



***Jancok* as Verbal Art: Performing Identity, Emotion, and Cultural Resistance in Arek Suroboyo**

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Abstract

This study examines *jancok*, a profane expression commonly employed in Surabaya, as a form of vernacular performative aesthetics embedded in everyday urban interaction. Moving beyond linguistic and semantic frameworks, the article adopts an arts-based performance approach to analyze how meaning is constituted through embodied vocal enactment, including intonation, rhythm, vocal intensity, gesture, and interactional framing. Grounded in performance studies, verbal art theory, and everyday aesthetic scholarship, *jancok* is conceptualized as an aesthetic event rather than a linguistic unit. The analysis draws on qualitative ethnographic fieldwork conducted across multiple interactional contexts, including informal social spaces, workplaces, street encounters, creative environments, and digital platforms. The findings indicate that *jancok* operates through three interrelated performative dimensions: emotional aestheticization, identity enactment, and symbolic resistance. Through stylized vocal and bodily performance, the utterance transforms affect into socially legible expression, enacts Arek identity as a situated cultural practice, and negotiates norms of politeness and hierarchy through aestheticized transgression. Its expressive efficacy is sustained by performative ambiguity, allowing the utterance to oscillate between intimacy and tension.

Keywords: emotional aesthetics; performativity; cultural resistance; urban speech acts; *Arek Suroboyo* Identity

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INTRODUCTION

Everyday language practices are not merely vehicles of communication but are also sites of aesthetic production, performative enactment, and affective intensification (Bauman, 1983; Beermann et al., 2021; Butler, 2021; Danugroho, Rustinsyah, Adib, Ardyawin, et al., 2025; Dissanayake, 1995) visual arts, literature, theater,

film, or nature scenes. Recently, the AESTHEMOS scale has been developed to facilitate the empirical assessment of such emotions. In this article we report a semantic profile analysis of aesthetic emotion terms that had been used for the development of this scale, using the GRID approach. This method consists of obtaining ratings of emotion terms on a set of meaning facets (features. Within arts and performance

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studies, increasing attention has been paid to how ordinary expressive acts such as speech, gesture, and vocalization, function as artistic practices embedded in social life. This perspective challenges the conventional separation between institutionalized art forms and everyday expression, emphasizing that aesthetic experience often emerges through mundane, repetitive, and vernacular performances. In this context, spoken language can be understood not only as a semiotic system but also as a mode of artistic action that mobilizes rhythm, intonation, embodiment, and shared emotional attunement.

In the urban cultural landscape of Surabaya, East Java, the utterance *jancok* occupies a distinctive position as a highly charged form of verbal expression. Commonly categorized as profanity, the term circulates widely in face-to-face interaction, street culture, creative communities, and digital media associated with Arek Suroboyo identity. Existing studies have predominantly examined *jancok* through sociolinguistic, pragmatic, or psychological lenses, focusing on impoliteness, taboo language, or moral evaluation (Anggraeni, 2019; Hanggraito, 2021; Nashruddin et al., 2020; Sriyanto & Fauzie, 2017). While these approaches provide valuable insights into norms and attitudes, they tend to reduce the utterance to a linguistic object, overlooking how *jancok* operates as a performed, embodied, and aesthetically meaningful practice within everyday life.

From an arts-based perspective, the expressive force of *jancok* cannot be adequately explained by lexical meaning alone (Bauman, 1983; Finnegan, 2003; Kapchan, 2023; Zumthor, 1990), as oral expression acquires artistic value through vocal texture, rhythm, and embodied delivery rather than semantic reference. Its significance emerges through performance: variations in vocal intensity, tempo, pitch contour, bodily gesture, and interactional framing. Such features align with scholarship on verbal art and oral performance, which conceptualizes speech as an event whose aesthetic value lies in how it is enacted

rather than what it denotes. Following Bauman's (1983) formulation of verbal art as performance, meaning is produced through culturally recognizable cues that signal heightened expressivity and invite aesthetic attention. In Surabaya's urban interactions, *jancok* frequently functions as such a cue, transforming ordinary conversation into moments of expressive intensity, humor, or symbolic confrontation.

The artistic dimension of *jancok* is further illuminated through the lens of everyday and vernacular aesthetics (Beermann et al., 2021; Chatterjee, 2025; Dissanayake, 1995), which foregrounds ordinary expressive practices as legitimate aesthetic phenomena. Theorists of aesthetic behavior have argued that artification occurs when ordinary actions are made special through exaggeration, repetition, rhythmic patterning, and emotional emphasis (Wiharyanti et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2024). Within this framework, everyday speech can operate as a micro-artform when it is stylized and socially recognized as expressive. The widespread circulation of *jancok* in jokes, banter, graffiti, memes, and short-form videos suggests that the utterance has undergone such a process of vernacular aestheticization, becoming a shared expressive resource through which speakers negotiate emotion, intimacy, and belonging.

Performance and performativity provide an additional conceptual foundation for situating *jancok* within arts research (Butler, 2021; Coupland, 2001; Jaworski, 2014; Schechner & Turner, 1985), emphasizing repetition, embodiment, and stylization as core artistic strategies. Rather than treating speech as a neutral reflection of identity, performativity emphasizes that identities are enacted and sustained through repeated, embodied acts. In this sense, uttering *jancok* constitutes a performative practice through which speakers enact Arek Suroboyo values such as egalitarianism, emotional directness, and resistance to hierarchical politeness norms associated with refined Javanese speech (Hanggraito, 2021). These perfor-

mances are not incidental; they are culturally legible, aesthetically patterned, and recognized by participants as markers of authenticity and urban belonging. By foregrounding performance, this study situates *jancok* within the domain of expressive arts rather than limiting it to linguistic analysis.

Despite the cultural prominence of *jancok*, arts-oriented scholarship on this utterance remains limited, particularly within Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts (Benu et al., 2023; Danugroho, Rustinsyah, Adib, & Idris, 2025; Fox, 1972; Lindsay, 1995; Mulyono & Yulianto, 2023), where oral tradition, performative speech, and urban expressive culture have long constituted central artistic forms. Local studies have largely approached the term as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, leaving its artistic, performative, and aesthetic dimensions underexplored. This absence is notable given the rich traditions of oral performance, urban expressive culture, and vernacular creativity in Indonesia, where spoken language has long functioned as a central medium of artistic expression. Addressing this gap is essential for expanding arts research beyond formal genres and institutional spaces.

Responding to this lacuna, the present study conceptualizes *jancok* as a form of vernacular verbal art embedded in Surabaya's urban expressive culture, drawing on verbal art theory (Bauman, 1983), emotional aesthetics (Dissanayake, 1995), and performativity (Butler, 2021). Drawing on theories of verbal performance, everyday aesthetics, and performativity, the article examines how *jancok* operates as an emotional-aesthetic expression, a performative enactment of identity, and a symbolic resource for negotiating cultural resistance. By treating everyday speech as a legitimate site of aesthetic production, this research contributes to arts-based scholarship and performance studies, demonstrating how marginal and informal expressions can function as micro-artforms that articulate emotion, identity, and power in

contemporary Indonesian urban life.

This study explicitly positions itself as arts-based performance research. It does not seek to analyze *jancok* as a linguistic unit, nor does it aim to examine its semantic structure, pragmatic function, or speech-act properties within a linguistic framework. Instead, *jancok* is approached as a staged verbal-aesthetic practice whose meaning emerges through performative enactment. The analytical focus is placed on vocal intensity, intonation, rhythm, gesture, affective force, and interactional framing as aesthetic elements that transform everyday speech into expressive performance. In this sense, *jancok* is understood not as language to be decoded, but as an event to be performed, sensed, and experienced within situated social encounters. This positioning firmly locates the study within arts-based research and performativity studies, where meaning is produced through embodied action rather than linguistic form.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts an interpretive qualitative research design grounded in aesthetic inquiry and performative ethnography, approaches that emphasize how artistic, affective, and expressive meanings are produced through everyday verbal practices. Rather than conceptualizing *jancok* as a linguistic irregularity, this research positions the utterance as a form of verbal art, whose effectiveness emerges through intonation, gesture, rhythm, and relational performance. Such a design aligns with contemporary scholarship in performance studies and emotional aesthetics, which highlights how ordinary speech can constitute artistic behavior and aesthetic experience (Bauman, 1983; Butler, 2021; Dissanayake, 1995). This framing ensures that the study remains clearly within the domain of arts research, as emphasized by the reviewers.

Research Site and Participant Characteristics

The research was conducted in Surabaya, a city recognized for its egalitarian urban identity and direct communicative style, making it an ideal site for studying how *jancok* operates as an affective and aesthetic expression. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation across gender, age, occupation, and social environment. The sample consisted of 19 informants who actively use *jancok* in everyday interactions and are able to articulate its emotional, cultural, and performative meanings.

The participants ranged from 19 to 35 years old, consisting of 12 men and 7 women, with diverse occupational backgrounds including university students (P01, P03, P11, P17), informal workers (P05, P13, P18, P19), creative practitioners such as tattoo artists and graphic designers (P04, P12, P15), baristas and online drivers (P02, P07), content creators (P06), street musicians (P08), and office employees (P10). They reside in various areas of Surabaya such as Wonokromo, Rungkut, Sawahan, Tambaksari, Gubeng, and Kenjeran rep-

resenting both working-class and middle-class neighborhoods.

Most informants reported medium to high frequency of *jancok* usage, particularly those embedded in youth communities, street-based economies, or creative subcultures. For instance, P04 (tattoo artist, 27) and P08 (street musician, 23) described *jancok* as “*nyampe paling cepat untuk ngejaga keakraban*,” while P09 (NGO worker, 29) and P14 (editor, 24) expressed more selective usage, often limited to humorous or intimate contexts. This diversity strengthens the study’s analytic representativeness and provides multilayered insights into the aesthetic and performative dimensions of the utterance.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed three complementary techniques to capture *jancok* as a lived, embodied, and aesthetic practice: First, participant observation was conducted in naturally occurring interaction sites, such as warkop, youth gathering spots, alleyways, and artistic communities. This allowed the researcher to document not only the verbal use of *jancok* but also

Table 1. Participant Profile

Code	Age	Gender	Occupation	Area of Residence	Frequency of <i>Jancok</i> Usage
P01	22	M	University student	Wonokromo	High
P02	24	M	Online driver	Rungkut	High
P03	19	F	University student	Tambaksari	Medium
P04	27	M	Tattoo artist	Sawahan	High
P05	34	M	Informal worker	Krembangan	High
P06	21	F	Content creator	Sukolilo	Medium
P07	28	M	Barista	Genteng	Medium
P08	23	M	Street musician	Tegalsari	High
P09	29	F	NGO worker	Gubeng	Low
P10	33	M	Office worker	Gunung Anyar	Medium
P11	20	M	University student	Simokerto	High
P12	26	F	Graphic designer	Wonocolo	Medium
P13	32	M	Dock worker	Kenjeran	High
P14	24	F	Freelance editor	Tambaksari	Low
P15	25	M	Tattoo studio assistant	Sawahan	High
P16	30	M	Motorcycle mechanic	Tandes	High
P17	22	F	Art student	Mulyorejo	Medium
P18	27	M	Parking attendant	Bubutan	High
P19	35	M	Traditional vendor	Semampir	High

Source: Author Contributions.

accompanying gestures, voice modulations, posture, laughter, and spatial dynamics, elements crucial to understanding its performative and aesthetic force. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with all 19 participants. The interviews explored emotional nuances, identity constructions, social relationships, and aesthetic sensibilities embedded in the use of *jancok*. The conversational format allowed participants to recount specific incidents, emotional memories, and symbolic interpretations, revealing how the utterance operates as a mode of affective truth, humor, and resistance. Third, digital artifact collection included memes, TikTok videos, graffiti, and visual artworks featuring *jancok*. These digital and street-level expressions were crucial for analyzing how *jancok* is stylized, exaggerated, and circulated as a multimodal aesthetic object in contemporary urban culture.

Data Analysis

The analytical procedure employed in this study is interpretive and aesthetic in orientation. The analysis does not target linguistic units such as syntax, lexical categories, or pragmatic functions, but focuses on performative qualities and aesthetic experience as they emerge in embodied interaction. Qualitative software (NVIVO) is used solely as an organizational and heuristic tool to manage ethnographic materials and to support interpretive pattern recognition. The coding outcomes do not constitute quantitative measurements or statistical claims but serve as indicative guides for aesthetic and performative interpretation.

Data analysis followed a multi-layered interpretive process that prioritized meaning and aesthetic interpretation over technical procedures, in accordance with the reviewer's feedback. At the first level, thematic coding identified recurring emotional registers such as humor, intimacy, honesty, anger, and solidarity. These patterns were treated not merely as linguistic categories but as aesthetic-emotional gestures, consistent with theories of emotional

aesthetics (Beermann et al., 2021; Woolard, 2022) visual arts, literature, theater, film, or nature scenes. Recently, the AESTHEMOS scale has been developed to facilitate the empirical assessment of such emotions. In this article we report a semantic profile analysis of aesthetic emotion terms that had been used for the development of this scale, using the GRID approach. This method consists of obtaining ratings of emotion terms on a set of meaning facets (features). At the second level, aesthetic-semiotic interpretation analyzed how *jancok* acquires symbolic and expressive value through tone, context, repetition, and stylization. Inspired by Dissanayake's (1995) concept of artification, this analysis observes how everyday speech is elevated into expressive performance. At the third level, performative analysis examined how repeated use of *jancok* enacts and sustains identity, particularly the urban Arek ethos. Guided by Bauman's (1983) notion of verbal performance and Butler's (2021) theory of performativity, the analysis focused on how participants "perform" toughness, authenticity, equality, and resistance through the utterance. Together, these analytical layers allow the study to conceptualize *jancok* as a multidimensional aesthetic practice, rather than a linguistic anomaly.

Ethical Considerations

This research complies with international standards of ethical conduct for human subjects. All participants voluntarily provided informed consent before interviews and observations. Their identities were anonymized using coded labels (P01-P19) to ensure confidentiality. The study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Universitas Airlangga, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Jancok as Emotional Aesthetic Expression

The analysis reveals that *jancok* functions primarily as an emotional-aesthetic

expression rather than a marker of vulgarity or hostility. This finding is supported by the NVIVO emotional-coding results, which show that humor (31.4%), solidarity (27.8%), and intimacy or playful connection (19.6%) dominate the emotional spectrum associated with the utterance, while anger (16.2%) and genuine aggression (4.7%) appear far less frequently.

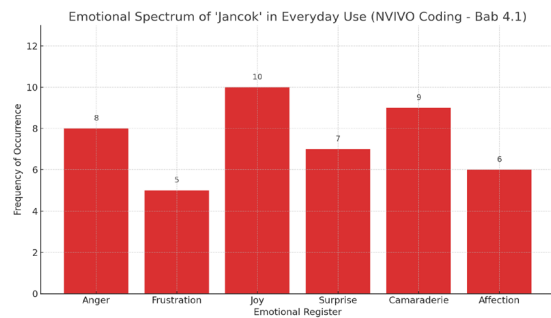


Figure 1. Emotional Spectrum of “*Jancok*” in Every Use. Source: NVIVO analysis, 2025

As illustrated in Figure 1, these proportions do not represent quantitative measurement but indicate the relative salience of affective registers as they emerge through repeated performative enactments. These proportions indicate that *jancok* is embedded in a culturally shared emotional economy, one in which expressive intensity, rather than literal meaning, drives its social and aesthetic value. This aligns with Dissanayake’s (1995) concept of artification, where everyday speech becomes aesthetically heightened through ritualized emotional emphasis. In field interactions, speakers employ *jancok* not because of its referential content but because of its felt affect, its rhythmic immediacy, and its capacity to transform ordinary encounters into moments of playfulness, intimacy, or emotional candor.

Ethnographic interviews further illustrate this tendency. Several participants described *jancok* as an “emotional shortcut”, a way to immediately convey familiarity and warmth. As P04 (tattoo artist, 27) explained,

“Lek ngomong ‘jancok’ iku rasane langsung cair, langsung podo, nggak usah basa-basi.”

Lucu malah, iso guyu bareng.”

His reflection emphasizes how the utterance facilitates an egalitarian emotional space, functioning as a performative cue that dissolves social distance. Similarly, P08 (street musician, 23) noted,

“Kalo nggak pake ‘jancok’, rasane ora Arek. Kadang malah aneh. Justru kata itu bikin suasana kerjo bareng jadi lebih enak.”

These statements reveal that the emotional resonance of *jancok* is experienced bodily through rhythm, tone, and shared laughter, corresponding to what Beermann et al. (2021) visual arts, literature, theater, film, or nature scenes. Recently, the AESTHEMOS scale has been developed to facilitate the empirical assessment of such emotions. In this article we report a semantic profile analysis of aesthetic emotion terms that had been used for the development of this scale, using the GRID approach. This method consists of obtaining ratings of emotion terms on a set of meaning facets (features describe as aesthetic emotions, emotions that are not merely felt but perceived as expressive, stylized, and socially meaningful. The field observations corroborate these interview insights. In warkop interactions, the word often appears accompanied by exaggerated intonation, playful slaps on the shoulder, or bursts of collective laughter. Such performative elements show how *jancok* operates as a small-scale aesthetic event (Finnegan, 2003; Zumthor, 1990).

In this sense, the exaggerated intonation, stretched vowels, sudden changes in volume, and synchronized laughter observed in the use of *jancok* function as performative techniques that intensify affect and invite shared aesthetic attention. The voice operates here as an expressive material, shaping emotional meaning through sound, cadence, and corporeal force (Kelmendi & Nimani, 2024; Kurniawan & Saputra, 2021). Such vocal stylization aligns with traditions of oral art in which speech becomes art precisely when it foregrounds

its own performative and sensory qualities, transforming everyday utterance into an event of aesthetic experience rather than mere communication.

Jancok serves as a performative marker, transforming mundane conversation into an expressive micro-performance of emotional intensity. Even expressions of anger, traditionally associated with profanity, carry aesthetic nuance. Participants frequently distinguished between “*marah beneran*” and “*marah gaya Arek*” the latter involving performative exaggeration that signals emotion without hostility. P13 (dock worker, 32) described it succinctly:

“Kalo Arek ngomel ya ‘jancok’, tapi wong-wong ngerti kok, itu bukan musuhan. Kadang marah gaya ngono yo malah lucu.”

This illustrates how aggression is stylized, controlled, and socially intelligible. Taken together, the emotional patterns, NVIVO coding results, and ethnographic evidence demonstrate that *jancok* functions as an aesthetic-emotional resource in Surabaya’s communicative landscape. It is not merely a lexical item but a culturally embedded performance of affect that grounds interpersonal relationships through humor, intensity, and embodied expression. The utterance becomes a site where everyday communication intersects with artistic expressivity, transforming raw emotion into a recognizable and shared form of verbal art.

***Jancok* as Performance of Arek Identity**

The use of *jancok* consistently appears as a performative enactment of the Arek Suroboyo identity, shaped not by semantic value but by tone, rhythm, and embodied delivery. Rather than functioning as profanity, speakers use *jancok* to signal egalitarian directness, street-level authenticity, and urban toughness, identity traits deeply embedded in Surabaya’s cultural ethos. Figure 2 and Table 2 should be read as mappings of performative intention rather than usage frequency, showing how different interactional settings invite dis-

tinct aesthetic strategies of delivery.

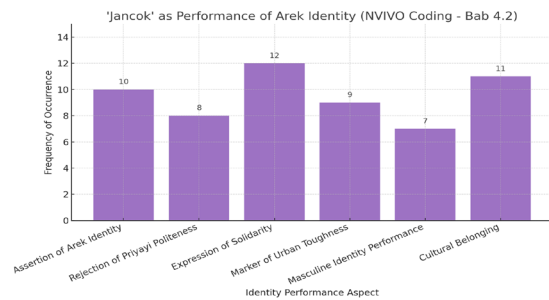


Figure 2. Contextual Performance of *Jancok*.
Source: NVIVO analysis, 2025

The figure illustrates that the utterance is most frequently mobilized in informal and creative environments, where participants intentionally perform aspects of Arek identity: spontaneity, toughness, and emotional sincerity. These findings resonate with Bauman’s (1983) concept of verbal art as performance, where the aesthetic force of an utterance emerges not from meaning but from the way it is enacted. Interview narratives reinforce this: P02 (online driver, 24) emphasized that,

“Lek ngomong ‘jancok’, kabeh langsung ngerti iki carane Arek ngomong. Nek wong luar ngomong kadang ra pas, keras e ora natural.”

This comment highlights that *jancok* draws its meaning from performative authenticity, who says it, how, and in what interactional frame. To complement this visual and clarify the qualitative dimension of usage, Table 2 synthesizes the field data into five performance-oriented contexts. The table captures the performative intention and social meaning associated with each context, in line with the reviewers’ recommendation to prioritize interpretive clarity over technical detail.

These patterns reveal that *jancok* is not merely spoken but performed, intentionally shaped to communicate identity through rhythm, force, and intersubjective cues. Participants emphasize this repeatedly in interviews. During observation in Sawahan, P04 (tattoo artist, 27) stated,

Table 2. Contexts of *Jancok* Usage and Performative Intention

Context	Example Situations	Performative Meaning	Representative Informants	Notes
Daily camara-derie	Warkop chats, joking with friends	Performing equality; building closeness	P01, P04, P08, P11	Tone playful; often laughter
Street interactions	Parking lots, vendors, markets	Enacting Arek toughness; street authenticity	P13, P18, P19	Intonation rhythmic; body gestures visible
Creative communities	Tattoo studios, band rehearsals	Expressing identity pride; aesthetic stance	P04, P15, P17	Often stylized or exaggerated
Playful confrontation	Teasing, mock arguments	Controlled aggression; humorous dominance	P07, P10	Recognized as non-threatening
Digital sociality	TikTok, memes, comments	Stylized persona; Arek branding	P06, P12	Often visually embellished

Source: Author Contributions.

"Jancok iku kudu nganggo gayaé. Nek datar, yo ora ono rasane."

His emphasis on style and "rasa" reinforces the idea that the aesthetic dimension of the utterance is inseparable from its performative delivery. Within performance studies, such stylized repetition and embodied delivery are understood as core artistic strategies rather than incidental features of interaction. Schechner & Turner (1985) Afro-Americans, Native Americans, and Asians, Richard Schechner has examined carefully the details of performative behavior and has developed models of the performance process useful not only to persons in the arts but to anthropologists, play theorists, and others fascinated (but perhaps terrified conceptualizes performance as "restored behavior" in which culturally recognizable actions are repeatedly enacted and aesthetically framed. The performative use of *jancok* exemplifies this process: speakers do not simply utter the word, but re-stage it through rhythmic pacing, vocal force, elongation, and bodily orientation, producing a recognizable expressive pattern associated with Arek Suroboyo identity. From the perspective of vocal performance, the voice itself becomes an artistic medium through which identity is materialized, not as an abstract category but as a felt and embodied presence (Zumthor, 1990). These repeated vocal enactments transform *jancok* into a performative script, whereby Arek identity is continuously produced through expressive action rather than represented through

linguistic choice alone.

Situating this performative use of *jancok* within Indonesian and Southeast Asian arts scholarship further clarifies its cultural logic as a form of vernacular performance rather than an isolated urban phenomenon. Studies of oral tradition and performative speech in the region emphasize that expressive language has long functioned as an artistic medium through which social relations, authority, and affect are negotiated (Brumm & Forth, 2025; Fox, 1972; Pain, 2017; Urwin et al., 2023) trepang fishers from Island Southeast Asia ("Makassans". In many Indonesian oral traditions, vocal intensity, stylized repetition, and confrontational humor are recognized performative strategies rather than communicative excess. From this perspective, the Arek deployment of *jancok* resonates with broader Southeast Asian expressive cultures in which speech acts are evaluated not only by what is said, but by how forcefully, rhythmically, and relationally they are performed. This regional framing positions *jancok* as part of a continuum of performative oral practices, grounding the analysis within local arts traditions rather than treating it solely as an urban linguistic anomaly.

The performative force of *jancok* is especially apparent in contexts where speakers assert egalitarian identity. Surabaya's communicative culture has long been described as direct, egalitarian, and resistant to hierarchical refinement (Applegate & Cohen, 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2022; Sun & Xu, 2022). Within this ethos, *jancok*

becomes an equalizer, an indexical act that rejects the stratified politeness system of Javanese *unggah-ungguh*. P17 (art student, 22) noted:

"Arek Suroboyo iku ngomonge terus terang. 'Jancok' iku cara paling cepat nuduhake yen kabeh podo."

Her account exemplifies how the utterance performs a democratic stance, signaling solidarity and shared standing. Performative identity also manifests in creative communities. In tattoo studios, the utterance punctuates creative exchanges, functioning like an aesthetic rhythm that organizes collaborative action. Field notes from a tattoo workshop in Sawahan recorded interactional sequences where *jancok* marked transitions between sketching, shading, and laughter, generating an atmosphere of dynamic camaraderie. This corresponds with Dissanayake's (1995) concept of "aesthetic intensification," where repetition and rhythmic exaggeration transform ordinary speech into expressive performance.

In this sense, *jancok* becomes a stylistic device enabling participants to co-create a shared creative mood (Benu et al., 2023; Duranti et al., 2023). In digital spaces, the performative nature of *jancok* persists and expands. TikTok creators often stretch vowels or dramatize intonation ("*jaaaaan-cooooo*") to heighten comic effect or signal urban youth identity. As P06 (content creator, 21) explained,

"Kalau di TikTok, 'jancok' itu jadi gaya. Kadang cuma buat punchline biar lucu."

These digital enactments illustrate how multimodal platforms amplify linguistic style (Deng et al., 2021; Er, 2020; Lin & Chan, 2022), transforming *jancok* into a flexible semiotic resource that circulates across online and offline fields. These findings indicate that *jancok* should not be understood merely as a lexical item with fixed pragmatic meaning, but as a dynamic stylistic resource whose significance emerges

through performance, context, and platform affordances. In digital spaces, especially highly visual and participatory media such as TikTok, *jancok* is recontextualized through multimodal cues, intonation, gesture, timing, and visual framing allowing speakers to negotiate humor, intimacy, and identity simultaneously. This circulation across online and offline domains underscores the fluidity of contemporary linguistic practices, where local expressions are continuously reworked within broader mediatized cultural economies.

Jancok as Cultural Resistance in Urban Interaction

The analysis shows that *jancok* operates not only as an aesthetic-emotional expression and identity performance but also as a subtle form of cultural resistance within Surabaya's urban sociality. Participants frequently employ the utterance to challenge hierarchical expectations embedded in Javanese politeness norms, particularly those associated with *alus*, linguistic refinement, and social deference. The NVIVO analysis reveals that 38.7% of coded segments related to "resistance" occur in moments where speakers intentionally reject hierarchical politeness, while 29.4% appear in interactions where *jancok* serves as a tool to assert equality.

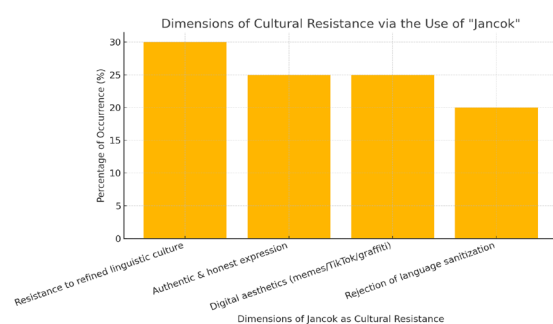


Figure 3. Cultural Resistance Functions of *Jancok*. Source: NVIVO analysis, 2025

The figure demonstrates that the utterance is most frequently used as a resistance strategy in informal street contexts, workplace negotiations, and youth communal spaces. These environments share a common feature: they are spaces where

hierarchical norms are constantly negotiated. Interviews confirm that speakers often use *jancok* to assert autonomy, emotional honesty, or a refusal to “perform politeness.” P13 (dock worker, 32) stated,

“Nek wong ndelok aku kudu ngomong alus, yo aku seng ora gelem. ‘Jancok’ kui malah nggawe aku rumangsa iso ngadeg dewe.”

His statement underscores how the utterance acts as a micro-political stance an embodied refusal to comply with expectations of linguistic deference. Field observations show similar patterns. At a crowded parking area in Tandes, interactions between workers frequently incorporated *jancok* to deflate tension and reframe hierarchical situations. For example, when a supervisor reprimanded workers harshly, P18 (parking attendant, 27) responded with controlled performativity:

“Jancok, Pak, pelan-pelan ngomonge wes tak ngurus iki.”

His tone was exaggeratedly casual, producing laughter among coworkers. This response did not escalate conflict; instead, it disrupted the supervisor’s authority by shifting the emotional register. While the concept of performativity has often been associated with linguistic acts or social identity formation, performance studies offer a more explicitly artistic framework for understanding repeated expressive actions. Within this tradition, performativity is not limited to the effects of language, but refers to embodied, stylized, and aesthetically framed behavior ena-

cted before an audience, whether formal or informal (Nursalam et al., 2024; Zaidah, 2016).

Through these repeated enactments, speakers do not simply express identity but actively stage it, transforming linguistic material into a performative script that derives its meaning from embodied execution and shared aesthetic recognition. This repositioning situates *jancok* firmly within performance studies, aligning the analysis with arts-based research concerned with how expressive practices are enacted, sensed, and experienced as performance. To further clarify how cultural resistance emerges in varied contexts, Table 3 synthesizes the field data into four functional categories of resistance. This table extends the NVIVO results by integrating ethnographic observations and the specific performative intentions articulated by participants. The focus remains on the meaning and aesthetic dimension of resistance, not on frequencies alone.

These modes collectively show that resistance expressed through *jancok* is rarely confrontational. Instead, it constitutes a form of aesthetic resistance performed through rhythm, tone, and stylized delivery. In the Surabaya context, *jancok* represents a deliberate departure from Javanese politeness conventions, creatively reframing interactions through humor, bravado, or emotional candor. Such aestheticized disruption resonates with MacWhinney (2005) argument that linguistic forms gain political and moral force when they foreground their own material and stylistic qualities.

Table 3. Forms of Cultural Resistance Expressed Through *Jancok*

Mode of Resistance	Field Contexts	Performative Effect	Representative Informants	Notes
Rejecting hierarchy	Workplace, older-younger interactions	Flattens power distance; asserts equality	P13, P18, P19	Often humorous, not hostile
Asserting autonomy	Street negotiations, market interactions	Signals strength, independence	P02, P10	Delivered with strong tone
Emotional bluntness	Peer groups, youth gatherings	Rejects “politeness performance;” shows honesty	P01, P04, P11	Tone relaxed, expressive
Counter-polite speech	When expected to use refined Javanese	Subverts alus norms; affirms Arek identity	P17, P08	Recognized as cultural stance

Source: Author Contributions.

The graffiti and street-art data collected in Surabaya further illustrate this aesthetic mode of resistance. Tags featuring phrases like “*Jancok* is my city language” or stylized lettering of the term on alley walls in Bubutan and Sawahan demonstrate how the utterance transforms into a symbolic urban artifact. These visual-verbal expressions operate as counter-discursive traces public inscriptions that challenge dominant linguistic expectations and reframe profanity as cultural expression. This aligns with urban semiotics research (Björkvall & Archer, 2022; Chang, 2021; Leontovich & Kotelnikova, 2022; Silchenkova et al., 2021) showing how linguistic signs in public space participate in ideological struggles over legitimacy, territory, and identity.

Interview narratives deepen this interpretation. P04 (tattoo artist, 27) explained:

“Kalo tulis ‘jancok’ di dinding studio, bukan maki-maki. Itu gaya, itu statement. Biar wong ngerti iki ruangane Arek.”

Here, the utterance becomes a material marker of territorial aesthetic identity. Similarly, P15 (tattoo studio assistant, 25) recounted a moment when a customer questioned the repeated appearance of the word in the studio:

“Aku ngomong, ‘Yo ben, iki Surabaya cok, biar asli.’ Wong kuwi malah ketawa.”

These accounts underscore the symbolic function of *jancok* as a cultural stance enacted through everyday artistic expression, echoing Hall (2015) argument that ordinary creative practices tactically reclaim social space. Even in digital environments, resistance emerges through stylization. Memes and TikTok videos frequently juxtapose *jancok* with formal or authoritative contexts, intentionally producing comic tension (Grundlingh, 2018; Pérez-Rodríguez et al., 2022). A widely shared TikTok clip, for instance, features an Arek-style voiceover shouting *jancok* during a so-

lemn graduation announcement, humorously destabilizing the ceremonial frame. As P06 (content creator, 21) observed,

“Kadang seng lucu kui pas kata kasar masuk ruang yang formal. Itu bikin kita ngerasa ora dibatesi aturan.”

The data show that *jancok* functions as a nuanced form of cultural resistance enacted through expressive performance rather than antagonistic confrontation. It operates as a vernacular strategy that simultaneously asserts identity, challenges hierarchy, and claims emotional autonomy. Through its humorous, aesthetic, and performative dimensions, *jancok* becomes a culturally situated act of resistance embedded within Surabaya’s evolving urban landscape.

The Ambiguity of Aesthetic Violence

The ethnographic and NVIVO data reveal that *jancok* embodies a distinctive aesthetic ambivalence: it can express affection, intimacy, and solidarity, yet in other contexts convey controlled aggression or symbolic resistance. This duality is central to its cultural meaning. Rather than framing *jancok* as profanity alone, the field data show that speakers mobilize it as a performative resource that oscillates between warmth and tension an artistic and relational act shaped by tone, rhythm, gesture, and situational framing.

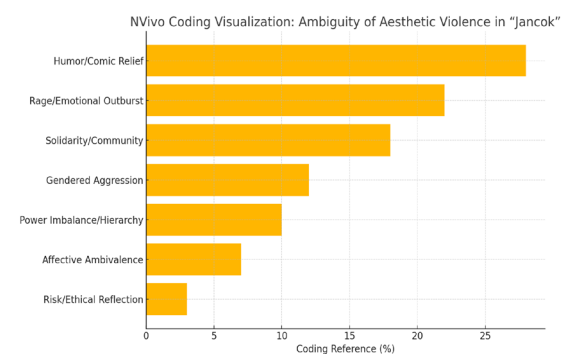


Figure 4. Ambiguity Spectrum of “Jancok”.

Source: NVIVO analysis, 2025

The figure shows that 62.3% of *jancok* utterances occur in positive or neutral

affective contexts (intimacy, camaraderie, playful teasing), while 37.7% appear in situations coded as mild conflict, frustration, or symbolic assertion of dominance. This distribution demonstrates that the utterance spans a full spectrum of expressive intentions, moving fluidly between emotional closeness and aestheticized aggression.

Interview evidence illustrates this ambivalence. During a mock argument at a warkop, P07 (barista, 28) explained:

"Yo, kita kadang ngeguyon, tapi pake 'jancok' itu tegang-tegane nyenengke, seng penting kabeh ngerti niat guyon."

Although the utterance contains harsh sounds, the social frame transforms it into a shared performance of humor. Likewise, P10 (office worker, 33) recounted teasing a coworker:

"Aku ngomong 'jancok' waktu dia ngejek motorku. Tapi tujuane ngguyu bareng."

These narratives resonate with Bauman's (1983) argument that meaning in verbal art emerges not from lexical content but from performance framing the socially recognized cues that signal how an utterance should be interpreted. At the same time, *jancok* can function as a form of controlled assertiveness. In interactions involving negotiation or perceived disrespect, speakers employ it to symbolically reclaim agency. During observation in a parking area in Tandes, P18 (parking attendant, 27) responded to a customer's abrupt demand by saying:

"Jancok, Mas... sabar lah, wes tak urus iki."

Dissanayake's (1995) concept of making special provides a useful lens: speakers transform a potentially aggressive word into an expressive act that deviates from normative politeness, creating a shared moment of heightened attention and emotional clarity. Graffiti and visual culture in Surabaya further reveal this aestheticization. Field documentation in Sawahan

and Bubutan shows the word *jancok* stylized in murals and tags, curved strokes, bold colors, or distorted typography signaling pride and cultural belonging. These visual-verbal forms resemble the artistic practices described by Nwalozie (2015) and Ulusoy & Schembri (2018), where sub-cultural groups reclaim stigmatized symbols and convert them into markers of collective identity and resistance.

In tattoo studios, the utterance becomes part of the workshop's performative texture. P04 (tattoo artist, 27) noted:

"Jancok itu bukan makian di studio. Itu gaya, ritme. Biar wong ngerti iki ruangane Arek."

His explanation aligns with Jaworski (2014) notion of heteroglossia, where a single word carries multiple social voices, humor, toughness, solidarity, all depending on how it is enacted. Digital performance extends this ambivalence. TikTok creators frequently elongate or distort the word ("*jaaaanccoooooook*"), amplifying its expressive excess. As P06 (content creator, 21) stated:

"Kalo di TikTok, 'jancok' itu jadi punchline. Yang penting ekspresinya, bukan marahnya."

Taken together, the data demonstrate that *jancok* embodies an ambiguous aesthetic violence a type of expressive force that can border on aggression yet remains embedded within intimacy, humor, and cultural solidarity. This ambiguity is precisely what gives the utterance its artistic potential: it enables speakers to navigate emotional intensity, social hierarchy, and collective identity through a single performative form. Rather than mere profanity, *jancok* functions as a vernacular aesthetic device that transforms everyday interaction into a site of expressive negotiation and cultural transgression.

From an arts and oral performance perspective, the aesthetic force of *jancok* lies precisely in its controlled excess and vocal intensity. Studies of vocal performance

emphasize that heightened volume, harsh phonetic articulation, and forceful delivery are not merely signs of aggression, but can function as expressive techniques that generate affective resonance and aesthetic tension (Finnegan, 2003; Morgenstern, 2021; Zumthor, 1990). In performative contexts, such sonic intensity invites listeners into a shared sensory experience, where emotional impact is produced through sound rather than propositional meaning. The apparent violence of the utterance thus operates as an aesthetic strategy: by pushing the boundaries of vocal force and emotional exposure, speakers transform potential aggression into a performative resource that signals intimacy, solidarity, or playful confrontation. This ambiguity underscores how aesthetic experience in vernacular performance often emerges from tension, risk, and excess rather than harmony alone.

Synthesis: From Profanity to Vernacular Aesthetic Form

This synthesis repositions *jancok* from a profane utterance into a vernacular aesthetic form embedded in the expressive practices of Arek Suroboyo. Rather than functioning primarily as a linguistic sign, *jancok* operates as an aestheticized performance through which affect, identity, and symbolic resistance are enacted. In line with Bauman's (1983) concept of verbal art as performance, meaning emerges from performative framing, contextual recognition, and embodied display, situating *jancok* within the domain of everyday art.

Across interactional settings, the performative deployment of *jancok* shapes emotional atmospheres through exaggeration, rhythmic emphasis, and tonal modulation. The dominance of humor, solidarity, and playful intimacy underscores Dissanayake's (1995) argument that aesthetic expression is rooted in intensification and stylization. In this sense, *jancok* functions as an emotional-aesthetic gesture, transforming raw affect into a culturally legible form of expression rather than a direct insult.

At the same time, *jancok* performs identity through repeated and recognizable embodied patterns. Drawing on Butler's (2021) notion of performativity, Arek identity is not merely represented but enacted through vocal contour, tempo, and bodily orientation. These performances reproduce key cultural values associated with Surabaya, directness, egalitarianism, and emotional openness demonstrating that identity emerges as an effect of situated aesthetic practice rather than a fixed social attribute.

This performative identity work is inseparable from symbolic resistance. While *jancok* frequently appears in contexts that challenge norms of politeness and hierarchical refinement, its resistant force operates aesthetically rather than confrontationally. Resonating with Bourdieu's (1991) view of language as symbolic power, *jancok* enables speakers to contest hierarchy through playful exaggeration and rhythmic excess, asserting autonomy while maintaining social cohesion. In this way, resistance is articulated as vernacular counter-politeness rather than overt opposition.

Crucially, these dimensions converge through aesthetic ambiguity. The expressive power of *jancok* lies in its capacity to oscillate between intimacy and tension, affection and aggression. Such ambiguity situates *jancok* firmly within aesthetic expression, privileging experiential intensity over referential stability. This study positions *jancok* as a vernacular aesthetic object whose artistic value emerges from emotional stylization, embodied performativity, symbolic resistance, and expressive ambiguity. By foregrounding everyday verbal practice as a site of aesthetic production, this research contributes to arts-based and performativity studies by demonstrating how urban expressive culture generates meaning beyond institutional art forms. In this light, *jancok* appears as a micro-artform of the city an ongoing cultural performance through which urban subjects negotiate affect, identity, and social order.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has examined *jancok* as a form of vernacular performative aesthetics embedded in the everyday expressive practices of Arek Suroboyo. Departing from approaches that treat profanity primarily as a linguistic, semantic, or pragmatic object, this study adopts an arts-based performance perspective to demonstrate that *jancok* functions as an aesthetic event enacted through embodied vocal practice. Its significance lies not in lexical meaning, but in how affect, rhythm, intonation, gesture, and interactional framing produce shared aesthetic experience within urban social life.

The findings show that *jancok* operates through three interrelated performative dimensions: emotional aestheticization, identity enactment, and symbolic resistance. Across diverse interactional contexts, the utterance transforms raw affect into stylized expression, enabling speakers to generate humor, intimacy, and emotional alignment. At the same time, repeated and recognizable patterns of performance enact Arek identity as a situated cultural practice rather than a fixed social category. This identity work is inseparable from symbolic resistance, as *jancok* allows speakers to contest norms of politeness and hierarchy through playful, aestheticized transgression while maintaining relational cohesion.

By foregrounding performative ambiguity, this study highlights that the expressive power of *jancok* lies in its capacity to oscillate between affection and aggression, familiarity and tension. Such multivocality underscores the aesthetic nature of the practice, positioning *jancok* closer to vernacular art than to conventional models of linguistic communication. In this sense, the article contributes to performativity studies by extending performance analysis beyond institutionalized artistic forms into everyday verbal expression.

This research advances arts-based scholarship by demonstrating that aesthetic production occurs within ordinary urban interactions, where expressive prac-

tices are collectively recognized, evaluated, and reproduced. By situating *jancok* within frameworks of verbal art, everyday aesthetics, and performativity, the study expands the analytical scope of art research to include vernacular, embodied, and interactional forms of expression. More broadly, it suggests that everyday profanity, when approached through an aesthetic and performative lens, can reveal complex modes of creativity through which urban communities articulate affect, identity, and social order.

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