

INDONESIAN SLANG AND ITS SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPACT IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract. *This study reviews the sociolinguistic implications of Indonesian slang in the digital era. Informal language is becoming increasingly popular among Indonesian teenagers in line with the growing appeal of digital communication platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter (X). This study aims to examine how Indonesian slang functions as a space for developing new language, a tool for communicating with others, and a marker of identity. Data were collected using a qualitative descriptive approach from social media texts, which included comments, memes, and captions. The research findings reflect that Indonesian slang has features such as the creation of new vocabulary, the use of abbreviations, code-switching, and changes in meaning. From a sociolinguistic paradigm, slang reflects the identity of the younger generation, strengthens group bonds, and creates diverse perceptions of prestige and stigma across various societal structures. Furthermore, the role of influencers and digital media accelerates the spread and acceptance of slang. This study contributes to understanding how language changes in the digital era. This also emphasizes the importance of stability between the creativity of informal language and the ability to correctly apply formal language.*

1. Introduction

Language is a dynamic system that evolves in step with societal and technological developments. The rise of digital communication has significantly altered Indonesian linguistic practices, particularly among younger generations. One notable phenomenon is the widespread use of Indonesian slang, an informal language variety characterized by slang, acronyms, and hybrid linguistic forms.

Social media's rise has produced new communication spaces where relatability, quickness, and inventiveness are valued more highly than formal linguistic conventions. Indonesian lingo has consequently taken center stage in online conversations.

Nonetheless, this phenomenon poses significant sociolinguistic queries about language evolution, identity, and the conflict between standard and informal language. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate how Indonesian slang serves social purposes, represents youth identity, and advances language change in the digital age.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Identity and Linguistic Variation

Language variety is systematic and socially significant, according to Labov (1972). In a similar vein, Eckert (2000) highlights the importance of language as a tool for identity formation. Indonesian slang is an example of stylistic variance in this environment, reflecting youth identity and social positioning.

2.2 Prestige and Linguistic Capital

The idea of linguistic capital is introduced by Bourdieu (1991), who suggests that some language variations have social value. Young people use Indonesian slang as a display of modernity and cultural knowledge.

2.3 Digital Sociolinguistics

According to Androutsopoulos (2014), algorithmic amplification and user interaction in digital media hasten language change. Linguistic innovation, especially slang and hybrid forms, spreads quickly because to online channels.

2.4 Language Hybridization and Code-Switching

Myers-Scotton (1993) asserts that code-switching is a reflection of communicative strategy and social identity. English's incorporation into Indonesian slang is an example of linguistic hybridity and globalization.

3. Methods

3.1 Design of Research

Within a sociolinguistic framework, this study uses a qualitative descriptive method.

3.2 Source of Data

Information was gathered from social media sites, such as:

- TikTok
- Instagram
- WhatsApp and
- Twitter (X)

3.3 Information Gathering

Information was gathered by seeing and recording:

- Captions
- Remarks
- Memes
- Conversations

3.4 Analysis of Data

Data analysis was done using: Discourse analysis

- Sociolinguistic theory (Bourdieu, Eckert, and Labov)
- Classification of linguistic features

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Indonesian slang's linguistic characteristics

a. Slang (Informal Lexical Items)

Informal lexical expressions used in daily conversation, especially among younger generations, are referred to as slang. Examples of language being reduced into more succinct but meaningful forms are gabut (idle/unproductive; originally "gaji buta") and baper (overly emotional; literally "carrying feelings").

From a linguistic standpoint, slang serves as:

- A social group identity marker (in-group identity)
- A way to express emotions more freely
- A way of defying strict language conventions

Through techniques like word blending and shortening, slang also exhibits morphological originality.

b. Abbreviations

A propensity for efficiency in communication, particularly in digital situations, is reflected in acronyms like OTW (on the way) and mager (malas gerak; "too lazy to move").

From a linguistic standpoint:

- They entail procedures like initialism and cutting.
- They speed up conversation in casual contexts.
- They demonstrate the impact of globalization, especially in English.

The idea of linguistic economy, which states that speakers typically employ shorter forms while still being effective communicators, is also connected to this issue.

c. Code-switching

Code-switching between Indonesian and English is a widespread occurrence in social media discourse, as seen by expressions like literally me.

According to linguistic analysis,

- It is an aspect of sociolinguistics, specifically bilingualism.
 - It serves to: o Indicate modernity or prestige
- Adapt to worldwide digital communication environments

- It demonstrates the speaker's proficiency in two languages.

Additionally, code-switching enhances meaning by enabling speakers to reveal subtleties that would not be adequately expressed in a single language.

d. Newly Coined Words, or Neologisms

Neologisms like sabi ("bisa") and anjay are examples of newly created vocabulary terms that frequently defy accepted grammatical norms.

From a linguistic standpoint:

- They are examples of lexical innovation.
- They frequently appear by: o Reversing syllables

Phonological alteration

- Popular culture and social media trends have an impact on them.

Neologisms show how language is dynamic and always changing to satisfy speakers' communication needs.

e. Meaning Change, or Semantic Shift

Healing, for instance, is defined as "recovery" in English but as "going on a trip or taking time off to refresh oneself" in Indonesian slang.

Analysis reveals that:

- There has been a semantic shift.
- It could entail expanding or contracting the meaning.
- Local cultural circumstances have an impact on it.

This phenomenon shows that word meanings can change based on how they are used in different social contexts.

These characteristics show lexical innovation, language hybridization, and semantic recontextualization processes, suggesting that Indonesian slang functions as a dynamic linguistic system influenced by digital contact and globalization.

4.2 Social Function and Identity Construction

Slang from Indonesia serves as:

a. Identity Marker (Gen Z, Urban, Youth)

Slang in particular serves as an identity marker, reflecting the speaker's age group, cultural orientation, and social background. Younger speakers, particularly those from Generation Z and metropolitan areas, are highly linked to the use of Indonesian slang terms like *baper*, *mager*, and *anjay*.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, this suggests that:

- Social identity is constructed and expressed through language.
 - Speakers convey that they belong to a contemporary, tech-savvy generation.
 - Exposure to media, trends, and international culture reflects urban impact.
- Slang thus turns into a linguistic representation of being "young," "trendy," and socially conscious.

b. Signal of Group Membership

Additionally, slang acts as a group membership marker, making it easier for people to recognize members of a specific community or social group.

In this situation:

- Using common terminology fosters a feeling of unity and belonging.
- It separates members of the group from outsiders.
- Recognizing and appropriately use slang conveys social inclusion

For instance, a speaker may be identified as belonging to a particular peer group (such as students, online communities, or social media users) if they frequently utilize phrases like *gabut* or *sabi* in talks.

c. Tool for Cultural Alignment

Particularly in the digital age, slang serves as a tool for associating oneself with particular cultural trends, ideals, or lifestyles.

This implies:

- To demonstrate that they are aware of current trends, speakers employ slang.
- It is in line with popular culture, which includes social media, memes, and inspirations from around the world.
- Code-switching, such as "literally me," shows alignment with digital and global culture, especially in English-speaking situations.

In this approach, language becomes a means of expressing awareness of both local and global cultural norms and positioning oneself within a larger cultural environment.

This bolsters the idea put forth by Eckert (2000) that language does more than just reflect social identity—it creates it.

4.3 Social Boundaries and In-Group Unity

Indonesian slang usage:

a. Enhances Peer Connections

Slang usage is crucial for fostering stronger bonds between peers. There is a sense of familiarity and emotional intimacy when people utilize the same colloquial terms.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint:

- Common language usage promotes intimacy and unity.
- Slang fosters relaxed communication and lessens social distance.
- It makes it easier for speakers to convey humor and feelings.

Interpersonal ties within a peer group are strengthened and conversation becomes more interesting as a result.

b. Produces Exclusivity

Additionally, slang serves as an exclusivity mechanism, making it difficult for everyone to comprehend or utilize.

This suggests that:

- Certain phrases are only fully understood by members of particular groups (e.g., adolescents, online communities).
 - It fosters a feeling of belonging to a chosen or "insider" group.
 - Language turns become a symbolic barrier that restricts meaning.
- Slang, therefore, plays a role in the development of social boundaries in communication.

c. Differentiates Between Insiders and Outsiders

Slang aids in differentiating between insiders (members of the in-group) and outsiders (members of the out-group), which is closely tied to exclusivity.

In this situation:

- People who know and use slang correctly are seen as insiders.
- Those who don't are viewed as outsiders or have a weaker bond with the group.
- Language serves as a symbol of identity and social membership.

This differentiation both highlights the distinctions between social groupings and strengthens group cohesion.

This is consistent with the idea of speech communities (Labov, 1972).

4.4 Stigma and Prestige

a. Young People: Distinguished and Contemporary

Slang is typically seen as prestigious and contemporary by young people. It is linked to being current, socially engaged, and culturally appropriate.

From a sociolinguistic perspective:

- Slang serves as a symbol of contemporary individuality and awareness of trends.
- It shows conformity to global influences and digital culture.
- Using slang might improve one's reputation among peers.

Slang is viewed by young people as a useful tool for identity creation and self-expression rather than as "incorrect."

b. Teachers: Unconventional and Difficult

Teachers, on the other hand, typically see slang as unconventional and possibly problematic, especially in official or academic settings.

This impression is impacted by:

- The focus on correctness and established language conventions
- Fears about language deterioration or diminished formal Indonesian competency
- The idea that using slang excessively could impede academic writing and communication abilities

Slang is so frequently viewed as improper in educational contexts where uniformity, formality, and clarity are valued.

c. Ambivalent Society

Slang is generally seen with ambivalence by the general public, which means that opinions vary depending on the situation.

This conflicting sentiment is shown in:

- Slang is accepted in casual and online communication
- Slang usage in official or public conversation is criticized
- Slang is seen as a potential danger to linguistic conventions as well as a creative linguistic invention.

Because of this, society perceptions of slang are dynamic and change based on the situation, the generation, and the communication goal.

4.5 Using Digital Media to Accelerate Language Learning

Digital platforms serve the following purposes:

a. Hubs for Innovation

New linguistic forms are developed and tested on digital platforms, which serve as innovation hubs.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint:

- Users actively create new terms, phrases, and definitions (such as *sabi* and *anjay*).
- Trends, humor, and inventiveness are what propel language innovation.
- The rapid pace of digital communication promotes ongoing language experimentation.

As a result, digital environments foster language innovation and change.

b. Systems of Distribution

Additionally, digital platforms serve as distribution networks that facilitate the quick dissemination of linguistic innovations to large audiences.

This implies:

- New idioms and slang can quickly become viral.
- Language is now used nationally and internationally rather than just in local groups.
 - Algorithms, content producers, and influencers all contribute to increased usage.

Linguistic variants that develop in small groups might therefore swiftly gain widespread recognition.

c. Agents of Normalization

Lastly, digital platforms serve as normalization agents, increasing the acceptance of previously informal or non-standard language.

In this situation:

- Regular exposure fosters acceptance and familiarity.

- Even outside of its originating community, slang is used in daily conversation.
- The distinction between standard and non-standard language becomes less rigid. Certain terms can eventually gain legitimacy and become part of the mainstream when they are used often in digital places.

Memes and hashtags serve as dissemination tools, while influencers serve as language authority.

This supports the findings of Androutsopoulos (2014) regarding linguistic change mediated by digital media.

5. Summary

This study shows how internet communication has influenced Indonesian slang, a key sociolinguistic phenomenon. It is a tool for social interaction, linguistic innovation, and identity creation.

Its extensive use, however, raises questions about formal language proficiency. As a result, a balanced strategy that upholds conventional language proficiency while embracing linguistic originality is required.

The long-term effects of digital language on literacy, education, and national identity should be investigated in future studies.

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