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## Manifestations of Slang in Improving Informal Subvariety of The Indonesian Language

Qurrota Ayu Neina<sup>1\*</sup> & Tran Thi Khanh Vi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Semarang- Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>University Of Social Sciences And Humanities - Ho Chi Minh City - Vietnam

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### Abstract

Slang is a unique phenomenon in society. Related to this phenomenon, slang is a language commonly used by the community, often with modified vocabulary. Slang is an increasingly prevalent social phenomenon among young people today. Based on previous research, several factors have triggered its resurgence among young people. Related to this, this article will discuss the manifestation of slang as one of the informal subvarieties in Indonesia. The use of slang is recommended to be able to develop in a society with several considerations, including (a) Slang is just one subvariety of Indonesian; (b) Slang increases the expressive power and diversity of Indonesian; (c) Slang indicates cultural pluralism in Indonesian; (d) Slang is just a variant form of the informal variety of Indonesian. Thus, slang and its use cannot be considered vulgar.

\*E-mail:

[neina@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:neina@mail.unnes.ac.id)

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## INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in shaping society. Language in a community environment is dynamic, constantly shifting and changing according to a society's culture. The language teenagers, known as the millennial generation, use has changed and evolved over time and with technology. As a result of such development, adolescents begin to use slang. If we look and explore how the millennial generation uses language, especially slang, we will find many peculiarities.

The peculiarities that Indonesian young people use are also often called "slang." Slang is a phenomenon in itself among the public. Teenagers usually use this type of language daily to communicate with their peers. Society in this context is not only determined by geographical factors but is more complex than that, for example, age (Oktaviani, 2014a; Saputra & Aida, 2019). With their turbulent psychological state due to conflicts among various values, they form their own culture based on the values and norms they believe in. The culture commonly referred to as pop culture then affects all aspects of their lives, including the language style they use (Febrianti & Pulungan, 2021; Marsudi, 2008; Marsudi & Zahrok, 2015).

During the interaction, the slang teenagers use will foster a friendly environment. This is because slang can express a teenager's mood and is often more relaxed. This is corroborated by (Marsudi & Zahrok, 2015; and Saputra and Aida, 2019), which reveal that teenagers usually use slang when interacting in the real world and cyberspace. Teen slang is quite attention-grabbing, but trying to understand it only makes things more confusing and triggers anger. Not everyone can know what they say or mean when they write and converse with a friend.

Related to this phenomenon, the language adolescents use is common in society; the difference lies in how they modify their vocabulary when communicating. The shape of the modification is such that letters may be reversed, the words are shorter, and new terms or foreign terms are used, as well as other ways to modify them. Putri (2017), Setyawati (2014), and Yi et al. (2017) reveal that of the many vocabularies that teenagers use, some are difficult to understand. However, other words have precise meanings and functions. Some people may find this confusing due to unfamiliarity with, or misunderstanding of, even the most fundamental aspects of teenage language. Not infrequently, many people assume that teenagers are engrossed in playing tricks, and some argue that slang damages morals and degrades the proper Indonesian order.

The young people who use Indonesian in this context are not to blame. The ability of young people to adapt to slang is undoubtedly facilitated by its widespread use in cyberspace. (Annisa et al., 2022; Yi et al., 2017). For example, almost all television soap operas, advertisements, and various social media support use slang. Moreover, some writers seem to prefer experimenting with slang rather than maintaining Indonesian in their writing. (Asqo Balqis et al., 2023; Oni-Buraimoh & Adeyelure-Macaulay, 2018; Suleman & Islamiyah, 2018). This leads to a decrease in the use of proper Indonesian.

Slang is an increasingly prevalent social phenomenon among young people today. Based on previous research, several factors have triggered its resurgence among young people. *First*, many young people idolize and even look up to celebrities as role models. Young people use various habits and celebrity lifestyles as examples. They imitated the behavior and even the way of speaking of those celebrities. Celebrities usually use this "slang" language. Young people are more interested in the language celebrities use than in the formal language used by bureaucrats, businesspeople, politicians, and academics (Asqo Balqis et al., 2023; Astriyani, 2022).

*Second*, the proliferation and acceleration of slang use are both driven by technological developments. Today, many rural communities or those considered poor own luxury goods such as televisions and mobile phones. In other words, this instrument is now the most efficient way to spread slang. Therefore, it is unsurprising that many individuals, especially young people, will quickly understand and imitate new terms that celebrities have aired on television. Young people today find it challenging to understand the language celebrities use, thanks to technological advancements, as shown by screen media. (Anjani, 2018; Arisandy et al., 2019; Arsanti & Setiana, 2020; Nahak, 2019).

*Third* is the drive to create variants (Indonesian) that can express feelings and thoughts and be used as identities. Young people consider the standard language rigid and challenging to understand, and its formal nature creates distant social relations. For them, the language should be understood, easy to use, and generate familiarity among the people using it (Ramdhani & Enawar, 2019; Sari, 2015). That is how young people see, respond to, and understand the language from their perspective.

Based on this assumption, it is suspected that such a young person's perspective is why they adapt their language to accommodate slang. Therefore, they made linguistic efforts to build

language systems appropriate to their understanding.

Furthermore, if examined more closely and linked to the linguistic context of words such as *kuy*, *hayuk*, *gasken*, and *mangat*, it reveals young people's linguistic innovation. Slang is a variety of language that can be understood as an informal subvariety of Indonesian. Slang usage situations that pertain to users and are associated with variants of language used in close, familiar, and casual social situations significantly impact the meaning of slang (Assapari, 2014; Krongauz, 2007; Silva et al., 2022). This variation is, therefore, referred to as slang about the socio-psychological context in which it is used.

Related to this, this article will discuss the manifestation of slang as one of the informal subvarieties in Indonesia. The development of technology and information, and the friction between Indonesian and other languages, are inevitable necessities. This includes language development. Therefore, it is necessary to manage slang as one of the informal subvarieties of Indonesian to avoid interference with the formal use, development, and preservation of Indonesian.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

### **The Development of Slang in Indonesia**

Slang, according to Chaer and Agustina (2004), is a social variation that is special and secretive. Certain circles use this variation, which is very limited and should not be known by circles outside the group. In addition to being unique and secretive, slang is also temporal. Therefore, vocabulary constantly changes in response to social changes that affect language development. This is corroborated by Hilaliyah (2010), who states that slang, also called coded language, It is used and favored by confident teenagers. However, if it gets out of hand, it may lead to misunderstandings.

According to Oktaviani (2014b) Slang is a style of language that develops or modifies various languages, including Indonesian, so it does not have a definite stylistic structure. Most words in teenage slang are translations, abbreviations, or puns. However, sometimes strange words are also created, making tracing their origin difficult. Next, Firman (2008) explains that using slang can enrich the language's vocabulary by communicating old words with new words.

There are many variations and differences in slang depending on the city in which one lives, mainly influenced by the language of the region, which is different from the ethnicities that make up the majority population in the city (Hermaji, 2016). Today, slang has been widely assimilated and is commonly used in daily conversation, in popular

media such as TV, radio, and national cinema, and in publications aimed at teenagers, such as popular youth magazines.

According to Akbar and Robbany (n.d.), Slang is a non-standard Indonesian commonly used in Jakarta in the 1970s, which was later replaced by various slang languages. This language is also often called coded language, understood only by certain groups. Like Indonesian, slang has also evolved. The development involves adding and subtracting words. Even some old vocabulary has begun to shift with new vocabulary. Therefore, each generation has its own characteristics in language use.

According to Grossman and Tucker (1997) and Suleman and Islamiyah (2018), Slang is a typical language of adolescents (words are altered so they can be understood only within groups). It can be understood by almost all teenagers in the country who are reached by the mass media, even though these terms are evolving, changing, and increasing almost daily. The two definitions complement each other. The first definition only explains that slang is a language with unique terms. In contrast, the second definition is made clear again: those who use the language are teenagers, and the language will continue to grow.

The development of slang has undergone many changes over time, influenced by foreign-language expressions such as OTW (On The Way) and OMG (Oh My God). The use of slang from generation to generation never stops, even though it is not a formal language. From the explanation of the meaning of the stated slang, it can be concluded that slang is a social language used by specific communities, usually used by teenagers. Especially young people who use this language relate slang to social and educational aspects.

### **Linguistic Creativity in Slang in Indonesia**

According to the sociolinguistic view, language exhibits a wide variety of social variations that structural theoretical frameworks cannot account for, and it is naïve to call those variations 'performance'. The task of a sociolinguist is to explain the relationship between language variations and social factors, both situationally and implicationally (Wijana & Rohmadi, 2006).

Humans, as social beings, need language to communicate. Language enables interaction between humans. Every language has similarities in sound, form, grammar, sentences, and meaning. However, the language varies due to age, education, religion, field of activity, profession, and the region's cultural background (Chaer & Agustina, 2004).

Along with the times, the language has also developed. Technological developments also

contribute to language development. Differences in groups, occupations, activities, and communities contribute to linguistic diversity. These factors can be said to be among the causes of language variation. The occurrence of language diversity is not only caused by speakers who cannot live alone, but also by social interaction activities carried out in different ways. Speakers in a vast area will lead to more linguistic diversity.

If we look deeper and relate to the linguistic context in general, lingual practices carried out by young people are considered to have become verbal opportune. Parents do not yet possess the linguistic competence that causes lingual symptoms among young people. That is why, in practice, there is a language gap between the elderly and the young, or exaggerated expressions can be understood as "*lingual shock*" among the elderly.

The linguistic creativity of young people in practice has led to linguistic divergence, so it is not surprising that this phenomenon creates a disparity in communication between young people and the elderly in society. As we all know, natural language changes take a long time to become new variants. In the future, new language variants will not cause communication disparities among social groups within the language community.

Rahyono (2015) said that when language is used in the context of communication, language is interwoven with culture in complex and many different ways. It is defined as fragmenting a language into several dialects due to the absence of standard educational facilities and insufficient communication (Kridalaksana, 2008). In the context of sociolinguistics, this is understood as divergence, which means that language is understood as the process of splitting a language into dialects, dialects into subdialects, or variety into subvarieties, either due to internal or external factors, resulting in difficulties in specific speech communities to understand the new variant (Martinet, 1987).

The development of slang among young people is driven by language contact, which, over time, leads to the absorption and adoption of these linguistic elements into Indonesian slang through code-switching and interference. According to the author, these two linguistic symptoms have shaped and sustained the pace of slang development among young people (zein).

### Analysis and Discussion

Based on theoretical studies, Indonesians develop in two directions: formal Indonesian and non-formal Indonesian. Over time, the variety of informal languages has become increasingly in demand and favored by most Indonesians,

especially young people. The rapid development and use of informal language reflect the increasing familiarity of young people with internet technology, especially among teenagers. According to Febrianti & Pulungan (2021), The emergence of slang (non-formal) also reflects a very dynamic era, as language must adapt to society to survive. Although not a formal language, the use of slang from generation to generation has not diminished. This shows that a teenager tends to have a limited language in communicating. There is nothing wrong with that. Therefore, teenagers do not express themselves the same way. One of them is the use of slang.

In addition, a person's ability to use two or more languages may lead to code-switching when communicating. The tendency of young people to be bilingual in their mother tongue (regional language), Indonesian, and English also allows for code-mixing. However, when speakers of the same language group speak two or more languages, some aspects of one language (the source language) are transferred to another (the receiving language). There is a linguistic levy or *inference* as a result.

The speaker himself creates a model or design for interference. It moves one or more linguistic elements from one language to another, combining and mixing them. This kind of thinking is consistent with what is happening in young people's linguistic experience today. The language they use to communicate with each other today is an Indonesian code that has interfered with several other languages. Disorders of slang do not always occur naturally, but there are some modifications, prestige, and contemporary impressions (Yi et al., 2017). This is corroborated by Silva et al. (2022), who reveals that the achievement of symptoms in such communication is carried out by introducing parts of a foreign language into slang, the introduction of foreign language components is intentionally based on a specific purpose.

The secret to being creative when producing slang is passion or tireless passion for creating vocabulary. Akbar & Robbany, n.d. reveal that this invention process shows how the seeds of innovation have managed to penetrate linguistic reality. Slang is a way for young people to express their identity while demonstrating their ability to preserve culture for future generations. Slang is a cultural communication tool developed through a creative process, portrays teenagers' identities, and is shared among them to foster a sense of community.

The beneficial and detrimental effects of discussing slang are two positions of mutual attraction. Why not adopt different perspectives and put those different points of view side by side?

In other words, slang needs to be used appropriately. Maintain slang, which is the basis of relationships within the boundaries of associations. The key is to convey the idea of building fair and friendly relationships without undermining the previous order.

Through their research, Zein and Wagati (2018) revealed that slang is only short-term (temporary) and limited to certain circles. Slang is present, but it looks natural because it reflects the demands of the times, especially for young people. In addition, using slang can refine our speech compared to Indonesian, which is more rigid and limited.

The Indonesian lexicon is enriched with new terms and slang, regardless of whether the default language is corrupted. The ability to distinguish between standard and nonstandard Indonesian is necessary for users. Slang is only temporary, comes and goes, and will always exist. Thus, its existence need not be questioned repeatedly regarding whether it harms the preservation of the language order. Only young people try to form communities that use slang. Slang serves as a way for its users to convey their sense of community. Slang users also want to distinguish themselves from others and identify with a particular community, which is why they use it.

Why is the use of slang allowed to flourish in society? There are many explanations; here are the reasons: (a) slang is just one subvariety of Indonesian; (b) slang actually enhances the expressive power and diversity of Indonesian; (c) slang indicates cultural pluralism in Indonesian; (d) Slang is merely a variant form of the informal variety of Indonesian. Thus, slang and its use cannot be considered vulgar.

### ***Slang as a subvariety of Indonesian***

Slang is part of the diversity of Indonesians that continues to grow with the times and culture. In linguistics, slang among young people is considered one of the language variants prevalent among youth. Positioned as a variant of language, slang can also be considered an informal variety of Indonesian.

In the context of meaning, slang is strongly influenced by the situation in which it is used. It is associated with a variant of language used in close, familiar, and relaxed social situations. Therefore, this variant, referred to as "slang," is associated with the psycho-social situation of its use. Given its widespread use, this language is becoming a "trend" among young people today. If it is associated with cultural phenomena, slang can be

considered one of the cultural phenomena spreading among young people.

### ***Slang can increase the expressive power and diversity of Indonesian***

New slang expressions can be seen in the linguistic practices of young people, especially on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Line. The social media-based lingual practice has influenced young people's everyday lingual practice, especially in their associations. According to the elders' understanding, the linguistic practice that gave rise to the expression "hodgepodge" still sounds strange to them. However, for young people, the lingual practice is ordinary, natural, creative, and communicative.

In practice, young people use many terms that have experienced symptoms of reductionism, abbreviation, and acronymization. The appearance of this symptom does not seem to obtain a shorter, shorter, and less wordy form from expressions considered long. However, certain social factors also contribute to the appearance of these symptoms.

Another factor behind the linguistic creativity of young people's practices is the linguistic factor. Many young people are 'talkative,' following their role models or idols in all aspects of life, including language. Almost every television show follows the language practices of celebrities, who often use slang. The lingual phenomenon is followed and imitated by young people in the real world and associated with social media networks.

Advances in communication and information technology are another factor behind linguistic creativity in young people's linguistic practices. This advancement in communication and information technology is driving the acceleration and spread of slang among young people. The existing development is evident in the high intensity of communication tools and technologies, such as television, telephones, and devices. Today, these goods are no longer seen as owned only by the rich or urban people, but are widely owned by people living in villages and rural areas. In other words, such means of communication have become the most effective and efficient means of spreading slang.

The last factor is the desire to create variants (Indonesian) that can support the expression of the speaker's feelings, thoughts, and lingual identity. Young people view standard language (Indonesian formal) as a complicated, rigid form that leads to distant communication. For young people, the practice of language is the practice of transferring information, so in its use, language must be easy to understand, easy to use,

and cause familiarity between speakers when communication occurs. Based on this assumption, it is suspected that young people's perspective has encouraged creativity in their language.

### ***Slang as a form of cultural pluralism in Indonesia***

With the advent of slang, Indonesians are increasingly diverse and rich, and this shows how important cultural and linguistic diversity is in building an inclusive and pluralist national identity. Slang can be considered a form of cultural pluralism in Indonesia for several reasons. The first factor is the variety of slang origins. Slang often uses words from various foreign languages, such as English, Japanese, Korean, or Mandarin. This shows the influence of foreign cultures on Indonesian slang.

The second factor is the role of regional influences in the use of slang. Slang can also come from regional influences or local culture. Each region in Indonesia has its own language and culture, and slang in a particular region can reflect the influence of its local language or culture. The third factor is technological and social media development. The development of technology and social media has accelerated the spread of slang among young people in Indonesia. Young people across regions can interact and share the slang they use, making it more diverse.

The fourth factor is the existence of creativity and innovation in its creation. Slang also reflects creativity and innovation, creating new words and expressions that reflect social, cultural, technological, and societal changes.

### ***Slang as an informal variety in Indonesian***

In order to be included in a particular language variant, a language must fulfill the characteristics that mark it. Variability in an aspect of language can serve as a marker of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, paralinguistic elements, and physiological forms of written language. In the context of slang in the Indonesian variant, it has a simple, concise, solid nature, many reductions (both in word construction and syntax), and deviations from standard linguistic rules.

Summarized from the research conducted by Zein and Wagiaty (2018) Two aspects can serve as lexical characteristics of slang among young people: morphological features and word origins. In the context of morphological aspects, slang among young people can be classified into four types, namely (1) everyday words, (2) reduction words, (3) abbreviated words (abbreviations), and (4) acronyms. As for the context of word origin, slang among young people can be divided into three

groups: words derived from Indonesian, regional languages, and foreign languages.

Indeed, everyone often finds themselves in informal settings, which makes multilingualism helpful. However, let us not forget the excellent and authentic Indonesian. Slang should be used appropriately, in the right situation, in synchronous media settings, and when speaking to an appropriate audience.

Slang inherently does not harm the progress of Indonesians because each variety has a unique context and purpose of use. Indonesian citizens, especially young people, must strive to uphold and respect the ideals for which their ancestors fought since October 28, 1928, by acting appropriately.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and discussion results, several recommendations regarding the manifestation of slang as an informal subvariety of Indonesian can be put forward. Among others are the following.

1. Slang can be recommended as one of the subvarieties of informal Indonesian.
2. The use of slang in certain circles, in this context, the environment of young people, can be used by paying attention to relationships within the boundaries of associations and conveying ideas for building fair, friendly relationships without damaging the previous order.
3. Restrictions on the use of slang are nothing to worry about because they only apply to specific communities and last for a short period.

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