YOUTH SLANG AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN TEENAGE COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the types of slang used by teenagers and explain the reasons behind their use in the context of social identity. Slang is defined as an informal language used by certain social groups for internal communication, reflecting the values and experiences of its users. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through semi-structured interviews and observations on social media, especially among high school students aged 15-17 years. The results show that there are 10 slang terms that are often used by teenagers, such as "BFR", "tea", "C U", "PAP", "YOLO", "salty", "Kk", "Btw", "fix" "YOLO", and "ASAP". This study also found that the use of slang can strengthen teenage social identity as well as influence intergenerational communication patterns, where adults often do not understand or negatively judge teenage use of slang. Thus, this study provides insights into how informal language plays a role in shaping social identity and interaction dynamics in teenage communities.

INTRODUCTION

Slang is described both as "the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession" and as a "language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense" (Mattiello, 2008). Slang continuously emerges from certain subcultures or groups of people engaging in unique experiences and perspectives. It undergoes a very fast-paced evolution, spurred on by social patterns and innovation and social changes.

Slang can travel quickly through most circles of life. Such rapid dissemination can obscure the distinctions between specialized vocabularies and natural speech. Just what happens when users adopt and change slang reflects the fluidity of our language. Teenagers' use of dialect is frequently intriguing and evolving. Children have a propensity to establish groups that are chosen and unique from the others, speaking unusual and often mysterious languages that only members of their group can comprehend.

Slang is typical of the spoken and informal side of human interaction, and slang words are limited in their social status, culture and geographical distribution (Alawiyah et al., 2021). Slang is informal language used by people in a particular social group for internal communication (Munthe et al., 2023). From two definition above can we conclude that, slang is informal language that is mostly utilized for internal communication inside particular social groups? It is a dynamic and context-dependent form of expression that is frequently constrained by elements such as social standing, culture, and geography. Slang is not always understood by people in different places or communities, and it usually reflects the views, values, and experiences of individuals who use it.

Slang encompasses a wide range of linguistic expressions, reflecting the dynamic and creative aspects of informal language. It can be categorized into several distinct types based on origin, usage, and social context, as highlighted by (Mailisa & Merina, 2022) and (Herman, 2020). These types include fresh and creative slang, flippant expressions, imitative phrases, acronyms, and societal variations such as Cockney, workmen's slang, public school and university jargon, public house expressions, and theater slang. Fresh and creative slang showcases the inventive nature of language by introducing entirely new terms or phrases to describe contemporary trends or ideas. Flippant slang, on the other hand, is characterized by humor, sarcasm, or casual attitudes that bring a playful tone to communication. Imitative slang involves the adaptation of existing words or phrases, often transforming standard terms into more informal or culturally resonant versions. Acronyms, particularly popular in the digital age, serve as concise tools for communication, with terms like "LOL" and "BRB" becoming commonplace in both

written and spoken language. Societal slang, such as Cockney expressions rooted in East London's cultural history or theater jargon unique to the performing arts community, reflects the linguistic traditions and shared identities of specific groups. These diverse types of slang not only enrich the vocabulary but also illustrate its adaptability and significance in shaping human interaction. By exploring these categories, we gain a deeper understanding of how slang evolves alongside societal changes, reinforcing its role as a vital component of language and culture.

Teenage communities are networks or social groupings made up of teens (usually 13 to 19 years old) who connect together because they have similar interests, pastimes, or problems. These online and offline communities can take many different forms and be centered around activism, education, mental health, hobbies, or simply interacting with others. Teenagers are highly complex and diverse group (Bell, 2016). Teen communities give young people a forum to talk about their experiences, get support, and explore who they are in an environment that suits their individual viewpoints. These support groups can empower teenagers by assisting them in overcoming obstacles like social pressures, mental health issues, and academic stress. In certain instances, these groups also provide a feeling of inclusion, which is important throughout the frequently tumultuous adolescent years. Teens can locate like-minded friends and form lasting relationships through these social groups, whether they are online or off.

In social identity, that language and identity have a very close relationship and influence each other. In reference from (Rajagopalan et al., 2016) social identities are not only reflected in language use, but are also shaped and negotiated through linguistic practices. He emphasizes that language is the main marker of social identity, identity is formed through social interaction and language use, and the selection of language variations reflects the identity that wants to be displayed. While Norton in him book state developed a theory about investment in language learning and its relationship with social identity. Norton developed the previous theory into social identity is dynamic and changes according to context because language learning cannot be separated from the construction of social identity, and power relations influence how people use language to express their identity (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Social identity as a theory with a strong focus on how social context affects intergroup relations (Hornsey, 2008) Social identity also plays a crucial role in the process of leaving terrorism, as it involves a transformation of self-concept linked to group membership (Raets, 2017). He also explained that The interaction between individual and group-level mechanisms is essential for understanding how individuals disengage from extremist behaviors.

Social identity theory (SIT) explains relations between large social groups using psychological processes concerning social identity an individual's sense of belonging to a group and the positive or negative feelings associated with that membership (Harwood, 2020). Social identity refers to the 'part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (McGowan et al., 2017)

We can infer from these two definitions that Social Identity Theory (SIT) contributes to the understanding of how people's sense of self is influenced by the groups they belong to and the emotional significance they place on them. The psychological processes associated with group membership and how group membership affects people's attitudes and conduct toward others both inside and outside the group are highlighted by this theory. The idea emphasizes how crucial group identity is in forming individual and group experiences, affecting social dynamics, and fostering intergroup harmony. As a result, SIT provides an invaluable framework for comprehending the psychological underpinnings of group-based attitudes and social conduct.

Another previous study by (Silalahi & Silalahi, 2023) the data obtained came from WhatsApp Application that used teenagers in Author WhatsApp Group. For collecting the data, Author used the method of observation. Author found some slang words that using teenagers in popular slang such as: "Jelly" means Jealous, 'Swag' means Cool, 'Y' means why, 'Zzz' Means Sleeping, 'Imo' means In my opinion and others.

In previous study by (Aisyah & Tanjung, 2022) based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that in the use of English slang in undergraduate students of Tourism Study Program there are four forms of slang language use in English, namely abbreviations, funny mispronunciations, shortened forms, and interjections used by these students in their conversations. The use of slang is dominantly done with the aim of creating a relaxed atmosphere and a familiar impression in their association.

This study aims to identify the types of slang used by teenagers, such as acronyms, English phrases, word abbreviations, and new terms, based on the categories described in studies by (Davie, 2018). Another objective is to explain the main reasons behind teenagers' use of slang, particularly in relation to their social identity, as expressed in (Norton & Toohey, 2011) theory and the analysis. This

study also aims to describe the impact of slang use on social dynamics, social identity formation, and interpersonal relationships within the adolescent community (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000).

Additionally, This research aims to explore how slang reflects the social identity of teenagers. It hopes to help teachers, parents, and others understand how teenagers use slang as a way to express themselves and connect with their peers, encouraging more open and supportive communication. On a broader level, this study can inspire other students or researchers to learn more about the connection between language and identity, offering a simple starting point for future research on this topic.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method by relying on data based on facts. An inductive method to qualitative research uses initial observations to characterize the phenomenon under study, whereas an open-ended approach uses open-ended questions to elicit a detailed description and interpretation of the researcher's experience. Qualitative descriptive research is a descriptively described research method that employs qualitative data based on the findings of the research. Analyzing events, phenomena, or social conditions is a common use for his kind of descriptive qualitative research (Furidha, 2024)

This research will use a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how youth slang reflects social identity in the youth community, using interviews and observation as the main data collection techniques. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with teenagers to gain in-depth insight into their use of slang, focusing on the meaning behind certain terms, the context in which they are used, and how they contribute to their social identity. In addition, participant observation dan questionnaire will be carried out in social media that is X. Data collected from questionnaire and observations will be analyzed thematically to identify the kind of slang and its relationship to social identity. The sample of this research is high school students aged 15-17. The aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how youth slang functions as a reflection of social identity in the youth community.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
RESULT

The study, among other things, identified 10 words used by teenagers on social media: BFR, tea, cu, pap, salty, kk, btw, fix, yolo, and asap. These terms reflect the way teenagers express themselves, build social identities, and strengthen solidarity with their peers. Interviews with ten respondents revealed that the use of slang functions as a communication tool that creates a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Social media such as X, Instagram and TikTok play an important role in spreading these terms and accelerating changes in teenagers' communication patterns. Although slang is often viewed favorably by teenagers, there are differences in views between generations. Adults tend to misunderstand or negatively judge the use of slang, which reflects changing social values in communication across generations.

Interviews revealed that the majority of respondents consider slang as a freer and more honest way to express themselves. The use of slang words such as "BFR" (Be Real) and "teh" allows to express honesty while telling interesting stories and gossip. In this context, slang functions not only as a conversation tool, but also as a means of expressing social identity within a particular group.

Most respondents also said that slang helps them feel more connected to the people around them and helps create a deep sense of togetherness. The use of terms such as "YOLO" (you only live once) and "ASAP" (as soon as possible) creates a relaxed and humorous atmosphere for interaction. Social media is a primary means of learning and spreading new vocabulary and enriching the linguistic culture of teenagers.

However, there are differences in views between generations regarding the use of slang. Respondents acknowledged that adults often misinterpret slang as rude or view it negatively. This reflects changing social values in cross-generational communication. However, even in the digital age, slang remains an important tool for teenagers to express themselves and build social relationships.

DISSCUSION

Observations on social media platform X show that there are 10 frequently used slang terms, namely: BFR, tea, cu, pap, salty, kk, btw, fix, yolo, and asap. All of them, have interesting meanings and usages that reflect the dynamics of communication in the digital era.

1. BFR

The word "BFR," which stands for "be for real," is typically used to request that someone talk honestly and without hyperbole. This remark frequently appears in informal conversation when one suspects that the other person is not totally serious or is expressing something absurd. For example, if someone makes an outrageous assertion, the listener may answer with "BFR", indicating incredulity and seeking clarification. This statement is often used in informal contexts and is popular among the younger generation, particularly on social media. Its popularity underscores the qualities of honesty and sincerity that are important to today's communication culture.

"BFR" eventually became a widely used shorthand, especially among young people, as a way to point out mistakes or ask someone to speak more honestly. Its use reflects a social movement towards assertive quality and honesty in discussions, especially online, where individuals regularly share exaggerated or attention-grabbing substance. By conjuring up a "BFR," the speaker is essentially pressuring other individuals to dramatize less and offer a more grounded point of view. It is not a fair tool to set the record straight, but more so, to signal disbelief or indeed amusement at outlandish claims. In this way, expressions act as a quick social boost, creating a minute of shared understanding or an amusing pause in the discussion.

2. Tea

The phrase tea is more informal and amusing than the seriousness that BFR emphasizes. It is employed to allude to rumors or intriguing details that one wishes to discuss. The phrase "spill the tea" refers to the sharing of an intriguing tale, frequently a rumor or shocking news. For instance, a buddy may say, "You won't believe what I just heard!" in casual conversation. The tea is mine!
The fact that tea is so widely consumed demonstrates how people are compelled to share amusing or unexpected tales. The phrase captures the impromptu and enjoyable aspect of giving knowledge in a lighthearted yet interesting way. Its brief and direct style, which fits well with social media's fast-paced communication culture, is another factor contributing to its appeal.

The word "tea" has become extremely popular, particularly on the social media scene, as a playful way to describe the act of rambling or sharing interior data. The word captures the substance of casual and often thrilling narratives, making it the perfect expression to convey the energy that arises from exciting news or the subtle elements of embarrassment. While "spilling the tea" is usually carefree, it can also be a way to bond with others through shared stories or insider facts, building a sense of camaraderie. Its casual, almost off-the-cuff nature makes it indistinguishable from more sincere or pugnacious expressions like "BFR," advertising a break from concentrated talk and empowering more relaxed commerce. The continued use of "tea" reflects society's fascination with the latest patterns, celebrity talk, and individual drama content that keeps individuals locked in and engaged.

3. C U
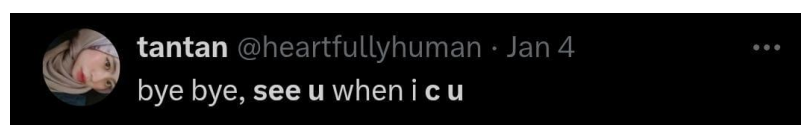
"C U" stands for 'see you later,' which is commonly used as a casual phrase in digital communication. It combines the letter "C" which represents the word "see" and "U" which replaces "you".

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The phrase is often used at the end of conversations on various digital platforms such as text messaging or social media. The use of "C U" generally indicates the evolution of language in the digital era, where efficiency and conciseness are prioritized. Its use is particularly common among teenage social media users, reflects the informality of today's digital interactions.

The popularity of "C U" highlights the trend of shortening and simplifying language in the age of SMS and instant messaging. The abbreviation is a reflection of how communication has adapted to the fast-paced nature of digital conversations, where brevity is highly valued and the emphasis is on quick and efficient exchanges. While it may seem too casual or even impersonal to some, "C U" represents a shift towards a more relaxed and friendly tone in everyday interactions. It is also part of a broader trend of creating abbreviations or emojis to convey emotions, ideas, or intentions without the need for full sentences. This change in communication style is not only a product of technological advancements, but also shows the development of the way people interact with each other in a digitized world

4. PAP

The acronym "PAP" stands for "Post A Picture," a common request in digital conversations asking someone to share a photo. This phrase is becoming increasingly popular with the emergence of various digital platforms that facilitate image sharing. The term is often used in everyday conversation, especially on social media platforms and messaging apps, when users want to see confirmation or visual documentation of something. Its expanding use reflects the growing importance of visual communication in digital interactions, where images are often more powerful than words.

5. YOLO

YOLO is used to encourage people to take risks or live life without regret, believing that life is only once and should be enjoyed to the fullest. Spontaneous or bold decisions are situations where this term is often used. For example, one might say "YOLO" before taking an impromptu trip or bungee jumping (Putra et al., 2024)).

The phrase "YOLO", short for "You Only Live Once", has become a popular way for young people to express their values and needs. It speaks of an attitude of living life to the fullest, taking risks, and seeking unique encounters. This slang term, often used to legitimize quick choices or bold actions, emerged as a movement in thinking where individuals were more comfortable with volatility and focused on gaining profits in the moment rather than emphasizing later outcomes. It is used in social media captions, discussions, and memes, which seems to be a popular way of thinking among young people. From a sociolinguistic perspective, YOLO shows how pop culture and media around the world influence dialect.

6. ASAP

The short word "ASAP" (meaning "As Soon As Possible") is widely used by young people to mean "fast" or "quickly". It is also used in advanced communications to show how fast things are moving in today's high schools. It's simple and to the point, so it's a popular choice in text messaging, social media, and online chats, where it's important to do it quickly. ASAP reflects today's fast-paced world of youth culture, where instant communication and quick decision making are a big part of life.

The use of ASAP also shows how high school slang is changing with modern technology and communication practices. This report highlights the younger generation's preference for fast and simple language, which meets the needs of the digital era. It is also important to note that ASAP's popularity among young people indicates their preference for speed and finesse, which differentiates them from older generations. These terms not only help speed up communication but also serve as a simple way to show that they share the same traits that thrive in a fast-paced, connected world.

The increasing use of phrases such as ASAP by young people further emphasizes how technology has shaped contemporary communication. Instant messaging applications, social media sites, and other digital tools have encouraged the development and use of short, easy-to-understand words that are widely recognized and quick to type.

In addition to increasing productivity, this trend helps users who rely on these shorthand idioms to develop a sense of belonging and shared identity. The language of middle school children and young adults will likely continue to change as technology advances, reflecting their desire to stay connected and relevant in a rapidly changing digital environment.

7. Salty
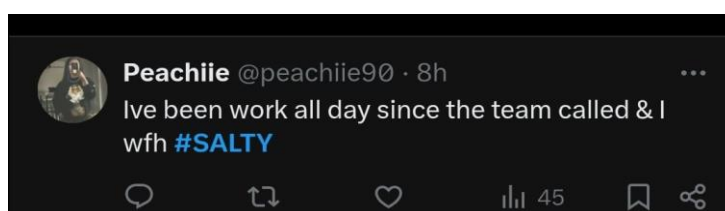
Salty is a slang term used to describe someone who is upset, angry, or jealous about something. It's often used to refer to someone who shows negative emotions or an exaggerated reaction to a situation. The term originates from the idea of something being "salty," which implies bitterness or a sharp, unpleasant taste, reflecting someone's displeased mood. A person who is "salty" is typically easily offended and may overreact to minor events. It can also refer to a person feeling dissatisfied or disappointed. This term is commonly used in informal or casual conversations. For example is "She got so salty when she didn't win the game."

The term "salty" initially gained significant popularity in the online gaming community, where players often use it to describe opponents who become frustrated after losing a match or suffering a setback. Since then, the term has spread beyond gaming culture into wider social media usage and everyday conversation. Interestingly, it has evolved to have more of a joking or teasing tone, rather than just a negative connotation. People may even self-deprecatingly describe themselves as "salty" when admitting to momentary frustration.

8. Kk

Kk is an abbreviation of "okay," commonly used in text messages or online conversations. It's a quicker and more casual way to express agreement or acceptance of something. Using "KK" can make the speaker seem less formal or more relaxed in their response. Though often used in everyday chats, "KK" can sometimes come across as less enthusiastic or a bit detached, depending on the context. It's

frequently used by younger people or those who are accustomed to communicating via messaging apps. It's a more informal version of saying "okay." For example is "KK, see you then!"

The use of "KK" also reflects the changes in the way we communicate in the digital age. In this fast-paced world, abbreviations and acronyms are becoming increasingly popular as they allow users to communicate more efficiently. In addition, "KK" can create a more relaxed and casual situation between the sender and receiver of a message. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the context of communication; in formal or professional situations, the use of "KK" may be considered inappropriate or less serious. Therefore, understanding context and situation is key in choosing the right words when communicating.

9. Btw

"BTW" stands for 'by the way' in English, which means 'by the way' or "in addition." In today's youth context, "BTW" is used to insert additional information or as an introduction in a casual conversation. An example of its use is "BTW lo udah ngerjain quiz buat besok?" Meaning: "By the way, have you studied for tomorrow's quiz?"

Crystal (2008) explains that words or phrases from other languages are often absorbed to enrich the local language, especially if they are considered cooler or fit a certain lifestyle. "BTW" is an example of this adoption in today's youth communication. This slang is often used to give the impression of being casual and up-to-date with global speech trends.

10. Fix

The meaning of "Fix" in youth slang In the colloquial language of South Jakarta kids, "fix" is often used as slang to emphasize a certainty or decision. For example:
"Fix gue bakal dating ke event itu!"
Meaning: "I'm definitely going to that event!"
"fix pasti bakal seru bgt sih."
Meaning: "It's going to be very exciting."
The use of "fix" also shows commitment or certainty to something, although its use absorbs the term from English (fix means to fix), in this context the meaning shifts to "certain" or "sure."

According to sociolinguistic theory, the use of slang reflects a particular social and group identity (Holmes, 2013). It serves as a symbol of solidarity and group membership, reflecting a distinctive lifestyle, values or social status. Young people use the word fix to show a modern urban identity and connect with global trends. In addition, Trudgill's (2000) Language Change theory states that words in language can change their meaning or function when adopted by certain groups. In this case, "fix" which comes from English experiences a shift in meaning in the context of the slang of Jaksel kids.

In this study, researchers interviewed ten respondents, the majority of them were enthusiastic about the usage of slang among teens. According to the interviews, slang has an important role in developing and reflecting teens' social identities, as well as serving as a communication tool that brings them together with the larger social community.

According to the interview data, the majority of respondents believe that youngsters use slang to express themselves more freely and genuinely. Many people believed that utilizing slang allowed them to express themselves and connect with their peers. For example, phrases like "BFR" (be for real) and "tea" are used to convey sincerity in conversation while also sharing intriguing anecdotes or gossip. In this situation, slang serves as both a conversational tool and a means of expressing one's social standing within a certain group. Slang also helps teenagers feel more connected to their peers, fostering a deeper feeling of community. According to numerous responders, using terms like "yolo" (you only live once) and "asap" (as soon as possible) helps individuals form friendships in a pleasant and humorous way. Members of the youth community are more likely to accept slang as a sign of collective identity and solidarity in this setting.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents stated that slang allows them to communicate their thoughts and emotions more freely and openly, without being constrained by formal language conventions that can occasionally appear inflexible. Speaking freely without worrying about being constrained by rigid societal norms is made possible by slang. It also demonstrates how language shapes teenagers' vibrant and imaginative social identities. Social media has a crucial influence in the propagation and popularity of slang among youth. Many respondents said they learned new terms on sites like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, which allowed them to engage and share a more inclusive language culture. The purpose of social media is to accelerate changes in how we talk and introduce new language patterns that are rapidly changing.

While respondents generally see the usage of slang positively, they acknowledge that there is often conflict between the younger generation and adults about the language they use. Some respondents stated that adults frequently misinterpret or even condemn slang as rude or unserious conduct. However, this reflects shifting dynamics in societal ideals between generations, as language and communication methods improve over time.

Another good thing that came out of the interview was how slang can bring people together and create connections. By using popular slang words, children can easily connect with other people from different places, thereby creating a sense of unity and mutual understanding. They also say that slang is often the language that brings people together in youth communities, breaking down boundaries and encouraging people to work together in different social environments. This inclusivity makes it more effective than face-to-face interactions, and the internet makes slang more popular and available worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the use of slang among teenagers and its relationship with social identity, focusing on ten commonly used slang terms in digital communication. The findings reveal that slang serves as more than just informal language; it functions as a crucial tool for teenagers to express themselves freely and build connections within their peer groups. Popular terms like "BFR," " tea," "C U," "PAP", "YOLO","ASAP","Salty, "Kk", "BTW", "FIX" demonstrate how modern slang reflects the evolution of language in the digital era. Social media X play a vital role in the evolution of these slang words.

Through interviews with respondents, the study highlights the significant relationship between slang usage and social identity formation among teenagers, where slang allowed them to express themselves and connect with their peers. However, the research also revealed an intergenerational gap in the understanding and acceptance of slang, with adults often misinterpreting or viewing it negatively. Despite these challenges, slang continues to serve as a powerful tool for teenage expression and social cohesion in the digital age, contributing to our understanding of how language shapes and reflects social identity among teenagers in the contemporary digital landscape.

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