closely observing a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. In this method, data is analyzed and presented in the form of narratives made up of words and sentences, rather than using statistical numerical data.

The information in this research synthesis comes from both primary and secondary data sources. Data collection was carried out using multiple methods, including:

- **Observations:** Observing language behavior and digital discourse (both in person and on social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and X/Twitter).
- **Interviews:** Conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with teenage sources (high school students and university students) to understand their underlying motives.
- **Literature Review:** Reviewing various literature, news articles, linguistic textbooks, and previous academic journals regarding Indonesian slang and sociolinguistics.

Data analysis techniques refer to an interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes steps like data reduction (selecting and classifying slang vocabulary), data display (organizing conceptual tables and morphological patterns), and drawing/verifying conclusions based on the conceptual framework of sociolinguistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics and Patterns of Slang Formation

The slang language used by teenagers has some unique features: it's short, expressive, lively, creative, and closely follows current trends. The structure of the language is often unclear and focuses more on quickly getting the meaning across through incomplete sentences. Based on the study, teen slang, whether it comes from changes in Indonesian or English, is created through several main morphological patterns:

Removing the Initial Letter: This process involves taking away the first letter of a word to make it easier and faster to say. For example: the word *memang* changes to *emang*, *sama* becomes *ama*, *saja* turns into *aja*, and *sudah* is shortened to *udah*.

Vowel Replacement: There is a consistent phenomenon where the vowel "a" is replaced with the letter "e." For example: *benar* becomes *bener*, *cakap* turns into *cakep*, *sebal* changes to *sebel*, and *senang* is shortened to *seneng*. In addition, there are extreme changes where the word *tidak* is altered to become *kagak*.

Abbreviations and Contractions: Shortening words often focuses on greetings, like cutting one syllable (*brother* to *bro*, *sister* to *sis*, and *juragan* to *gan*), or keeping two

syllables, such as changing *halusinasi* to *halu*.

Acronyms: An acronym is a process where the first letters or syllables of words are combined and then pronounced as if it were a single word. Teenagers are changing words in a way that creates local acronyms like *caper* (*cari perhatian*), *mager* (*malas gerak*), *pewe* (*posisi wewe/enak*), *mabar* (*main bareng*), *nobar* (*nonton bareng*), *bucin* (*budak cinta*), *modus* (*modal dusta*), and *japri* (*jalur pribadi*).

Wordplay: Involves deliberately twisting a word from its original form to create a sense of humor or a relaxed vibe. An example is changing the last syllable to sound like “ay” or “uy”: the word *gemas* becomes *gemay*, *jijik* changes to *jijay*, and *santai* turns into *santuy*. There is also a change in long phrases, for example, “*mana ketahu*”, which is humorously twisted into “*meneketehe*.”

Word Reversal (Simple Anagram): Some slang is created by reversing the order of sounds or syllables. This practice creates words like *kuy* (from *yuk*), *sabi* (from *bisa*), and *woles* (which comes from the English word *slow*, pronounced as *selow*, and then reversed).

Semantic Shifts: The meanings of many standard words in the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBI) have changed a lot. The term “*garing*,” which originally means hard or dry, has changed in meaning to refer to a joke that isn’t funny. The term “*recek*” that refers to small coins is now understood as a simple joke that isn’t very funny but can still bring a smile. The term “*julid*” is used to show feelings of jealousy and envy, while “*gas*” is used as a sign of approval to act quickly on something.

The Use of English Abbreviations: In sociolinguistics, English is the main language used in conversations among teenagers. Based on observations, there are dozens of foreign abbreviations that have now become part of the everyday slang used by Indonesian teenagers. Some of the most popular ones include:

- **IDK (I Don’t Know):** Expressing not knowing something.
- **IMO (In My Opinion):** Used to share personal opinions.
- **OTW (On The Way):** This means to let someone know that a person is on their way.
- **BTW (By the way):** A way to start talking about a new topic in a conversation.
- **OMG (Oh My God):** An expression of surprise, amazement, or shock.
- **YOLO (You Only Live Once):** Justifying actions that are impulsive or daring.
- **LOL / LMAO (Laugh Out Loud / Laughing My Ass Off):** A way to show that something is really funny.
- **CMIW (Correct Me If I’m Wrong):** A request to correct any information that has been shared.
- **JSYK (Just so you know):** This gives extra information.
- **FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out):** The fear or worry of missing out on a trend.
- **THX, BF, GF, Gimme:** THX means Thanks, BF stands for Boyfriend, GF means Girlfriend, and Gimme is short for Give me.

2. Deep Sociolinguistic Analysis: The SPEAKING Framework

To understand how slang functions in teenage speech communities, we must apply Dell Hymes’ SPEAKING framework. This model helps explain that slang is not random linguistic chaos, but a highly structured, context-dependent communication choice:

- **S - Setting and Scene:** The physical and psychological setting dictates the use of slang. It thrives in informal spaces school backyards, cafes, and digital chat rooms. Conversely, teenagers show code-switching competence by suppressing slang in formal classrooms or religious settings.
- **P - Participants:** The speaker and the listener must belong to the same peer subculture. Teenagers intentionally use slang as an “in-group” code. It creates a

linguistic barrier that excludes outsiders such as parents, teachers, and older generations maintaining the group's privacy.

- **E - Ends:** The goals of using slang are social survival and ego-preservation. It is used to minimize social distance, establish camaraderie, and avoid being labeled as "kaku" (stiff) or "ansos" (anti-social).
- **A - Act Sequence:** The form and order of the words used. Slang conversations are rapid, highly elliptical, and heavily embedded with emotional punchlines.
- **K - Key:** The tone or manner of delivery is always casual, playful, humorous, or heavily sarcastic.
- **I - Instrumentalities:** The channel is heavily digital. It relies on text-based short messaging platforms and algorithmic social media feeds where characters are limited, hence prioritizing short acronyms over proper grammar.
- **N - Norms of Interaction:** Within the peer group, using standard Indonesian is actually viewed as a violation of social norms (perceived as arrogant or overly formal). The norm here dictates that casualness equals acceptance.
- **G - Genre:** The speech genre is informal dialogue, jokes, and digital commentaries. It is rarely found in narrative or expository genres within the teenage circle.

3. Factors Encouraging and Purposes of Using Slang

The presence and widespread use of slang did not happen in a vacuum. This phenomenon is driven by a complicated interaction between internal factors (like the level of understanding of standard language) and external factors (such as the environment, peer interactions, and advancements in social media technology).

Social media platforms like Instagram, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram play a major role in spreading slang language. When a teenager especially one who is influential uses a new term, that term can quickly be noticed, understood, and copied by thousands of other teenagers from different cultural backgrounds and geographic locations. This rapid dispersion is accelerated by internet algorithms that reward viral trends. The fast spread of information makes slang more popular and lasting among teenagers compared to formal language.

4. Impact on the Existence of the Indonesian Language

The widespread use of slang is like a double-edged sword. On one hand, slang has a positive effect by encouraging creative use of language; it helps teenagers learn to come up with new ways to put words together and create unique terms that make communication more lively. It proves that language is a dynamic, living organism.

However, on the other hand, the dominance of slang language has very serious negative effects on the existence of Indonesian as a national identity. Teenagers often use altered grammar, shorten words, and mix in foreign languages, which leads to a decline in their appreciation for their native language. Some of these destructive impacts include:

- **Decline in Grammar and Formal Spelling:** When teenagers find themselves in formal situations, like academic writing, the workplace, or official meetings, they often unconsciously carry over their casual language habits. This can lead to sentences that are messy, unstructured, and do not follow the rules of the Improved Spelling System (EYD).
- **Learning and Communication Challenges:** Too much exposure to slang leads to a lack of standard vocabulary. Teenagers find it hard to recognize and express complicated ideas in a clear and organized way using the Indonesian language. In fact, they lose their awareness and no longer realize that the way they speak may be incorrect or impolite to the older generation.

- **The Decline in the Value of Art in Language:** Instant slang makes young people see standard Indonesian as stiff, boring, and outdated. This is real evidence of how global trends are slowly pushing national identities aside if they are not supported by a strong cultural filter.

CONCLUSION

Language evolution is a natural process, and the rise of slang among teenagers is a normal sociolinguistic phenomenon that shows their need for recognition, social identity, and group closeness. The variety of slang vocabulary ranging from acronyms, abbreviations, puns, to borrowed words from other languages shows that language is very flexible and spreads quickly because of the fast growth of social media technology.

Even though slang provides a relaxed and creative way to communicate, ignoring the rules of proper language has led to a decline in teenagers' ability to use formal Indonesian correctly. The threat to the existence of the Indonesian language doesn't come from the slang language itself, but rather from the young generation's inability to use it appropriately by switching between languages based on the context and situation. Diglossia the ability to identify when to use formal language and when to use informal language is the core skill that is currently missing.

Suggestions

Therefore, a realistic effort isn't to completely get rid of slang because that would take away a way for teenagers to express themselves. Instead, it should focus on setting mindful limits:

- **For Teenagers:** As the next generation of the nation, teenagers should develop linguistic awareness (*kesadaran berbahasa*). They must practice code-switching, which means learning to use proper Indonesian language in education, formal settings, and public spaces, while keeping slang strictly for private, informal interactions.
- **For Educational Institutions:** Schools and universities should not just teach grammar mechanically, but also build pride in the national language. Incorporating fun digital literacy programs and creative writing public spaces can show teenagers that standard Indonesian can also be expressive and powerful.
- **For Families:** Early intervention from families is needed to instill polite communication norms from an early age, ensuring that seasonal internet trends do not permanently weaken our core cultural identity.

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