

Indonesian Gen Z's English slang: The use and effects on digital communication

Elly Nurhaliza Putri^{1*}, Nanang Zubaidi², Yusnita Febrianti³, Alma Huwaida Ramadhani⁴,
Sibakhul Milad Malik Hidayatulloh⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

*) Corresponding Author, email: elly.nurhaliza.2102226@students.um.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media transformed communication, encouraging the emergence of slang as a creative, identity-driven linguistic practice among Generation Z (Gen Z). Previous studies extensively examined types, functions, and general impacts of slang, presenting contradictory conclusions, either its positive role or negative implications. These inconsistent findings make it difficult to understand the actual role of English slang in communication effectiveness. However, limited research examined how Indonesian Gen Z use English slang and how it affects communication effectiveness among Gen Z users with similar linguistic backgrounds and comparable English proficiency. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the types of English slang used by Indonesian Gen Z majoring in English studies in communication and analyzes its effects on clarity and effectiveness. With a qualitative-descriptive approach, data were collected through questionnaires (N=65) and semi-structured interviews with selected participants (n=6). The collected slang was categorized using a slang taxonomy and analyzed in relation to perceived message clarity and effectiveness. The findings reveal four types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, acronym, and clipping. Acronyms were reported as the most frequently used slang in communication. The interviews indicate participants perceive slang as having positive impacts on communication effectiveness, self-expression, vocabulary development, and strengthening solidarity. However, the use of slang causes misunderstandings for those unfamiliar with slang and may encourage its inappropriate use in formal contexts. Future research should involve more diverse participant groups and examine the long-term effects of English slang on language use and communication.

Keywords: digital communication; English slang; Indonesian Gen Z; language

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has grown tremendously in the last decade and changed the online communication landscape. Social media allows for instant, informal, and more interactive exchange of information

because users can adapt and create new expressions to match the fast-paced and dynamic online platform. The various ways of conveying expressions, such as emojis, hashtags, slang, and memes, reflect the creativity and efficiency of language. Slang is characterized by creativity and dynamism, and always needs new expressions or words because the old terms tend to be considered outdated (Lantto, 2014). Young generations often create new terms as a way to express themselves in a unique way and relevant to current situations. Creative forms of expression not only change the structure and message content of language itself, but also shape social relationships, especially among younger generations who have grown up in a digital culture (Chai & Fan, 2018). As one of the most prominent forms of informal language among the young generation, slang has become increasingly visible on social media, where a lot of young users rapidly interact with diverse users. Furthermore, social media enables slang expressions to spread rapidly; as a result, new slang terms can quickly gain popularity and become part of everyday interactions. Beyond facilitating communication, slang also serves as a marker of identity, allowing people to express a sense of belonging within a particular community. The widespread use of slang demonstrates how language continuously adapts to technological developments and changing social contexts. Consequently, the use of slang has become an important area of study in language, communication, and contemporary youth culture.

Young generations' exposure to social media shapes the way they communicate. The majority of active social media users are young people born between 1996 and 2012, popularly known as Generation Z (Gen Z) (Kandiawan, 2022). Gen Z grew up in a period of economic stability and rapid technological development (Yusuf et al., 2023). The existence of Gen Z is followed by rapid access to the internet and technological advancement, making Gen Z a proficient user of social media. They are more exposed to information from social media and are quick to learn the newest things that emerge. These Gen Z social media users are interesting subjects of the study because they have already established distinct digital communication styles and actively contribute to the creation, adaptation, and circulation of new slang in online communities. Gen Z provides a more mature and observable population for analyzing how slang functions within digital communication. Slang is described as a non-standard and deeply informal form of language used especially by the younger generation in communication to convey identity and creativity. It is a constantly evolving collection of words and phrases that helps build or maintain social identity and a sense of belonging in a community (Eble, 1996). Different from colloquial language, which refers to widely accepted informal speech, slang is more dynamic and specific to a certain group. The use of slang in communication reflects Gen Z's ability to customize language for practicality and efficiency (Stahl & Literat, 2023). In addition, these forms of expression contribute to building a unique digital identity that only fellow Gen Zs are most likely to understand. Slang allows Gen Z to connect and interact in a unique way from previous generations. Although the linguistic transformation is more informal, it still holds a significant role in the evolution of communication in the digital age (Stahl & Literat, 2023).

Generation Z tends to use a unique communication style when interacting with others on social media to display existence and identity (Wijayanti & Sihotang, 2021). Gen Z usually mixes formal language with informal language, or code-switching between Indonesian and English, and this creates new expressions called slang that reflect their digital culture and values. According to Siagian et al. (2024), Gen Z communicates using slang to make themselves different from previous generations and also to express themselves more freely. Slang as a form of expression allows Gen Z to express their solidarity and identity with fellow Gen Z groups. Rahma and Moetia (2024) also stated that slang is a way to easily identify people from a particular group and build a sense of solidarity among the members of the group. Slang is also used to show affection and closeness in certain groups, and it is certainly reflected in their social media use. Social media has become a major space for the use and tool to spread slang among younger generations. Along with the appearance of this linguistic phenomenon, the development of digital communication has led to various studies to examine how social media, the primary platform for the younger generation to adopt and spread slang, affects communication. This study refers to Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, which considers slang as a form of creative expression and reflects social and cultural transformation. This perspective helps explain how slang

develops dynamically in communication. Gen Z's slang can be innovative and adaptive. Some expressions are newly created within digital culture, and others are recycled older terms with renewed meanings that fit current online contexts. Both forms highlight Gen Z's creativity and their role in shaping how language evolves in digital communication.

Several previous studies have explored Gen Z's use of slang in social media, with a focus on how English slang is used on various social media platforms (e.g., Hamida, 2019; Hutaeruk et al., 2024; Indra & Marhamah, 2024; Khatimah & Rohainy, 2024; Marzuki et al., 2025; Murni & Anjani, 2025; Siagian et al., 2024). Siagian et al. (2024) analyzed the meaning and types of English slang used by content creators on TikTok and reported that slang not only facilitated informal communication but also conveyed cultural expression and eased interaction between slang users. They also highlighted that slang plays an important role in enhancing the speaking process. Another study by Hutaeruk et al. (2024) examined slang use on X and found that slang is primarily used as a form of code-switching and is preferred over standard language. This phenomenon is not just social but also lexical, as the continual creation and adoption of slang words introduces new vocabulary and changes the existing meanings of words, which represent linguistic novelties that gradually influence the structure and norms of language. Slang is mostly used by teenagers and continues to grow from time to time. The increasing use of slang also has an impact on the linguistic structure of the Indonesian language itself. One study investigated the effect of slang among Gen Z students, where slang can shift the role of the original Indonesian language (Hamida, 2019). The habit of frequent use of slang may de-familiarize the use of the standardized Indonesian language, especially in an educational environment. In addition, a study exploring the types and functions of slang among Instagram users revealed the challenges of using slang on social media (Indra & Marhamah, 2024; Marzuki et al., 2025). The research shows that a potential problem is the potential for miscommunication. Not all media social users can understand the slang terms used, so the messages conveyed can be misinterpreted or difficult to understand, especially by those who are less active on social media or come from different linguistic backgrounds. This underlines that the use of slang, despite being considered modern and expressive and having quite a positive impact, still has negative consequences in communication.

These previous studies have mostly explored the types, functions, and impacts of slang among Indonesian Gen Z on social media (e.g., Hamida, 2019; Hutaeruk et al., 2024; Indra & Marhamah, 2024; Kandiawan, 2022; Khatimah & Rohainy, 2024; Marzuki et al., 2025; Murni & Anjani, 2025; Siagian et al., 2024). For example, Hutaeruk et al. (2024) highlighted the positive impacts of slang, such as strengthening social solidarity, showing group identity, and facilitating self-expression in a digital environment. On the other hand, two studies by Indra and Marhamah (2024) and Rafiqoh (2023) reported that the negative impacts of slang, such as the decrease in formal language skills, can lead to miscommunication and the shifting of linguistic standards in daily interactions. However, studies that specifically examine the impact of slang on effective communication remain limited. Not many studies have deeply analyzed whether the use of slang facilitates or obstructs the understanding of messages in communication between Indonesian Gen Z with similar linguistic backgrounds, who are equally proficient in English. Most of these studies have discussed the positive and negative impacts of slang in general. Therefore, there is a growing need for studies on how slang affects the effectiveness of communication among Indonesian Gen Z who have the same English proficiency. This study also identifies and analyzes the most frequently used types of slang based on the results of the researcher's observations, so that the data studied is more representative of the real habits of users. Based on this background, the research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What types of English slang are used by Indonesian Gen Z in online communication via social media?
2. What are the effects of English slang used by Indonesian Gen Z on their clarity and effectiveness in their communication?

This research offers novelty by focusing on an analysis of the use of slang by Indonesian Gen Z social media users. While previous studies have examined slang use in communication, most of

them have focused more on general social media users or primarily explored the linguistic features of slang rather than the impact on communication. Furthermore, findings from previous studies remain mixed, as some researchers emphasize the positive role of slang in self-expression and social bonding, while others highlight its potential to create misunderstandings. This study focused on Indonesian Gen Z who major in English studies, as they are more accustomed to using English in daily communication, making them more likely to use slang. Their linguistic background makes them a relevant group for examining how slang is integrated into communication practice. In addition, investigating this group can provide a deeper understanding of how the English language influences communication patterns among Indonesian Gen Z. This research is expected to contribute to the study of sociolinguistics, specifically in the understanding of the relationship between the use of slang and the effectiveness of communication. Thus, this research can widen the field studies of sociolinguistics while providing insight into how language adapts to the newest media and the expressive needs of the user.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slang

This study is grounded in the field of sociolinguistics, which focuses on the use of language and society in daily communication (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Sociolinguistics provides a framework for understanding how language reflects social structure, pop culture, trends, and group identity. Slang has been used since the 16th century and initially used by certain groups that aimed to distinguish themselves from outsiders and functioned to keep the communication private (e.g., Indra & Marhamah, 2024). Slang is a language that is commonly used because of its unique way of speech. It is marked by certain codes or terms that are exclusive to a generation or group (Yusuf et al., 2023). Slang is usually a form of non-standard language that has unique characteristics in its use. Slang is always dynamic, creative, and full of linguistic innovations. The terms in slang will be temporary and always change according to the trend and the development of the times. According to Siagian et al. (2024), slang is likely to reflect current trends or culture, such as words and expressions that can continually evolve and reflect the changes of popular culture and trends in social media. In some cases, new words or phrases that gain popularity among teenagers can quickly become slang. In the current modern era, slang has developed as one alternative in communication, especially among teenagers. This language often contains implied meanings, so the understanding used is not easily understood by groups outside the community. This creates a form of communication that is exclusive and can only be understood by fellow members of the group (Rosyadi et al., 2023). Allan and Burridge (2006) categorized slang into five types: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping.

1. Fresh and creative is a new form of language that encourages a sense of instant creativity in communication. This kind of slang generally evolves among teenagers or certain groups. This form reflects the changes in social dynamics and constantly changing and the need for free expression, casual, and relevant to current developments, such as *delulu*, *lit*, *ate*, etc.
2. Flippant is an expression that reflects the use of language that tends to be rude, impolite, or shows little disrespect for others. This kind of slang is used in informal situations and can occur as a form of emotional expression or a form of over-intimacy. For example: *salty*, *unserious*, etc.
3. Imitative is words or expressions that aim to imitate or represent the sounds, characteristics of a particular object, action, or situation. This type of slang is often imitative and is used to create expressive, dramatic, or imaginative effects in communication. Some words resemble the original sound of what is being imitated, so they make a more vivid and recognizable impression on the listener or reader. For example: *sheesh*, *brrr*, etc.
4. Acronym is an expression created by shortening or taking abbreviations of words commonly used in daily life. This slang is very common in social media and conversations between members of certain communities. This slang usually appears in response to the requirement to communicate quickly, briefly, and efficiently. For example: *TBH* (to be honest) and *WDYT* (what do you think).

5. Clipping is a form of words that has been shortened to create new slang terms that are briefer to use in daily communication. This slang is created from longer vocabulary words and then shortened or rearranged to make them easier for speakers to use. For instance, *sus* for suspiciousness, and *ngak* for charisma.

The use of slang by Gen Z also brings positive and negative impacts. In a positive aspect, according to [Paino et al. \(2024\)](#), slang contributes to enriching and expanding the Indonesian language vocabulary, as well as enhancing the creativity and self-expression of Gen Z in the context of informal situations. Slang also plays a role in building a sense of unity and identity among certain social groups. Slang is used to facilitate communication, such as when not able to find a suitable Indonesian word, thus slang becomes the bridge. As slang is exclusive to certain groups, it provides a sense of comfort in communicating, so communication feels intimate. In the study conducted by [Firmansyah et al. \(2024\)](#), slang can improve the understanding of vocabulary and increase the understanding of culture. In addition, the slang used by Gen Z is an identity that reflects the identity of the group and supports freedom of expression in the digital world ([Hutauruk et al., 2024](#)). In contrast, overuse of slang in daily life can potentially decrease the ability to use formal language, particularly in academic and professional settings. Research conducted by [Firmansyah et al. \(2024\)](#) shows that 80% of frequent slang users have difficulty in using formal language in academic contexts, such as difficulty in writing using formal language, as well as decreased literacy in standard language. In another instance, slang may cause communication problems between generations due to differences in understanding and threaten the existence of Indonesian as a standard and national language. The use of slang in communication can lead to misunderstanding. This occurs because the interlocutor is not familiar with the slang term or its meaning. This can prevent communication and cause the message to be not properly conveyed.

Communication

Communication is a process of conveying messages from communicators to communicants to create mutual understanding and be able to influence the communicant's response ([Craig, 1999](#)). [Craig \(1999\)](#) also emphasizes that communication is wide; there are several ways to reach communication, such as how to talk persuasively (rhetoric), symbols and signs (semiotics), and how people understand each other (phenomenology). These perspectives balanced each other for better communication. Successful or effective communication occurs when the receiver can properly understand the messages and experiences a similar interpretation in both speakers. [Walther \(1996\)](#) stated that hyper-personal, online communication is considered more effective than face-to-face communication because online users can selectively present themselves, expressing attitudes and aspects in controlled and desired social settings, and the receiver tends to idealize their interlocutors, which is strengthened since communication is indirect. As a result, digital communication creates interpersonal relationships and optimizes shared meaning. Another psychosocial expert, [Suler \(2004\)](#), agrees that digital communication may reduce social barriers in interpersonal communication. In digital communication, people tend to be more open and expressive. It can enhance interpersonal communication by increasing openness, but also, the opposite, potentially cause negative behavior if not properly controlled. The development of digital technology changes the ways of communicating; many media support the ways of communication without meeting face-to-face. Nowadays, communication can occur online through various digital platforms. Those changes not only affect the speed and the distance of communication but also influence the language style they use in communication. The changes also indicate a shift from traditional communication to more modern communication, which accommodates dynamic and adaptable use of slang.

Communication plays a crucial role in daily life interaction because it enables and makes individuals or groups easily exchange information, share their experiences, express emotions, and build social relationships. Effective communication is considered the most fundamental aspect of every interaction, as it reduces misunderstandings and facilitates and enhances interpersonal relationships.

In addition, communication is influenced by various factors, including language choice, cultural background, social context, and the relationship between communicators. Different situations need different communication and language styles to make sure the messages can be delivered and interpreted properly. Therefore, understanding how communication functions in diverse contexts is important for examining the factors that contribute to successful communication. Language choice is one of the factors which could influence the effectiveness of communication. Every word, expression, sign, and language variety can affect how messages or information are interpreted. Among the various shapes of language variation, slang has already gained considerable attention because of its widespread use.

METHOD

To investigate Gen Z social media users' use of slang, the researchers employed a descriptive qualitative approach. A descriptive qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore issues in depth and focus on analysis and understanding the meaning or thoughts of people or groups in certain social conditions (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative descriptive approach was used because the research needs detailed elaboration, not only numbers. This approach provides a variety of expressions and interpretations about the effects of using slang.

The researchers collected the data using questionnaires and interviews because both allow participants to naturally demonstrate their slang use and perception of slang. This study uses 20 slang terms obtained from observations on Twitter or X, such as *FR*, *slay*, *ate*, and *cap*. The slang term chosen used purposive sampling to select slang terms that were frequently used in communication and relevant to the study's focus on Gen Z's expression, identity, and social interaction. First data is collected through an online questionnaire using Google Form, which is shared through WhatsApp chat groups and through the *@englishfess* based on X/Twitter. The data was collected from 65 Gen Z who frequently used slang in their digital communication and were fluent in English. This number was considered sufficient because the focus was on obtaining in-depth insight rather than generalization. The responses provided diverse perspectives that revealed consistent patterns across participants. Moreover, the data saturation was achieved after the sixth interview, indicating that the sample adequately represented the phenomenon being studied.

All participants have an X account as proof that they are active on social media X. The sample was chosen by both 27 males and 38 females with an age range from 19 to 24 years old, and the majority of participants were found from Java, which was the result of participant availability and accessibility through online distribution. English major students were intentionally chosen because they are more frequently exposed to English and digital slang, which allows for more insightful perspectives on the impact and interpretation of slang in communication. The questionnaires were closed-ended and open-ended, containing demographics, history of learning English, and knowledge of slang, with 24 question items, and questions about their perspectives and experiences with slang, with 10 question items. Then, six participants were selected for semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling from the questionnaire respondents. The participants were chosen based on the engaging and relevant nature of their open-ended responses, which provided insight into their experiences and perspectives on using slang. The researchers needed 5 days for interviews, and the duration per participant was less than 30 minutes.

The data analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model. The process involves familiarizing the data by repeatedly reading the questionnaire and interview transcript. Next, generating codes by identifying patterns related to slang use. The codes are grouped into themes, such as communication efficiency, emotional expression, etc. These themes were reviewed and interpreted using Allan and Burridge's (2006) slang classification theory so that the findings can be compared to previous studies' findings. To ensure the validity of slang meaning interpretation, the researcher relied on participants' descriptions and contextual usage in communication. The meanings were cross-checked between the open-ended questionnaire and interview data to confirm consistency and avoid personal bias. The questionnaire was reviewed by

academic supervisors to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. The process maintains the validity and appropriateness of the instrument. In addition, interpretations were supported by relevant linguistic literature.

To increase the trustworthiness and dependability of the study, the researchers used data source triangulation techniques, which involve combining data from open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's experiences using slang. Researchers minimize subjective bias through all the processes guided and corrected by academic supervisors as a form of peer debriefing, who also contribute to improving the quality of the research. Researchers also maintain the anonymity of the participants. Name, number, and social media accounts are not included and are only used for internal analysis. This data collection has been ethically approved by the research ethics committee of Universitas Negeri Malang (No.23.04.02/UN32.14.2.8/LT/2025).

FINDINGS

English slang terms used by Indonesian Gen Z in social media communication

The researcher describes the analysis of 20 slangs that were selected based on their frequency and popularity on X/Twitter. These terms were analyzed and categorized according to the classification of slang by [Allan and Burridge \(2006\)](#). Of the 20 selected terms, four of the five types were identified. They are fresh and creative, flippant, acronym, and clipping. However, imitative type was not found. The majority of fresh and creative slang indicates that Gen Z tends to modify or invent new linguistic forms to make their communication expressive. It is in line with [Allan and Burridge \(2006\)](#), who suggest slang as a means of identity formation and social belonging. The analysis also considered participants' demographic factors such as age, gender, study major, city of origin, length of English learning, and slang usage frequency to provide contextual knowledge to ensure more understanding of their linguistic behavior. The demographic data was used to contextualize the findings; a detailed discussion of these variables was beyond the primary focus of this study.

Table 1

Types of Slang

Category	Number of Slang	Slang Terms
Fresh and Creative	7	Ate, spill the tea, ghosting, flex, lit, slay, cap
Flippant	3	Salty, unserious, fishy
Acronym	6	IYKYK, FOMO, TBH, FR, SMTH, POV
Clipping	4	Delulu, bestie, rizz, sus
Imitative	-	-

Survey finding

The questionnaire data (N=65) shows variations in the frequency of the use of slang in digital communication. It shows that not all slang has the same popularity among participants. The variations may result from differences in participants, digital exposure, preferred platforms, and other contextual factors. The following table shows the highest to lowest distribution of slang terms used in communication:

Table 2

Frequency of Users Using Slang Words (N=65)

No.	Slang	Literal Meaning	Frequency of Users Using Slang Words (N=65)	Percentage (N=65)
1	FR	For Real	60	92%
2	FOMO	Fear of Missing Out	58	89%
3	Ghosting	Disappeared suddenly	57	88%
4	Slay	Look very cool	57	88%
5	TBH	To be Honest	56	86%
6	POV	Point of View	55	85%

No.	Slang	Literal Meaning	Frequency of Users Using Slang Words (N=65)	Percentage (N=65)
7	Spill the tea	Ask to share gossip or secrets	54	83%
8	Salty	Feeling angry or annoyed	54	83%
9	IYKYK	If you know, you know	52	80%
10	SMTH	Something	49	75%
11	Flex	Showing off something	48	74%
12	Rizz	Charisma, to flirt or attract someone romantically	48	74%
13	Sus	Suspicious	48	74%
14	Ate	To praise someone who did something extremely well	47	72%
15	Bestie	Best friend	46	71%
16	Lit	Exciting, amazing, or fun	46	71%
17	Unserious	Not serious, silly, absurd.	43	66%
18	Delulu	Delusional, believes in something unrealistic	41	63%
19	Cap	Lie	38	58%
20	Fishy	Suspicious and untrustworthy or doesn't seem right.	38	58%

Table 2 shows that among 20 slang terms listed, most participants are familiar and actively use *FR*, the acronym for '*For Real*', with a percentage of 92% of participants, and the least frequently used are *Cap* and *Fishy*, with a percentage of 58% of respondents. It indicates that it is still emerging or less relatable to the Indonesian context. This range reflects the diverse exposure and adoption of English slang among Gen Z, with some expressions becoming part of their daily lives, while others are still used to a small extent or are only somewhat familiar.

Effects of using English slang on the clarity and effectiveness of communication

This section explores the participants' perceptions of the effects of English slang used by Gen Z on the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Based on the questionnaire responses, the perceptions can be categorized into three groups: positive, negative, and mixed. Most participants viewed the use of English slang in communication as beneficial, as it can enhance communication effectiveness and engagement. However, some participants also identified challenges, such as the potential for misunderstandings. The chart below illustrates the distribution of these perceived effects.

Figure 1

Effects of Using Slang among Respondents (N = 65)

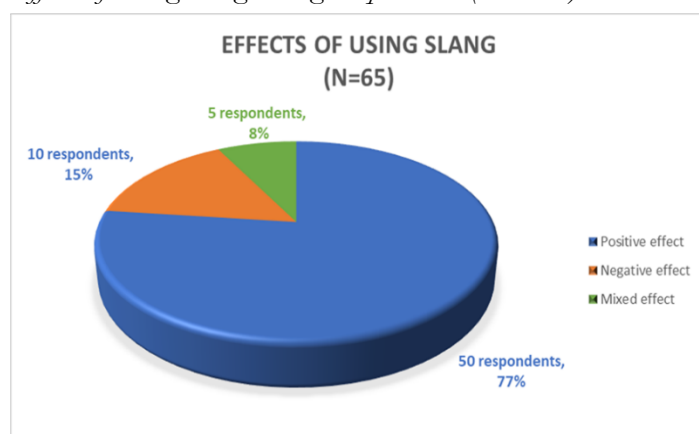


Figure 1 illustrates the distributions of participants' perceptions of the effects of using slang in communication. The data was collected from the closed-ended question that asked participants about their experiences in using English slang to communicate positively, negatively, or both. As shown, 77% (50 participants) reported positive effects, such as improved communication efficiency and

emotional expression. Meanwhile, 15% (10 participants) noted negative effects related to misunderstanding or inappropriate use in formal contexts. The remaining 8% (5 participants) experienced mixed effects, suggesting that slang can both facilitate and hinder communication depending on the situation. Even though slang is seen as beneficial among Gen Z, it still depends on the familiarity of the users and context.

Besides the general effects, which highlighted positive and negative impacts, this research also analyzes the answers to open-ended questions about how to interpret the use of slang in digital communication. Unlike the closed-ended questions that only measure general perceptions, open-ended questions allow participants to elaborate their views and experiences in detail. The variations in answers from participants were classified into a thematic group, such as communication effectiveness, expressing emotion, and miscommunication, etc.

Table 3

Categorization of the Effects of Using Slang

Labor agreement	Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Positive effects	Communication Effectiveness	25	32%
	Expressing emotion	22	28%
	Expanding Vocabulary	10	13%
	Social Bonding	7	9%
Negative effects	Situational Use	3	4%
	Miscommunication	11	14%

To understand in depth the impact of using slang in communication, the answers to the open-ended questions were grouped into several categories. One of the most frequent impacts that is mentioned is that slang can increase communication effectiveness. Slang is considered able to deliver messages more briefly, concisely, and directly to the point in communication. Many participants describe using slang to express emotion naturally in conversations. Ten participants also mentioned that using slang indirectly helps them in learning new vocabulary, especially new terms that are popular on social media. Not only for facilitating communication means, but slang can also strengthen social ties between users. However, the use of slang sometimes leads to misunderstandings.

Interview finding

In order to collect data from the questionnaire, six participants were chosen for short interviews to dig deeper into their views regarding the effect of using slang in digital communication. The result of the interviews is in line with the results of the questionnaires. The interview result gives more comprehensive explanations. The results from the interviews will be divided into positive and negative, and also grouped based on the themes:

Positive effects of using slang

According to the interview results from 6 selected participants, slang has positive effects and will be categorized based on some themes below:

1. Communication Effectiveness

From the results of the interview and questionnaire, the effectiveness of slang in communication was often mentioned. Most of the interviewees stated that slang can make conversation easier, quicker, and more comfortable when chatting with their peers. Slang may shorten the message and make the meaning clearer. Here are the statements from the interviewees:

“By using slang, I think the information is easier to convey but still seems fun and suitable for our age.” (Participant 3)

“The use of slang really helps to convey feelings and to shorten time as well.” (Participant 4)

Moreover, 25 people (32%) said that using slang can improve communication. These data indicate that slang contributes to communication effectiveness by allowing users to convey messages more quickly and naturally. Gen Z social media users have a tendency to speed and clarity in communication, especially in peer interactions or group conversations, where brevity is a crucial aspect in interaction. This pattern shows that slang pragmatically compresses information and manages interactional efficiency.

2. Expressing Emotion

As mentioned before, slang is used for expressing emotions, and quite a lot of questionnaire respondents agreed, and several selected respondents also support it.

"Using slang makes chatting more casual. So, when chatting with friends, for example, using the words 'bestie, WDYT, etc,' the atmosphere is immediately closer. It's not awkward, it makes you feel more attached." (Participant 6)

"It just feels more comfortable. If you're with someone who often uses slang, the conversation is more chill, not complicated, and definitely relatable." (Participant 6)

"It's definitely most suitable when chatting casually with close friends, especially in chat or in groups that often use the same language style. If the conversation is loose, slang makes the atmosphere more comfortable." (Participant 1)

"If you chat with someone who often uses slang, you feel more comfortable, like you're more attached. So, the conversation is also not awkward." (Participant 1)

The result of the previous chart shows that 22 participants (28%) feel that slang makes it easier to express emotions.

"Communication becomes more expressive." (Participant 5)

"Feel more relaxed, and the tone of speech becomes more natural." (Participant 11)

"Feels more fun to joke around with" (Participant 17)

"Chat or interaction is more interactive and expressive." (Participant 31)

These responses illustrate how slang creates a relaxing and emotionally expressive atmosphere. It allows users to convey closeness and comfort when communicating. Slang helps express emotion naturally, especially during jokes, casual reassurance, or supportive messages in friend groups and group chats. Slang creates a more relatable tone and relaxed and pragmatically reduces social distance and signals stance and affect.

3. Expanding New Vocabulary

Some questionnaire results mentioned that slang can improve new vocabulary. Based on the interview results, only one participant highlighted this effect. She revealed that the frequently exposed slang makes her aware of new terms that were unfamiliar before.

"There are a lot of abbreviations in this slang, so it's like adding to my vocabulary too." (Participant 5)

Participant 5 stated that using slang makes her look updated and trendy, but sometimes she has trouble dealing with new slang. However, she was pulled to find out about some new slang terms.

"I was looking for the latest slang on Google and saw some posts on other social media platforms. My experience made me more enthusiastic about learning slang. When I was confused, I immediately

asked my friend what it meant, and I had the initiative to learn other slang. Finally, I searched for articles on Google about the latest slang." (Participant 5)

Apart from the statement from one interviewed participant about slang being able to help add new vocabulary, there were several participants who answered the questionnaire have similar experiences.

"Increased insight into the meaning of some slang that we don't know the meaning of." (Participant 6)

"My curiosity about slang is increasing, and I am looking for new slang vocabulary every day." (Participant 30)

"I learned a new language, and it triggered me to learn other vocabulary." (Participant 44)

"It has taught me a lot about English vocabulary." (Participant 54)

These responses show that slang can encourage language awareness and vocabulary expansion among Gen Z. Their curiosity to understand and adopt new slang leads them to seek meaning online or through peers. It is indicated that slang acts as a medium for informal language learning and linguistic exploration. Learning new words could happen online or offline exposure through group interaction or social media, often prompted by encountering unfamiliar terms and then searching or asking peer groups, and this is in line with [Bandura's \(1977\)](#) idea about incidental vocabulary acquisition, which is the social learning idea that language is learned through social exposure and participation in group communities.

4. Social Bond

Some participants stated that slang makes the relationship closer, especially with peers of the same age who also use slang in social media or real life. That statement is supported by the following interview result:

"The use of slang can make a connection with a friend closer. Because slang is like a special code that is only understood together, so it makes us feel more related and familiar." (Participant 1)

"I feel like chatting with people who also like to use slang makes our friendship closer." (Participant 3)

"Because if I use slang, I can be more casual and familiar when chatting, especially when I'm online on social media with my virtual friends" (Participant 5)

Slang helps to be more intimate with the community, as supported by several statements from the questionnaire.

"...the conversation also feels more intimate." (Participant 17)

"When using slang, I feel cooler, and slang helps me in forming intimacy with my friends, especially in online communities on social media." (Participant 23)

"More intimate" (Participant 61)

"I feel more connected to the younger generation." (Participant 64)

These responses indicate that slang serves as a social bonding mechanism among Gen Z. It helps create a sense of belonging and share identity like inside code that strengthens closeness among

communities. Concepts of strengthening social bonds mainly occur in online communities and close peer networks

Negative effects of using slang

1. Situational use

Some participants stated that the use of slang depends on the usage situation. Slang is usually used in informal situations and avoided in formal situations or when talking with strangers or non-familiar people. In this context, it is considered a negative effect because slang is not universally applicable, and the user needs to adjust the usage. The use of slang has limitations in the fluidity of communication across situations. There are two participants from the questionnaire who have experience with the situational usage:

"...But if you use it to talk to new people, you have to think twice before using slang." (Participant 8)

"Sometimes I get carried away talking informally in official situations." (Participant 65)

These statements highlight the contextual limitations of slang use. Slang can be inappropriate in formal or unfamiliar contexts. This shows Gen Z's awareness of code-switching and adjusting language use based on context to maintain appropriateness and clarity in communication.

2. Miscommunication

Miscommunication or misunderstanding is a negative effect that almost everyone has experienced. The following interview data revealed the occurrence of miscommunication among social media users.

"What often happens is that the person I am talking with misunderstands me. I use the slang word 'cap', but he thinks it's 'topi'- refer to ordinary cap, not slang, in the dictionary, that's what it means, but I am not talking about a cap." (Participant 1)

"...my cousin used the slang TBH, which I had never heard before, so I was confused and had to ask him about the meaning." (Participant 2)

"The first time I heard the word 'B aja', which means 'biasa aja' or ordinary in English. At that time, my friends had already used the word, while I had just heard it, so I didn't connect with what they were talking about because instead of 'biasa aja', at that time I thought 'b aja' was part of the Jakarta license plate number which is B" (Participant 4)

"Like when I said, Rizz, people didn't understand what I was saying and thought that I didn't get the conversation." (Participant 6)

Miscommunication was the most frequently mentioned negative effect in both interviews and questionnaires.

"The other person doesn't understand what we're talking about." (Participant 2)

"Loading (not immediately grasping the meaning) in processing the other person's intention" (Participant 3)

"On social media, I often encounter misunderstandings in using slang so that the true meaning is not conveyed..." (Participant 9)

"Many misinterpret and cause misunderstanding." (Participant 55)

The responses indicate that miscommunication is a common issue in slang use. Differences in familiarity or interpretation of slang often lead to confusion, especially when slang has multiple meanings. Miscommunication mostly occurs when slang is used outside a shared-group context, such as in mixed conversations involving people with varying levels of English proficiency. The most frequent confusion arose with some slang terms, such as *cap*, *riꦗꦶꦱ*, *fishy*, and *TBH*, which are unfamiliar to Gen Z, or they interpreted them literally according to dictionary meanings. Misunderstanding is not only a linguistic problem but also a matter of pragmatic competence and shared cultural knowledge. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), perspective slang as a marker of in-group identity and social belonging. It strengthens solidarity among Gen Z and also simultaneously excludes or unites others who are not part of the group. Slang demonstrates how code familiarity influences the meaning and successful delivery of messages.

Based on the findings, slang is used differently depending on the communication situation. In casual interactions, slang is frequently used to create closeness and express emotions. However, in formal situations or unfamiliar contexts, users tend to avoid using slang to maintain appropriateness and prevent misunderstanding. Slang plays a double role in communication. It can enhance communication, be engaging, and allow users to communicate more efficiently and express themselves freely. However, slang also creates barriers when familiarity with the slang terms is limited. It can lead to misunderstanding and reduce clarity.

A clear example of ambiguity is participant 1's mention of being misunderstood when using the slang word "*cap*". While in slang it means "*lie*" or "*not true*," the listener interpreted it literally as "*a bat*." Similarly, participants 2 and 6 experienced confusion when encountering unfamiliar slang such as "*TBH*" and "*Riꦗꦶꦱ*." These examples show that slang can have multiple meanings and can lead to misunderstandings if one person does not understand the terms. Slang can influence cross-cultural communication. In digital communication, people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds often use slang, which can both connect and confuse. Gen Z frequently mixes Indonesian and English slang when communicating online, especially with international or English-speaking friends. This shows that slang is a linguistic bridge.

DISCUSSION

Frequently used English slang terms by Gen Z

Based on the analysis, we find out only four types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, acronym, and clipping. Imitative was not found in all terms of slang. The most dominant slang is fresh and creative, with as many as 7 terms. Followed by six terms from the acronym, three terms from flippant, and four terms from clipping. Unfortunately, the imitative type was not found. Type slang fresh and creative like '*spill the tea*, *ate*, *slay*, etc.', reflects Gen Z's tendency to use slang, which is expressive and fresh. Fresh and creative slang appears and evolves by forming a new definition or meaning of the existing terms or words, so that creative terms are formed. For example, the word '*ate*' has the literal meaning of eating or consuming food, but now we can use '*ate*' to praise someone who has done something extraordinary. Another example is '*cap*' (headwear), which, after redefinition, means '*lie*'.

This phenomenon happens because of the influence of online culture, such as fandom communities or memes, where slang is used as a group identity (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Jeresano and Carretero (2022) speculated that Gen Z uses slang as a means to express individuality and a sign of group identity. The finding is in tune with Allan and Burridge (2006), who see slang as having a role to indicate group affiliations and to convey emotions in new and creative ways in informal communication. This finding reflects Gen Z using slang for self-representation as well as a means of communication. The popularity of fresh and creative slang shows that slang continuously evolves with the times and generations. Gen Z tends to create new terms that are considered fresher, more expressive, and relevant in this time. The terms '*ate*, *slay*, *cap*, etc.' are a form of reflection of linguistic creativity to fill the need for language that represents their identity. While clipping is quite popular because it is concise and feels contemporary, clipping slang is not widely used because not all Gen Z understand its original meaning. Flippant is not very common because it tends to be contextual, often

used to express emotional attitudes like sarcasm or irritation. Its use is limited. On the other hand, imitative slang is less used by Indonesian Gen Z because mostly popular slang on social media is in the form of acronyms and phrases, rather than sound imitation. In Indonesia, Gen Z does not use English imitative slang because they have their own imitative slang, such as *ehem*, *cuit*, *krik-krik*, etc. This result, in line with the research conducted by Nuraeni et al. (2021), shows that of 87 slang terms, only five terms were found to be imitative.

Even though type slang fresh and creative dominate on social media X, in this study, the acronym of *FR* was the highest and most used by the respondents. *FR* categorized an acronym according to the classification by Allan and Burridge (2006). The table on the findings shows that 95% of 65 respondents use slang *FR* in daily communication. The reason why *FR* is very popular is that there was a meme video about communication that mostly uses acronyms. It could be said as a satire video, but it is quite easy to remember. Acronyms are efficient for quick and brief communication, also matching the Gen Z habits, who like to type briefly. In addition, *FR* is not only limited to expressing agreement but also used for expressions of surprise or disbelief. These double functions make this slang flexible and relevant for daily use. This finding corroborates the research conducted by Tufail et al. (2024), Marzuki et al. (2025), and Murni and Anjani (2025), which shows that acronyms frequently appear in Gen Z digital communication on Instagram. The use of slang in the form of acronyms reflects the requirement for efficient communication and is fast and brief. This indicates that efficiency of conveying information is the main priority, which is relevant because Gen Z uses social media that are informal and fast-moving as a communication field. Another similar research by Yusuf et al. (2023) also reported that acronyms are the most used slang. Their research shows that using slang acronyms like *BTW*, *WYATB*, etc., in conversations speeds up the conveyance of information without losing meaning. Besides being concise, the use of slang to start a casual conversation will build intimacy between fellow users. In this case, the use of slang like *FR* aims not only to follow the current trends but also as a communication strategy that matches the character of social media, which is efficient, fast, and expressive. In addition, the high usage of slang acronyms, like *FR*, is a reflection of Gen Z's habits and characteristics, which prioritize expression, concise, efficient, and effective communication in digital communication.

Other types of slang terms that are not often used due to lack of recognition and exposure among Gen Z. The least used slang, such as *cap* and *fishy*, are quite often used in non-Indonesian content. Not because both are unpopular, but sometimes they have an ambiguous meaning. Both of these slang words are used more often in movies, so it's a bit exclusive. This is because Gen Z prefers to enjoy short videos rather than movies or long-duration videos. The statement was supported by the data survey Yoursay.id, which stated that Gen Z activities are dominated by visual-based social media, especially short videos. That's also influenced by Gen Z, which is in line with a fast and instant lifestyle. Naturally, Gen Z tends to be interested in short and interesting content rather than long text or long-duration videos because Gen Z was the generation that was born with technology (Hapsari, 2025). As a result, these slangs are rarely recognized among Indonesian Gen Z; conversely, other terms of slang, such as *FR*, *bestie*, *slay*, etc., which more frequently appear in memes or viral content, are more popular. *Fishy* and *Cap* have the lowest frequency because the level of exposure is still low among Indonesian Gen Z. These slang terms are less related to daily communication. Indonesian Gen Z tend to use other slang that is more familiar. Like *'sus'*, short for suspicious, is more popular and often appears in digital or direct communication than *fishy*. Meanwhile, *'cap'* is often misinterpreted by some people as *"topi"* in Indonesia. Some Gen Z may find this slang less popular, so they prefer to avoid using it in daily communication.

Effects of using English slang on the clarity and effectiveness of communication

The findings show that the effects of using slang in communication are very varied. The majority of participants describe slang as increasing communication efficiency and facilitating emotional expressiveness, and some positive effects, such as expanding new vocabulary by new slang terms that continue to develop, and slang is considered able to strengthen relationships with fellow users.

However, the participants also mentioned the possibility of misunderstanding or miscommunication using slang. The variation effects depend on the contextual factors of the users, such as digital literacy level, media social platform used, and bonding between communicators (Meilinda et al., 2020). All data was not only collected from closed-ended questions that evaluate the general perceptions of the respondents but also collected information from open-ended questions and short interviews to dig deeper into participants' experiences regarding the use of slang in daily communication.

The majority of respondents consider that slang can increase communication efficiency. The participants describe that slang helps convey messages more concisely, especially in fast-paced digital communication. This result is in line with the research by Jeresano and Carretero (2022), which stated that the use of slang is a reflection of Gen Z in the digital world, which indirectly demands fast conveyance of information, adaptation, and adoption to digital culture by creating codes or symbols that show their belonging to a particular community. The research also highlighted that slang could help students talk more confidently, and using slang does not create barriers between students, but still has possibilities between students and teachers or the older generations. Research conducted by Xursanovna (2025) also indicates that slang can enhance communication effectiveness. The research found that 87% of participants use slang in social media and stated that slang makes communication more efficient. Slang can help express oneself and emotions through communication. The participants stated that using slang can make conversation comfortable between users. This reflects the participants' responses, who stated: *"Communication becomes more expressive", "Feels more relaxed and the tone of speech becomes more natural", "Feels more fun to joke around with", "Chat or interaction is more interactive and expressive"*. Those statements show that the use of slang plays a role in building a relaxed, emotional, and expressive communication atmosphere. Gen Z often uses slang to follow a communication style with emotion and a certain social context. The finding is in line with some previous studies (e.g., Alawiyah et al., 2021; Bardi et al., 2024; Khatimah & Rohainy, 2024; Syafa'ah & Haryanto, 2024), which reported that slang has an impact on social interactions and influences solidarity among users, such as helping users express themselves more casually. Hamida (2019), for example, suggests that slang on Instagram contains connotative meaning as an indirect expression of emotions, so that users can convey their emotional feelings in a contextual way. It shows that slang is an important means in emotional communication among Gen Z.

Indirectly, slang can also expand the new vocabulary. According to questionnaire and interview results, participants stated that they find and learn new terms from English slang. The dynamics of slang continuously develop and create new terms, which will encourage Gen Z to adapt and be encouraged to find out the newest slang terms to keep relevant with the times. This indicates that they considered slang as an identity to maintain their relevance to the community. The research by Jeresano and Carretero (2022) showed in their research that Gen Z slang's continuous development of new terms can help expand vocabulary and help students' fluency in English. In addition, slang not only enriches their knowledge about language but also makes them feel more relevant to young people's trends in communication.

Slang is also considered to build and strengthen social bonds between Gen Z. Gen Z who use slang can feel familiar with each other because indirectly slang is a sign that someone belongs to the same social community, thus strengthening a sense of belonging and togetherness, and generally they will be the same age or the same generation. Participants said that communicating with fellow Gen Z who use slang makes them feel more attached and familiar with each other. The use of slang among Gen Z feels familiar and close, so that a sense of closeness is formed. The informal language of slang can reduce social distance so that relationships with peers can be close in digital communication. Thus, slang is not only a means of communication but also a mechanism that allows Gen Z to show their affiliations, build trust, and strengthen bonding in a digital environment. Slang has the ability to build social solidarity in a digital environment. The result aligns with studies reporting the role of slang in strengthening relationships (e.g., Bardi et al., 2024; Tufail et al., 2024; Xursanovna, 2025) wrote that slang use eases Gen Z social interaction and strengthens their group identity by building a sense of togetherness.

Slang has more positive impacts in communications, but it cannot be covered if there are also negative impacts caused by the use of slang in communication, especially if used excessively. The majority of respondents indicate that they have experienced that slang has a positive impact, especially making communication easier and more efficient. However, data from the findings show some negative effects of using slang in communication. The one that is most mentioned is the occurrence of misunderstandings and miscommunication. Questionnaire participants and six interviewees stated that they had experienced, and there were possibilities of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Miscommunications could happen when one of the interlocutors is not familiar with the slang being used, so misunderstandings occur, and the conveyance of information will be paused or interrupted. Miscommunication and misunderstandings are very common because not every Gen Z knows certain slang terms or their meanings. Also, different interpretations or a lack of understanding of the context may cause messages to be misinterpreted.

Some participants also describe that the use of slang is not appropriate in formal situations or with someone older or respected. This is obvious because slang is casual language and is a form of informal communication that is commonly used in daily communication. However, what is highlighted and has a negative impact is excessive use, and it becomes a habit so that one cannot control it in formal situations. Participants have experienced using slang in formal situations because they use slang too often. [Jeresano and Carretero \(2022\)](#) also assert that the use of English slang by Gen Z is engaging because it makes them relevant in their age, but it needs to be limited to not obstruct when communicating with teachers or the older generations. In her research, [Rafiqoh \(2023\)](#) also stated that the habit of using slang excessively can make someone not accustomed to the Indonesian language. This has become a problem when communicating in academic or professional situations; the use of slang can be considered inappropriate and not professional.

According to these results, it is clear that Gen Z uses slang in communication more than a linguistic trend, but it reflects how they build identity, creativity, and connection. These insights carry important implications not only for Gen Z themselves but also for educators and parents who interact with Gen Z. Understanding how slang is used in everyday life can help teachers create more engaging and relatable learning environments, and for parents, can bridge the generation gap through better linguistic awareness. For the Gen Z themselves, understanding the social meaning and potential ambiguity of slang can improve their communicative competence and awareness of their audience, helping them navigate between informal and formal contexts more effectively. On a wider level, the spread of Gen Z slang can enrich and complicate communication. Slang demonstrates linguistic innovation and cultural adaptability, as the digital generation is constantly reshaping language to suit new modes of expression. However, rapid evolution can jeopardize shared understanding, especially across generations or cultural contexts. Therefore, while slang can enhance expression and a sense of social belonging, it simultaneously demands contextual sensitivity to ensure clarity and inclusiveness in communication.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that Indonesian Gen Z, especially college students who are active on social media X (Twitter), show a preference for slang types, such as acronyms, such as *FR*, *FOMO*, *TBH*, *POV*, etc. Those terms reflect creativity and the need to adapt to today's digital culture, which is fast-paced and dynamic all the time. Slang is not only used as a means of communication, but also to make communication easier, express emotions, strengthen social relationships, and improve vocabulary learning materials. In contrast, imitative slang is rarely used because of limited exposure and more specific contexts of use. It shows that the dynamic language used by Gen Z can influence many social contexts. Slang shapes the way the younger generation communicates and reflects their social identity in communications. This research is useful for Gen Z in understanding the role of slang in social relationships and communication. For academics in linguistics or communication, it can serve as a foundation for developing more relevant language learning strategies. This research has several limitations, including that the slang data collected is limited to only 20 slangs, so it does not represent

all types of slang. Furthermore, the participants were limited to students, so they did not represent the Indonesian Gen Z population. Based on these limitations, it is recommended that further research expand the choice and number of slangs to investigate so it can represent more types of slang and expand the number of participants. It is important to consider supplementing with other theories (e.g., politeness theory) or compare slang used in Indonesia and other countries and international sources to gain diverse perspectives to gain diverse perspectives.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

About the authors

Elly Nurhaliza Putri graduated from the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. Her academic background focuses on the English language and literature. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, digital communication, youth language, and slang studies. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2420-7025>, email: elly.nurhaliza.2102226@students.um.ac.id

Nanang Zubaidi is a lecturer in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, and specializes in applied linguistics and educational linguistics. His research interests encompass educational linguistics, applied linguistics, interlanguage pragmatics, feedback in second language learning, and sociocultural theory (SCT) and activity theory (AT). He is an active member of the Center of Digital Innovation in Language, Literature, Arts, and Teaching (C-DILLAT) research center and the Research on Linguistics research group. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0840-6374>, email: nanang.zubaidi.fs@um.ac.id

Yusnita Febrianti is a lecturer in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. She is actively engaged in teaching and research related to language studies. Her areas of expertise and research interests include Multimodality and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4965-8703>, email: yusnita.febrianti@um.ac.id

Alma Huwaida Ramadhani is a lecturer in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. She has contributed to academic activities in the field of English language studies through teaching and research. Her expertise and research interests are in Linguistics. Email: almahwd.fs@um.ac.id.

Sibakhul Milad Malik Hidayatulloh is a lecturer in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. He is involved in teaching and research in the area of English language education. His expertise and research interests focus on English Language Teaching (ELT). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1595-8599>, email: milad.malik.fs@um.ac.id