



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL FACTORS ON LANGUAGE CHANGE AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the rapid phenomenon of language change driven by technological advancement, social media, and cross-cultural interaction. This study aims to examine the influence of social factors on language change among Indonesian youth. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using observation and semi-structured interviews with participants aged 15–25 from diverse social backgrounds. The findings indicate that the younger generation serves as a primary driver of language change, largely influenced by their receptiveness to emerging trends and digital technologies. Social media acts as a catalyst for disseminating new vocabulary, while cross-cultural exposure enriches linguistic variation through the borrowing of foreign words. Social environment, popular culture, education level, and social class also shape vocabulary, style, and pragmatic flexibility. Observable language changes include lexical borrowing, widespread use of abbreviations, and semantic shifts. This phenomenon enhances linguistic creativity and strengthens community bonds. However, without proper language awareness, it may also undermine mastery of the standard language. Therefore, adaptive language preservation strategies are recommended, incorporating new variations into education while maintaining the integrity of Indonesian linguistic norms.

Keywords: Language Change, Social Factors, Young Generation, Social Media, Sociolinguistics.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental sociocultural system that enables humans to exchange ideas, emotions, and information. Its nature is inherently dynamic, constantly evolving in response to social and cultural changes. Linguistic change is influenced by two key factors: internal and external. Internal factors involve structural and phonological shifts, such as grammatical innovation and sound changes that arise within the language system (Poedjosoedarmo, 2006). External factors, on the other hand, originate from social interactions, technological advancements, cultural developments, and contact with other languages. The interplay between these forces allows language to continually adapt to the evolving communicative needs of its users.

In the Indonesian context, the younger generation plays a central role in shaping linguistic change. Their openness to trends, rapid adoption of technology, and extensive engagement in diverse social interactions accelerate the acceptance and diffusion of new linguistic forms (Ulya et al., 2024; Bangun, 2024). Social media, messaging platforms, and digital communities function as catalysts for introducing and popularizing new vocabulary. Phenomena such as the emergence of slang and various abbreviations illustrate how young people act as key agents of linguistic innovation, often driven by creativity, identity expression, and popular culture trends.

Research by Octorina et al. (2020), Hidayati (2018), Sartini (2020), Pratama et al. (2022), and Pare et al. (2021) underscores the importance of social factors, such as class, education, peer networks, and cross-cultural exposure, in shaping youth language practices. Digital media has facilitated the incorporation of foreign and regional vocabulary, creating a vibrant and dynamic

linguistic landscape that often diverges from standardized forms taught in formal education.

While these changes enrich linguistic diversity and creativity, they also raise concerns regarding the preservation of standard Indonesian. Overreliance on non-standard forms may weaken proficiency in formal registers, potentially threatening linguistic identity if not balanced with proper language awareness. Although youth-driven language change is widely observed, empirical studies that specifically analyze the relationship between social factors and linguistic shifts in Indonesia remain limited. Such research is crucial for mapping language development amid globalization and digitalization, ensuring that Indonesian remains both adaptive and culturally grounded.

This study aims to analyze the influence of various social factors on language change among Indonesian youth, identifying dominant linguistic shifts and their underlying causes. The findings are expected to deepen understanding of contemporary language dynamics and provide a foundation for strategies that safeguard linguistic identity while embracing linguistic innovation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2017), the qualitative descriptive research method is research that is used to describe or describe a phenomenon, event, or phenomenon that occurs as it is using words or narratives, not statistical numbers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the influence of social factors on language change among the younger generation. The subjects of the study were adolescents and youth aged 15–25 years who were active in social media and involved in various social environments. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is to select respondents who are considered capable of providing relevant data according to the purpose of the research. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation of oral and written conversations used by young people, both in the real world and in digital media. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that language change among the younger generation is characterized by the emergence of various forms of linguistic variation influenced by social factors. One of the most notable changes is the emergence of new vocabulary derived from foreign languages, specifically English, which are then absorbed and modified according to the pronunciation or style of the local language. This phenomenon can be seen in the use of words such as *update*, *share*, or *random* which often undergo a shift in meaning or form of adjustment in spelling. In addition, the use of abbreviations, acronyms, and slang that are popular on social media are also characteristic of communication by the younger generation. Examples are abbreviations such as "OTW" (on the way), "BTW" (by the way), or "LOL" (laugh out loud) which are often used in online and offline conversations. Another change found is the shift in the meaning of words due to use in contexts different from their standard meaning. For example, the word "savage" which in English means 'ruthless' or 'wild', in the context of slang is used to describe someone who is brave and decisive. These changes show the dynamics of language that are heavily influenced by the creativity of the younger generation as well as their intensive interaction with popular culture and digital media.

This study found that language change among the younger generation is strongly influenced by various interrelated social factors. Social media is emerging as the dominant factor that accelerates the spread of new slang and vocabulary, due to its interactive and viral nature. Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter), new terms can spread quickly and be widely

used in just a matter of days. The social environment also plays an important role, as younger generations tend to adjust their language styles to align with the social groups they interact with. In addition, popular culture such as music, movies, and content creators make a great contribution to shaping language choices, both through song lyrics, movie dialogues, and typical expressions used by influencers. The level of education also affects the balance of the use of standard and non-standard languages; Individuals with higher education backgrounds generally have the ability to control the use of language according to the context, while others tend to be more free to use non-formal language. Social class also influences the variety of vocabulary and language styles, where differences in access to information, experience, and environment shape the linguistic characteristics of each group. These factors together create a dynamic and ever-changing language ecosystem among the younger generation.

The results of the study also show that the younger generation has a high language adaptability in responding to the influence of these social factors. One form of adaptation is mixing Indonesian with foreign languages or code mixing, which generally involves English in everyday conversation. This mixture is often used to add a modern, expressive, or following trends that are popular on social media. In addition, the younger generation is able to use language flexibly in accordance with formal and non-formal contexts. For example, they may use standard language in academic or official situations, but switch to slang when interacting with peers. Another form of adaptation is the creation of new terms that are only understood by certain community members, such as online gaming communities, music fandoms, or certain hobby groups. This term becomes a symbol of the group's identity as well as distinguishing them from other communities. This pattern of adaptation shows that the younger generation is not only a recipient of language change, but also an active creator in the development of the language itself.

The role of the younger generation as agents of language change can be understood through a sociolinguistic perspective that emphasizes that language develops according to the social dynamics of its users. The younger generation has a strategic position in this process because they are in a phase of life that is synonymous with the exploration of identity, active involvement in a wide social network, and a high acceptance of linguistic innovation. This adaptability does not only occur passively, but also accompanied by creative initiatives in creating new forms of language that suit their communication needs. Within the framework of Labov's theory of language change, young people are often pioneers in introducing lexical, phonological, and pragmatic variations that then spread to other age groups. This phenomenon also reinforces the view that language change is not only the result of external influences such as the media or globalization, but also the result of internal interaction between members of the language community who actively shape their own communication norms. Thus, the younger generation is not only a recipient of linguistic trends, but also a producer of language innovations that have the potential to shape the direction of language development in the future.

Social media plays a role not only as a channel for the distribution of new languages, but also as a space for interaction that shapes the communication patterns of the younger generation. The multimodal nature of digital platforms combining text, images, audio, and video encourages the emergence of more creative and concise forms of language expression. Features such as hashtags, comments, and instant messaging create an ecosystem that allows certain vocabulary or phrases to survive and continue to be used as long as they have relevance or entertainment value. In addition, the participatory nature of social media makes each user potentially a creator of linguistic trends, so language change can occur organically without having to go through a formal process. This phenomenon suggests that social media is not only accelerating the flow of language innovation, but is also shaping language usage patterns that differ from face-to-face communication, including the tendency to use symbols, emoticons, or abbreviations that replace words. Thus, social media is a catalyst that expands reach and accelerates the cycle of language change among the younger generation.

Cross-cultural interaction facilitated by the internet opens up access to the younger generation to various language systems from various countries. This exposure not only adds linguistic insight, but also influences the way they form identities through language. In a

sociolinguistic context, this process can be seen as a form of borrowing or borrowing vocabulary that is often adapted to local communication needs. However, this adoption process is not always neutral; Foreign languages that are more globally dominant, such as English, tend to have a prestigious position that influences the language preferences of younger generations. This can lead to the phenomenon of language shift, where the standard language begins to lose its use space in the informal realm. Nonetheless, cross-cultural interaction also fosters the birth of unique hybrid variations, which creatively blend elements of local and foreign languages. Thus, the challenge faced is not only to maintain the standard language, but also to manage the process of language assimilation in order to enrich, not replace, the national linguistic identity.

Language change among young people has dual implications, including benefits as well as challenges. On the positive side, this dynamic encourages increased linguistic creativity, where the younger generation is able to create new forms of expression that are fresh, relevant, and contextual. The resulting linguistic variations not only enrich linguistic treasures, but also strengthen bonds within certain communities through the use of distinctive terms that distinguish them from other groups. This innovation shows that language remains alive and develops according to its communication needs. However, on the negative side, there is a risk of a decrease in standard language skills, especially if the use of slang and foreign vocabulary is not balanced with awareness to maintain the correct language rules. This phenomenon can result in a reduction in formal writing and speaking skills, which ultimately impacts the quality of communication in the academic, professional, and official realms. Therefore, a balance is needed between acceptance of language innovation and a commitment to maintaining standard language standards as part of national identity.

The implications of this study's findings on language preservation suggest the need for a more adaptive approach in language learning. It is not enough for learning strategies to focus only on mastering the rules of the standard language, but also to accommodate the new language variations that are developing among the younger generation. This approach can utilize the phenomenon of slang, absorbed vocabulary, and other creative variations as an entrance to introduce the correct rules of the Indonesian language, so that students do not feel disconnected between the formal language and the language they use on a daily basis. In addition, language learning needs to integrate digital literacy, considering that social media is one of the main arenas for language change. In this way, the younger generation can develop the skills of choosing a variety of languages according to the context without neglecting the values of the national language. This step is important to ensure that the Indonesian language remains relevant in the era of globalization while maintaining the nation's identity and cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the young generation has a central role as an agent of language change, with a high adaptability to the influence of various social factors. Social media is proving to be a key catalyst that accelerates the spread of new vocabulary, while cross-cultural interaction enriches language variety but has the potential to shift the role of standard language. Factors such as social environment, popular culture, education level, and social class form a dynamic and varied pattern of language use. Language change has a positive impact in the form of increasing linguistic creativity and strengthening community bonds, but also presents challenges in the form of a decrease in standard language mastery if it is not balanced with good language awareness. Therefore, an adaptive language preservation strategy is needed, accommodating the development of new languages without sacrificing Indonesian standards, so that language remains relevant while maintaining a national identity in the midst of globalization.

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