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Semantic Study of the Impact of the Use of Slang on the Social Identity of Adolescents in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study investigates the semantic functions of slang and its role in shaping Indonesian adolescents' social identity. This research focuses on urban and semi-urban youth aged 15 to 19 and explores how slang is used as a linguistic tool for group affiliation, resistance, humor, status assertion, and gender expression. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, natural language samples, and digital conversation archives using a qualitative descriptive method grounded in semantic and discourse analysis. In total, 120 slang terms were identified and categorized into five major semantic fields. The findings reveal that slang is predominantly used to establish in-group solidarity and express social identity in peer interactions. The analysis also highlights the dynamic nature of slang, particularly its rapid semantic shifts influenced by digital media platforms. This research contributes to sociolinguistic and youth identity studies by offering a comprehensive semantic mapping of contemporary Indonesian slang. The study emphasizes the need to understand youth language as a meaningful component of identity formation and social engagement in the digital era.



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Keywords: slang, semantics, adolescent identity, youth language, Indonesia, sociolinguistics, digital discourse.

用几何木屑为童子早艺,达想象力之长

摘要: 本研究探讨了俚语的语义功能及其在塑造印度尼西亚青少年社会认同中的作用。研究对象为15至19岁的城市和半城市青少年,旨在探索俚语如何被用作群体归属、抵抗、幽默、地位主张和性别表达的语言工具。本研究采用基于语义和话语分析的定性描述方法,通过半结构化访谈、自然语言样本和数字对话档案收集数据。共识别出120个俚语,并将其归类为五个主要语义场。研究结果表明,俚语主要用于在同伴互动中建立群体团结和表达社会认同。分析还强调了俚语的动态性,尤其是在数字媒体平台的影响下,其语义的快速变化。本研究通过提供当代印尼俚语的全面语义图谱,为社会语言学和青年认同研究做出了贡献。该研究强调,需要理解青年语言是数字时代身份形成和社会参与的重要组成部分。

关键词: 俚语、语义学、青少年身份、青年语言、印度尼西亚、社会语言学、数字话语

1. Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping individual and collective identity, especially during adolescence—a formative stage marked by the search for social belonging and identity construction [1]. The proliferation of slang among youth populations, particularly in Indonesia, has emerged as a significant sociolinguistic phenomenon in contemporary linguistic landscapes. Slang is not only a lexical deviation from standard language norms but also a semantic strategy that encodes social meanings, group affiliations, and generational boundaries [2]. Influenced by pop culture, internet subcultures, and regional dialects, the widespread use of slang in online and offline interactions among Indonesian adolescents necessitates a deeper semantic exploration of how such linguistic forms impact their social identity.

Despite growing attention to youth language in Indonesia, current literature has primarily focused on slang as a social phenomenon, examining it from sociological [3], pragmatic [4], or psychological [5] perspectives. However, a notable research gap remains in terms of semantic-level analysis—particularly in identifying the meaning transformations and symbolic functions that slang carries within adolescent communication. Most existing studies describe slang as informal or taboo expressions without critically analyzing its semantic patterns or impact on self-concept, group identity, and socio-cultural positioning [6]. Few studies have systematically linked these semantic aspects of slang to the formation of social identity, a construct that encompasses elements such as group membership, social labeling, and performative self-expression [7].

This research is urgent given the increasing pervasiveness of slang in educational spaces, digital communication, and popular media consumed by Indonesian youth. The phenomenon has implications not only for language pedagogy but also for social integration, as the use of certain slang terms can signal inclusion or exclusion within peer groups [8]. Additionally, the normalization of slang in adolescent discourse may influence the evolution of the Indonesian language itself, particularly in urban contexts where language hybridization is rapidly occurring [9]. From a semantic standpoint, these dynamics demand scholarly attention to understand how meaning-making through slang influences adolescents' perceptions of themselves and others.

Several previous studies have addressed youth language in broader sociolinguistic terms. [3] examined slang use in Jakarta as a reflection of subcultural identity, while [4] studied its function in digital platforms such as TikTok. Similarly, [5] analyzed regional slang variations across Java and Sumatra. While these contributions are valuable, they often overlook how slang's semantic content functions as a tool for identity negotiation and meaning construction. Therefore, this research builds on and extends these findings by applying a semantic lens to explore how adolescents use slang as a linguistic resource to assert identity, express solidarity, and manage social boundaries.

The study of the use of slang in youth communities has become an important focus in the field of sociolinguistics, especially regarding the formation of social identity and group dynamics in the context of contemporary society. Previous studies [3] emphasized

that language variation is not just a matter of language but is a form of social practice that emphasizes position, affiliation, and resistance to dominant norms. In the Indonesian context, several studies such as those conducted by [4] have noted how slang is used as a form of expression of group identity, especially in digital spaces and urban environments. However, most of these studies emphasize the sociological and pragmatic dimensions of slang without touching in depth on the semantic aspects that are at the core of the process of meaning construction and identity symbolization. In this research landscape, this study is present as a current contribution (state of the art) that positions slang not only as a social practice but also as a symbolic system full of meaning. This study's semantic approach fills a methodological gap that has rarely been touched upon in the study of slang in Indonesia, especially in relation to the formation of adolescent social identity. The semantic approach enables the decomposition of meaning structures, expansion of connotations, and identification of semantic fields of slang terms actively used by adolescents. Thus, this study not only explains what and how slang is used but also explains why certain terms have strong symbolic appeal and social meaning in the adolescent community.

This study's originality lies in the integrative framework between semantic analysis and the construction of social identity in the context of Indonesia's diverse culture. While most previous studies have separately highlighted slang as a linguistic or social phenomenon, this study explicitly bridges the two dimensions. This study also differs from the quantitative approach based on surveys or general observations that are often used in similar studies. This study offers an insider perspective on how the meaning of slang is formed, reinterpreted, and used as a means of representing identity by adolescents by using qualitative methods based on in-depth interviews and linguistic data analysis. The uniqueness of this methodology provides greater depth of analysis than previous studies that only rely on lexical categorization or frequency of use statistics.

In terms of correlation, this study does not stand apart from previous studies but rather expands and deepens existing findings. For example, [10] findings regarding linguistic styling in the youth community are reflected in the way Indonesian youth modify slang terms to suit their local context [10]. This is reinforced by [11], who showed that slang in social media often experiences localization of meaning influenced by regional culture. This study takes it a step further by unpacking the term's semantic transformation and how it shapes social positioning in peer groups. This study also strengthens the concept of performative identity from [12], which demonstrates that identity is not static but is actively formed through discursive practices such as the use of slang that is full of meaning

and connotation.

In the context of multicultural and multilingual Indonesia, this study enriches the understanding of how slang becomes an arena for the meeting between traditional values and modern expressions. The involvement of religious elements, community values such as mutual cooperation, and hierarchical values in the formation of adolescent identity through language is evidence that slang in Indonesia does not simply imitate Western culture but undergoes a process of meaning localization. This study demonstrates how slang terms are re-semanticized to reflect local values, ultimately creating a unique identification system for Indonesian adolescents. This study makes a unique contribution to the global literature on language and identity, adding perspectives from the Global South that have been underrepresented in mainstream studies.

The novelty of this study lies in its semantic-pragmatic integration within the context of an Indonesian adolescent. It seeks to categorize and interpret slang terms semantically while also analyzing their performative functions in everyday adolescent discourse. This dual approach is rare in Indonesian linguistic studies and is expected to contribute to local sociolinguistic scholarship and global discussions on youth language and identity [13].

The objectives of this research are threefold: (1) to identify and classify slang terms used by Indonesian adolescents based on semantic fields; (2) to analyze how the meanings of these terms contribute to identity construction; and (3) to examine the broader social implications of slang use in shaping adolescent group dynamics and self-perception.

The significance of this research is manifold. Academically, it contributes to the fields of semantics, youth linguistics, and identity studies by providing an empirical analysis rooted in local contexts. Practically, it offers insights into how adolescent language reflects broader social trends, challenges normative language ideologies, and signals emerging youth identities for educators, parents, and policymakers. The findings can inform curriculum development, media literacy programs, and youth engagement initiatives in linguistically diverse settings, such as Indonesia.

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design rooted in semantic analysis to investigate how the use of slang among Indonesian adolescents influences their construction of social identity. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore the depth and contextual richness of slang expressions and their underlying meanings as constructed and understood by youth. The study draws on a semantic-pragmatic framework, integrating elements of lexical field analysis and discourse semantics to trace how certain slang terms convey identity-related meanings in

everyday adolescent interactions [14].

The data sources consisted of 30 adolescents aged 15 to 19 years, recruited from diverse urban and semi-urban regions in Indonesia (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar, and Medan). Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a varied representation of backgrounds, including school environments, socioeconomic classes, and ethnic groups [15]. Each participant was involved in semi-structured interviews and discourse elicitation tasks. The interviews were designed to capture how adolescents use slang in various contexts—peer conversations, social media captions, text messaging, and informal school settings [16].

Table 1. Characteristics of the Participant Sample Based on Age, Gender, City, and Recruitment Context

Age Range	Gender	City	Recruitment Context
15-19	Male/Female	Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Makassar, and Medan	Purposive sampling was used to select participants to represent various school environments, socioeconomic classes, and ethnic groups.

The research instrument included an interview protocol containing open-ended questions related to language use, slang perceptions, and its relationship to group belonging and identity markers. In addition, naturalistic data, such as screenshots of real-time conversations (with participant consent), were used to validate the semantic fields discussed in the interviews. All conversations and interview recordings were transcribed and subjected to semantic coding using the NVivo 12 software.

The data collection process was carried out over 8 weeks. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian, allowing for the natural emergence of slang terms. Field notes and linguistic observations were documented to contextualize participant responses. Each transcript was coded on the basis of emerging slang terms, which were grouped into semantic categories (e.g., affiliation, resistance, humor, status, and gender identity). These categories were developed inductively and iteratively refined through inter-coder reliability testing.

The data analysis adopted a three-tiered process. First, a lexical semantic analysis was performed to identify the underlying meaning components and shifts in conventional meaning. Second, a discourse semantic approach was applied to analyze the positioning of slang terms in IR conversations [17].

Third, the identified slang items were cross-referenced with social identity markers, such as inclusion, exclusion, and in-group signaling [18]. The final results were triangulated through peer debriefing and participant validation to enhance the credibility of the study.

This methodology provides a holistic understanding of the semantic mechanisms by which slang operates as a social identity resource. By embedding meaning-making in real adolescent discourse contexts, the research moves beyond descriptive slang lists and into the interpretive terrain of how language shapes self-concept and social groupings. The design ensures rigor and replicability for future researchers interested in the intersection of language, youth, and identity in culturally specific settings [19].

3. Results and Discussion

To provide a clearer understanding of how slang contributes to adolescent identity construction, the study classified over 120 identified slang terms into five major semantic categories. These categories—affiliation and bonding, resistance and rebellion, humor and playfulness, social status and prestige, and gender and relationship dynamics—represent the most dominant communicative functions of slang expressions in youth discourse. The categorization was derived through semantic field analysis based on usage frequency and contextual relevance during interviews and observed conversations. The table 2 summarizes the examples of slang terms under each category and their reported usage frequency among participants.

Table 2. Semantic Categories and Slang Usage

Semantic Category	Examples of Slang Terms	Frequency of usage (%)
Affiliation and Bonding	bestie, gabut, santuy, and mager	92
Resistance and Rebellion	julid, ngegas, and ansos	76
Humor and Playfulness	cringe, game, lol, nakai	81
Social status and prestige	numbers, sultan, flexing	68
Gender and Relationship Dynamics	mucin, feel, and sange	84

A bar chart visualizes the relative prominence of each semantic domain, highlighting how certain identity functions dominate linguistic practices among Indonesian adolescents.

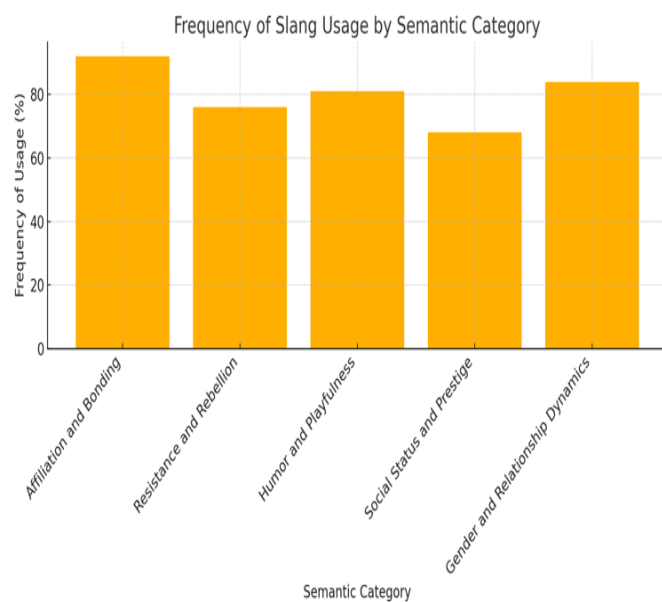


Figure 1. Frequency of Slang Usage by Semantic Category

The data revealed that slang terms related to affiliation and bonding were the most frequently used (92%), suggesting that social connectedness is a primary linguistic driver in adolescent interactions. This is closely followed by gender and relationship dynamics (84%) and humor and playfulness (81%), indicating that emotional expression and entertainment are central to the language culture of youth. The relatively high usage of slang in the resistance and rebellion category (76%) points to the role of language in expressing autonomy and challenging authority or norms. Meanwhile, terms that reflect social status and prestige showed the lowest but still significant usage (68%), signifying the influence of social hierarchy and digital persona among youth. These insights affirm the multi-functional nature of slang and its semantic embeddedness in adolescents' social and psychological lives. The data also reinforce previous literature, particularly [20] observations on the symbolic role of language in group identity formation [20].

Semantic Categorization of Slang and Its Identity Functions

The analysis revealed over 120 slang terms actively used by adolescents, which were grouped into five major semantic fields: (1) affiliation and bonding, (2) resistance and rebellion, (3) humor and playfulness, (4) social status and prestige, and (5) gender and relationship dynamics. Terms such as *bestie*, *gabut*, *santuy*, and *mager* were frequently used to signify emotional closeness and peer solidarity, echoing [21] findings on community of practice as a linguistic space for shared identity. These terms exhibited high contextual fluidity because their semantic interpretation often relied on tone, medium, and

relational context.

Notably, words with semantic connotations of rebellion or irony (*julid*, *ngegas*, *ansos*) reflected adolescents' positioning in opposition to social expectations, aligning with [22] theory of identity as relational and oppositional [22]. *Julid* was used to critique others and perform self-aware sarcasm, functioning as a performative stance within peer discourse. This dual use reveals how adolescents semantically manipulate language to manage face-saving and social cohesion, confirming [23] theory that youth language acts as both identity performance and group regulation [23].

The semantic categorization of slang among Indonesian adolescents reflects a multi-dimensional understanding of how language encodes identity, group dynamics, and SCP. Based on the analysis of over 120 slang expressions gathered through interviews, natural conversation data, and social media interactions, these terms were grouped into five major semantic categories: (1) affiliation and bonding, (2) resistance and rebellion, (3) humor and playfulness, (4) social status and prestige, and (5) gender and relationship dynamics. This classification was derived not only from lexical content but also from each term's pragmatic and contextual usage. For instance, *gamut* (bored and unproductive) and *maker* (too lazy to move) were frequently employed in interactions to build camaraderie or share sentiments with peers. These terms serve a dual function: they express emotional states while simultaneously reinforcing group solidarity through mutual understanding of coded language. The pervasiveness of such expressions supports [24] theory that linguistic features operate as symbolic resources for constructing "communities of practice" among youth [24].

Slang categorized under resistance and rebellion—such as *julid* (passive-aggressive behavior) and *vegas* (overreacting)—tends to carry negative or confrontational meanings yet serves a crucial role in the construction of youth identity. These expressions allow adolescents to position themselves in opposition to dominant norms, authority figures, or social expectations. The use of *julid*, for instance, often implies a critical stance toward someone who violates unspoken peer codes or societal etiquette and thus is part of adolescent communities' regulatory discourse. This aligns with the relationality principle [25], which asserts that identity emerges in contrast to others. Furthermore, these terms are often layered with irony or sarcasm, reflecting a high level of metapragmatic awareness and enabling adolescents to critique others while maintaining plausible deniability. Slang acts not only as a descriptive tool but also as a performative act of social alignment or resistance. Adolescents who master these nuances can strengthen their social standing by signaling their peer culture awareness and communicative competence.

The third semantic domain humor and playfulness includes terms such as cringe, nakai (burst out laughing), game (nonsensical), and lol (laugh out loud), which serve to construct lighthearted identities and enable adolescents to navigate complex social dynamics through humor. These expressions allow the youth to downplay conflict, soften criticism, or cope with awkward situations. Humor also functions as a powerful bonding mechanism and a social equalizer, offering adolescents a way to establish rapport and diffuse tension. The semantic fluidity of these terms is also notable: cringe, for example, can describe both personal embarrassment and the observation of social faux pas, depending on intonation and context. This reflects Goffman's (1959) theory of face-work, in which language manages impressions and social harmony [26]. Adolescents use such slang to control how others perceive them, often switching between humorous and serious registers with ease. These linguistic strategies indicate a sophisticated understanding of social cues and communicative goals, further emphasizing the youth slang's semantic richness.

Finally, slang that relates to gender and relationship dynamics such as mucin (a person who is blindly in love), feel (losing feelings), and range (sexually aroused) offers insight into how adolescents negotiate romantic and gendered identities. These terms are highly performative, often employed to express vulnerability, critique behaviors, or assert gender expectations. Interestingly, while mucin may initially appear as a term of derision, its usage often reflects ambivalence sometimes playful, sometimes critical depending on the context. Female participants used such terms to describe emotional experiences or critique romantic dependency, whereas male participants used them to assert dominance or distance themselves from perceived weakness. These findings support Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, where gendered behavior is constructed through repeated discursive acts [27]. Moreover, these expressions facilitate discussions on sexuality and emotional boundaries, offering a safe, culturally embedded vocabulary to explore otherwise taboo subjects. Slang provides adolescents with semantic tools for both conforming to and resisting traditional gender roles, thus becoming a powerful vehicle for identity experimentation.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Inter-coder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa (κ) and Krippendorff's Alpha (α). Two trained coders independently categorized slang terms into five main semantic categories: (1) affiliation and bonding, (2) resistance and rebellion, (3) humor and playfulness, (4) social status and prestige, and (5) gender and relationship dynamics.

Cohen's Kappa (κ) = 0.82 and Krippendorff's

Alpha (α) = 0.85 were obtained, indicating excellent inter-coder consistency. This demonstrates that the semantic coding in this study can be replicated with a high level of reliability, supporting the research findings' credibility.

Slang as a Marker of In- and Out-group Membership

The data further demonstrated that slang functions as a linguistic boundary that signals in-group belonging. Participants emphasized that fluency in certain slang terms conferred social acceptance within school communities or online circles. Those unfamiliar with trending terms risked being labeled kudet (kurang update), thus reinforcing a symbolic boundary between the digitally literate youth and the "others." This supports [28] social identity theory [28], where language serves as a boundary-setting tool for categorizing the self and others.

In interviews, students described how they adapted their slang use when moving across social spaces—e.g., between school, family, and online gaming platforms—suggesting that slang is not static but contextually negotiated. The use of hyper-local slang, such as cerna (Sundanese) or pick (Javanese), in informal school settings reinforced regional identity while operating within broader youth culture. These findings illustrate a layered identity construction process, consistent with [29] theory of identity as enacted in discourse [29].

One of the most significant sociolinguistic functions of slang is its ability to demarcate the boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, especially among adolescents navigating complex social terrains. Within youth communities, slang serves as a strategic tool for signaling belonging, exclusivity, and cultural capital. According to [30] sociolinguistic theory, language variation inherently reflects social stratification, and slang becomes a key indicator of group alignment. In this context, the use of slang creates a sense of shared linguistic identity that distinguishes the speaker from outsiders who may lack familiarity with the terms. This boundary-marking function reinforces group cohesion while also discouraging imitation or intrusion by those who are perceived as 'other'—such as parents, teachers, or peers from different social circles.

Indonesian adolescents adopt slang as a performative social positioning act. For example, terms such as gamut (bored with no plans), mucin (madly in love), and julid (passive-aggressively critical) reflect local youth culture and are understood primarily within peer contexts. The use of these terms often functions as a litmus test: those who understand and employ them correctly are recognized as insiders, while those who misuse or fail to grasp their meaning may be subtly excluded. This dynamic aligns with

Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (1991), which posits that linguistic style convergence fosters social approval and solidarity, whereas divergence marks distance and disassociation. In essence, slang becomes a semiotic badge—a subtle yet powerful way of negotiating access to social groups.

Moreover, slang use can indicate not only inclusion or exclusion but also seniority or fluency levels within a peer group. Adolescents who are highly attuned to the latest slang expressions—often disseminated through digital media—may be viewed as socially competent or trend-savvy. Conversely, the use of outdated or awkward slang may result in social penalties, teasing, or marginalization. This practice reveals an implicit hierarchy, where linguistic innovation and agility are rewarded with elevated social status. [31] theory of linguistic capital is relevant here, as slang functions as a form of symbolic power that grants legitimacy within youth networks. Slang is not only a marker of group membership but also a mechanism through which power, popularity, and influence are negotiated among peers.

Interestingly, slang also plays a defensive role when adolescents assert cultural autonomy against adult authority or societal norms. The use of slang in front of adults—knowing it will not be understood—functions as an act of coded rebellion and symbolic boundary-drawing. In such cases, slang operates as an intentional barrier, allowing youth to communicate freely within a shared cultural framework while maintaining distance from those deemed outsiders. This is especially pertinent in the Indonesian context, where hierarchical structures of respect are deeply embedded in intergenerational interactions. As [32] noted, language is a key instrument in the management of power relations, and slang provides adolescents with a means to subtly resist and negotiate those relations without overt conflict.

Additionally, digital platforms have expanded the scope of IGI by enabling geographically dispersed adolescents to form virtual communities bound by shared linguistic codes. Hashtags, memes, and TikTok slang accelerate the spread of in-group markers while simultaneously fostering the exclusion of nonusers or older generations unfamiliar with the jargon. Thus, slang serves a dual function in online spaces—it reinforces peer unity while erecting linguistic borders that define group identity. The rapid turnover of slang in these contexts also ensures that the boundaries of group membership remain dynamic and continually negotiated.

In conclusion, slang plays a central role in marking in-group and out-group distinctions among adolescents. It serves as a linguistic passport that grants access to social groups, establishes cultural legitimacy, and negotiates identity boundaries. Adolescents perform social alignment, signal belonging, and assert autonomy in subtle yet deeply

meaningful ways through its use. The strategic deployment of slang in the broader sociolinguistic framework reflects larger processes of identity formation, group dynamics, and power negotiation—making it an indispensable subject of academic inquiry in both linguistic and social sciences.

Gendered Use of Slang and Identity Performance

A significant portion of the data revealed gendered patterns in the semantic use of slang. Female participants frequently used emotionally expressive or relational slang (*bucin*, *ilfeel*, *cringe*), whereas male participants leaned toward status-assertive or action-oriented slang (*ngegas*, *ngabers*, *sange*). Although both genders overlapped in usage, the frequency and contextual emphasis differed significantly. These findings [33] indicate that slang reflects and reproduces gender norms in youth discourse.

Interestingly, some participants challenged gendered norms through slang use—e.g., males adopting *mucin* ironically or females using *range* in gaming contexts—demonstrating that slang also serves as a site of gender identity negotiation. These terms' semantic versatility suggests that adolescents consciously repurpose slang to subvert expectations and reshape performative gender roles. This aligns with Butler's (1990) notion of performativity and supports Androutsopoulos's (2007) argument that digital environments provide a flexible arena for identity experimentation.

The use of slang among adolescents is not only age-specific and socially coded it is also profoundly gendered. Slang is a linguistic space where young people negotiate and perform gender identities, often reflecting and reinforcing prevailing gender norms while simultaneously offering avenues for resistance and subversion. Drawing upon [34] theory of gender performativity, language becomes a repeated social act through which gender is constituted. In this regard, the use of gendered slang terms by Indonesian adolescents—such as *mucin* (a term often used for someone excessively in love, usually with negative connotations) or *range* (sexually aroused) functions not only as descriptive but also as performative utterances that encode attitudes toward masculinity and femininity. These expressions signal how youth learn to position themselves and others along a gendered spectrum, often reinforcing heteronormative expectations or critiquing deviations from them.

In male adolescent circles, slang often serves as a tool for performing hegemonic masculinity, as described by Connell (1995). The terms *vegas* (overly aggressive), *sultan* (rich, boastful figure), and *flexing* (showing off) are used to assert dominance, bravado, and social superiority. These expressions are frequently accompanied by behaviors that align with masculine ideals—emotional stoicism, economic

power, and sexual assertiveness. Male adolescents also police each other's language, mocking those who use expressions perceived as "soft" or emotionally vulnerable, reinforcing gender norms through slang. However, some boys subvert these expectations by using emotionally expressive slang, such as *paper* (easily offended or overly sensitive), reflecting a shift in the discourse around masculinity and vulnerability.

Conversely, female adolescents use slang to navigate conformity and resistance to normative femininity. The terms *feel* (a sudden loss of romantic interest), *mucin* (blindly in love), and *julid* (passive-aggressive behavior) are common in female speech, especially in online discourse. Although *mucin* may mock romantic vulnerability, it can also serve as a performative display of emotional honesty and intimacy. This use of slang reflects Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (2003) theory that gendered linguistic practices emerge from shared community activities and stylistic choices, with girls using these expressions to critique patriarchal romantic expectations and reconfigure feminine identity.

Furthermore, gendered slang intersects with digital performativity as adolescents curate their online personas. Female influencers may use slang to project emotional depth or relatability, whereas male influencers use it to project confidence or humor. Slang functions as a tool for narrative construction and social positioning in digital spaces. Notably, terms such as *mucin* are increasingly used across genders, signaling a shift toward gender-fluid expressions. This evolution reflects the dynamic nature of youth language and its adaptation to changing gender ideologies, offering insight into how young Indonesians navigate and challenge gender norms through everyday linguistic practices.

Digital Platforms as Semantic Change Accelerators

The study also found that slang meanings evolved rapidly, particularly on platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram. For example, depending on the context, terms such as *gaskeun* (originally meaning "go ahead") were semantically expanded to express encouragement, enthusiasm, or sarcastic compliance. The participants explained that meme culture and remixing trends contributed to the transformation of slang meanings, demonstrating a dynamic semantic shift influenced by intertextuality and virality.

The acceleration of semantic change on digital platforms reflects [3] emphasis on intersubjectivity in identity construction. Meaning is not fixed but is continuously co-constructed among users. Adolescents play an active role in this process, not only by adopting slang but also by redefining its usage and connotation based on community feedback. These observations reinforce [4] findings on language

hybridization and highlight the need for real-time semantic analysis to capture emerging identity markers in youth culture.

The digital age has drastically transformed the landscape of linguistic evolution, with digital platforms playing a pivotal role in accelerating semantic change, particularly among adolescent language users. Unlike traditional language evolution, which typically occurred over generations, the rapid dissemination of content via platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp has condensed the timeline of semantic shifts from decades into days or even hours. This transformation has profound implications for how slang is created, shared, modified, and discarded. In Indonesian adolescent communities, slang such as *santuy* (a relaxed variant of "santai") and *gabut* (a blend of "gaji buta," referring to idleness) exemplify how digital circulation can give rise to neologisms that gain near-universal understanding in remarkably short timeframes.

Semantic change in digital slang is often driven by memetic transmission—an idea introduced by [5] and later expanded upon in the study of digital culture by [6]. A single meme, short-form video, or viral tweet can alter the perceived meaning of a slang term through parody, sarcasm, or recontextualization. For instance, *cringe*, initially describing secondhand embarrassment, has expanded to denote inauthenticity, failed humor, or outdated trends, depending on the digital subculture that uses it. This kind of semantic drift is facilitated by the participatory and remix-friendly nature of digital media, where adolescents act as both consumers and producers of linguistic content. Each interaction adds a new layer of meaning, reshaping the function and scope of the term.

Moreover, algorithms on social media platforms amplify certain linguistic patterns, causing some slang terms to be adopted globally while others fade into obscurity. For instance, TikTok's "For You Page" privileges slang embedded in popular sounds, hashtags, and captions, leading to its widespread adoption across regions, social classes, and even linguistic boundaries. This phenomenon reflects the idea of algorithmic sociolinguistics, where digital mechanisms—not merely human agents—play a role in selecting and elevating certain forms of speech. Indonesian slang terms such as *numbers* (a stylized inversion of *bang* for older brother) gained national popularity via algorithm-driven trends rather than interpersonal networks. Digital platforms do not merely reflect adolescent language—they actively shape it.

In addition, the ephemeral nature of digital discourse demands constant linguistic innovation. The shelf life of a slang term may now be measured in viral cycles rather than calendar years. Terms that are overused or co-opted by adults quickly lose their subcultural value and are replaced by newer

expressions. This creates a linguistic environment characterized by high turnover and low stability, where the semantic field is constantly in flux. Adolescents demonstrate a remarkable linguistic agility, adapting rapidly to new meanings while intuitively recognizing when a term becomes passé. This aligns with [13] social network theory, which posits that dense, multiplex networks contribute to linguistic change networks that are now digital, global, and instant.

Finally, digital platforms also democratize the production of semantic change, allowing marginalized voices including regional ethnic contribute to slang innovation. Consequently, Indonesian adolescent slang increasingly reflects a pluralistic, hybrid identity that is more inclusive of diverse cultural references and intersectional experiences. Semantic diversification enhances the richness of youth language while challenging top-down language ideologies. Digital platforms serve not only as accelerators of semantic change but also as instruments of cultural negotiation and identity performance in the digital age.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the semantic roles of slang in shaping the social identity of Indonesian adolescents, revealing that youth language is a powerful vehicle for identity construction, negotiation, and performance. This research identified five primary categories of slang usage: affiliation and bonding, resistance and rebellion, humor and playfulness, social status and prestige, and gender and relationship dynamics. These categories underscore how deeply slang is embedded in the everyday lives and psychological development of Indonesian young people.

The findings emphasize that adolescents strategically use slang to express group membership, challenge norms, assert individuality, and navigate social hierarchies. Notably, the semantic versatility of terms such as *mucin*, *julid*, or *gamut* illustrates how language becomes a flexible and adaptive resource for identity work. Furthermore, the data demonstrate the dynamic and evolving nature of slang, especially as it is shaped by digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This digital influence accelerates the transformation of meanings, prompting researchers to consider not only the lexical features of slang but also its socio-digital context.

This study makes a significant contribution to the interdisciplinary understanding of Southeast Asian youth sociolinguistics by combining semantic analysis with social identity theory. While previous research has often focused on the structural features or the sociological impact of youth slang, this study uniquely integrates semantic categorization with DIC. In doing so, it provides a nuanced framework that educators, linguists, and policymakers can use to better understand youth expression and its implications for education, media, and social cohesion.

However, this research is not without limitations. The study was limited to urban and semi-urban adolescents, with little representation from rural youth, whose slang usage may differ in both form and function. Moreover, the analysis focused on Indonesian language-based slang, excluding other vernacular and ethnic linguistic influences. Future research could expand to include cross-cultural comparative studies, longitudinal tracking of semantic shifts in slang, or multimodal discourse analysis incorporating visual and textual data from social media platforms.

In conclusion, the semantic study of slang offers a valuable lens for understanding how language reflects and shapes adolescents' lived experiences. As language continues to evolve in an increasingly digital and globalized society, ongoing research in this area remains essential for capturing the complexities of youth identity, communication, and culture.

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