

The Influence of Slang Use on Social Media X and TikTok on the Written Language Skills of Makassar State University Students

Sitti Hasbiah*

Program Studi Manajemen, Universitas Negeri Makassar

²Department, University, City, Country

*Corresponding Author: sittihاسبiah@unm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the use of slang by Brawijaya University students on social media and analyze its impact on their ability to write good and correct Indonesian. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of semi-structured interviews with twelve active students who use TikTok and X. The results of the study indicate that slang is widely used to build familiarity and communication efficiency in informal contexts. However, most respondents are also aware of the limitations of its use in formal situations and demonstrate the ability to adjust language style according to the context. Slang is seen as a form of expression of identity and linguistic creativity, but has the potential to blur linguistic norms if used without control. Therefore, formal language literacy development is important so that students are able to sort and use language varieties according to the situation. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of contextual awareness in language use to maintain the quality of academic communication amidst the ever-evolving digital culture.

Keywords: slang, social media, writing skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a primary means of communication, serving not only as a means of conveying messages but also as a reflection of identity, culture, and social relations. Each person's use of a particular language reflects their particular culture and origins. In modern social life, particularly in the current digital era, a unique linguistic phenomenon has emerged: the widespread use of slang among teenagers, particularly university students (Iswatiningsih & Pangesti, 2021). Slang, in this context, refers to a form of informal language that is dynamic, full of innovation, and often contains abbreviations with specific meanings. This term often develops and becomes popular on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. This indicates that social media is a primary platform for the development of this language.

Teenagers and university students are age groups that are highly active in social media. They are not only social media users but also language trend setters. In this context, slang functions as a symbol of group solidarity, an expression of freedom, and a reflection of ever-changing social dynamics. In research conducted by Fawaid et al. (2021), it was found that the use of slang has become a hallmark of communication among today's youth. In practice, slang is used not only to build intimacy but also as a communication strategy that is fast, efficient, and relevant to developments in popular culture. Many people end up using slang because they believe it makes them easier to recognize and build relationships.

However, the widespread use of slang also raises concerns, particularly regarding its impact on students' written language skills in academic contexts. Several previous studies have highlighted that the frequent use of non-standard language can affect the ability to write with structure and spelling that

conform to Indonesian language rules. Written language should prioritize clarity, politeness, and accuracy. Many people feel concerned and anxious when this slang continues to be used, and as a result, more people write in a slang style due to social media. This is feared to cause problems in the real world, where many people prefer slang to proper and correct Indonesian.

Slang, which should be situational and contextual, has in fact infiltrated formal spaces that require precise language. If not recognized and limited, it can potentially reduce students' overall language competence. Furthermore, this phenomenon also has the potential to create a broader shift in language norms, including in higher education, which should uphold the use of proper and correct Indonesian.

Although several previous studies have discussed the phenomenon of slang use by adolescents and its impact on language skills, most have focused on the context of school students or, more generally, on the millennial and Gen Z generations. This research presents novelty by focusing on students at Brawijaya University in Malang, a region that has not been widely studied in similar contexts. Brawijaya students have diverse and distinctive socio-cultural backgrounds and high levels of exposure to social media, making them relevant and interesting subjects for further research. Thus, this research not only complements previous studies but also enriches our understanding of the dynamics of slang use in a more specific and contextual academic context.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe the forms of slang use by adolescents on social media and analyze its impact on students' writing skills, particularly in the context of good and correct Indonesian language use. Furthermore, this study also discusses the influence of slang on writing style and vocabulary, as well as shifts in language norms in academic settings.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the phenomenon of slang use by students on social media and its impact on their written language skills. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore experiences, perspectives, and language habits in depth in a natural social context. The research location was Brawijaya University, Malang, with the subjects being students who actively use TikTok and X social media. Informants were selected purposively, namely those who habitually use slang in online communication.

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 12 students and non-participant observation during the interview process. The research instruments included a question guide, field notes, and a voice recorder. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, starting with interview transcription, data coding, and identifying relevant key themes. To ensure data validity, the researcher used source and technical triangulation techniques, and conducted member checking with several informants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

To collect data, the author conducted interviews with 12 informants. The interviews revealed that the majority of respondents actively use social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as a means of daily communication. Rasyid stated that he frequently uses social media platforms like TikTok, while Nuzula stated that her most frequently used platforms are Instagram and YouTube. This indicates that social media platforms have become the primary platform for the circulation of slang among students at Brawijaya University. The use of slang was highly prevalent among the interview respondents. Eleven of the 12 respondents admitted to frequently using slang in social media communications. One of the underlying reasons cited was efficiency in communication and the creation of a relaxed atmosphere. One informant

stated, "I often use slang because I think it saves time when I'm in a hurry." (Interview with Nuzula – May 18, 2025). Furthermore, another informant added, "Using slang makes it easier to communicate with friends on social media or in everyday life." (Interview with Tevy – May 18, 2025). This led both respondents to perceive slang as easier to use and more efficient in communication. However, there were also diverse views regarding

the influence of slang on the ability to speak good and correct Indonesian. Several informants admitted to being affected, stating, "The use of slang really affects the ability to write good and correct Indonesian." (Interview with Nazwa – May 18, 2025). Another informant added, "Yes, sometimes I forget the correct spelling or formal/standard form of a word." (Interview with Alma – May 18, 2025). On the other hand, some reported no difficulties or impacts, such as Salsabila, who stated, "No," when asked whether the use of slang affects the ability to write good and correct Indonesian.

Awareness of adapting slang use according to context also emerged in several interviews. One source emphasized, "We use slang when we're with friends, except when speaking to seniors or lecturers." (Interview with Salsabila – May 18, 2025). Alma revealed that she "still pays attention to etiquette" when speaking to elders. Soraya also said, "We have to use polite language with our parents." (Interview with Soraya – May 18, 2025). Critical views also emerged regarding the social impact of slang use. Keysia highlighted changing language norms, saying, "For example, there's a child who calls his parents 'you, me'" (Interview with Keysia – May 18, 2025), while Natasya added, "Students still use slang when contacting lecturers. This is certainly not in accordance with norms and ethics." (Interview with Natasya – May 18, 2025). These views demonstrate concerns about shifting norms of language politeness in a digital society.

Although slang has become part of everyday communication routines, particularly on social media, it is not necessarily used uniformly across all contexts. Instead, users appear quite capable of censoring or modifying their language style when faced with situations that require formality or show respect, such as when speaking with lecturers, teachers, or elders (Ariska & Usiono, 2025). This ability is closely related to an understanding of the social norms inherent in verbal communication and demonstrates that language is not only a tool for conveying messages, but also a tool for negotiating social relationships and interpersonal status.

In this context, register theory, developed by M.A.K. Halliday, provides a highly relevant framework for understanding the dynamics of slang use. According to Halliday, register refers to the variation of language used in a particular situation and is determined by three main parameters: field (the area or topic of conversation), tenor (the relationship between participants), and mode (the medium or method of communication). Slang typically appears in casual or light-hearted conversations, such as conversations about everyday life, entertainment, or joking (Siahaan et al., 2024). In terms of tenor, its use tends to occur between participants in horizontal or equal relationships, for example, friends, peers, or online communities with similar cultural identities. In terms of mode, slang is more appropriate for spontaneous, personal, and less structured communication, such as text messages, social media comments, or informal online conversations.

However, when any of these three parameters change, for example, the conversation becomes academic or professional, the relationship between participants becomes vertical, such as between students and lecturers, or the communication medium becomes more formal, such as an official email or written document, the use of slang is considered inappropriate (Sinaga et al., 2025). In such contexts, a formal register with more standardized, polite, and structured language is required. Therefore, an individual's ability to shift from one register to another demonstrates a high level of linguistic literacy, including mastery of the forms and functions of language varieties in complex social life.

This awareness can also be understood as part of sociolinguistic competence, namely the ability to choose a language variety that is in accordance with the social norms and values of the society in which one lives. In the theory of communicative competence proposed by Dell Hymes, successful communication is not only.

English slang depends not only on mastery of grammar, but also on the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. In this regard, informants indicated that they understand when and with whom they can use slang, and when to revert to standard Indonesian to maintain politeness and credibility. Therefore, the issue is not the existence of slang itself, but rather the appropriateness of its use. The free use of slang is indeed part of the younger generation's identity expression and a means of fostering familiarity. However, when used in inappropriate situations, such as in academic or formal communication, slang can convey the impression of being impolite, unprofessional, and even disrespectful of the prevailing social hierarchy. Therefore, it is important not to immediately judge slang as a form of language degradation, but rather to consider how its use is adapted to the social context and the purpose of the communication.

The Indonesian language plays a crucial role as the national identity of the Indonesian people. It is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of identity and a unifying force that binds the diversity of tribes, cultures, and ethnicities within Indonesia into a unified whole. This language is a distinctive characteristic that distinguishes the Indonesian nation from other nations and is upheld through the 1928 Youth Pledge as the language of unity. In the context of citizenship, the proper and correct use of Indonesian reflects nationalism, strengthens nationalism, and represents the sovereignty and honor of the state. Therefore, the Indonesian language must be continuously preserved, developed, and fostered to maintain its function in various aspects of life, especially amidst the challenges of globalization and the influence of foreign languages.

The widespread use of slang among students, particularly on social media, is part of the language dynamics that reflect the expression of the younger generation. However, excessive use of slang and without awareness of language norms can displace the role of Indonesian as a national identity. Agustiana et al. (2024) showed that students tend to use a mixture of foreign languages and slang in digital spaces, which has the potential to weaken the existence of Indonesian as a unifying tool. In this context, slang isn't always a threat if used appropriately and accompanied by an understanding of the importance of maintaining correct Indonesian language rules. Therefore, literacy and language development efforts are needed among students so they can balance linguistic creativity with the responsibility of preserving Indonesian as a symbol of national identity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews and sociolinguistic analysis, it can be concluded that the use of slang on social media by the younger generation is a complex phenomenon, reflecting expressions of identity, group solidarity, and the dynamics of social relations. Slang functions not only as a means of informal communication but also as a symbol of closeness and linguistic creativity in a digital context. However, users also demonstrate metalinguistic awareness and the ability to adapt their language style to social norms and the communication context, as reflected in the application of the register principle. This awareness indicates that slang is not a form of linguistic decline, but rather a legitimate and functional form of language variation in the modern communication ecosystem, provided it is used proportionately and contextually.

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