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JAKARTAN SLANG AS A GENERATIONAL IDENTITY MARKER AND THE REDUCED USE OF JAVANESE IN PEER INTERACTION AMONG GENERATION Z STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITAS NEGERI SEMARANG

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Abstract

The increasing use of Jakartan slang among Generation Z has become a visible feature of youth communication in Indonesian university settings. While previous studies have examined the forms, meanings, and social functions of slang, less attention has been given to how slang shapes generational identity and affects the use of local languages in campus peer interaction. This study examines Jakartan slang as a generational identity marker among Generation Z students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, and explores its implications for the reduced use of Javanese in selected peer interactions. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with 10 students, qualitative questionnaire responses from 10 Javanese-speaking students, and unstructured observation in campus-related settings. The data were analyzed thematically and interpreted through Social Identity Theory, particularly the concepts of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. The findings show that Jakartan slang functions not only as an informal communicative style but also as a social resource through which students construct peer belonging, align themselves with modern youth culture, and distinguish their generation from older or more local linguistic repertoires. Among Javanese-speaking participants, Jakartan slang is used because it is perceived as practical, inclusive, socially current, and widely understood in multilingual peer groups. This practice may reduce the space for Javanese in certain informal campus interactions, although the findings do not indicate a general decline of Javanese at UNNES or in broader Javanese society. The study contributes to sociolinguistic discussions by showing that slang, local language use, and generational identity are closely connected through peer-group dynamics, digital culture, and the symbolic value attached to language in multilingual university contexts.

Keywords: *Jakartan slang; Generation Z; generational identity; Javanese; peer interaction; Social Identity Theory*

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A. Introduction

Language change is a natural and continuous process in social life. It occurs across generations, communities, and historical periods as speakers adapt their linguistic practices to changing social conditions (Trudgill, 2011). In the contemporary digital era, however, language change circulates more rapidly because young people are constantly connected through social media and online communication platforms. Generation Z, commonly understood as those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has grown

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up in a communicative environment shaped by platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These platforms influence vocabulary, writing conventions, interactional styles, and the circulation of new slang expressions among young speakers (Gul & Rukh, 2025; Sitohang et al., 2025). Among young people, slang is not only a casual mode of communication but also a social resource through which they create closeness, express humor, signal emotional stance, and construct peer-group belonging. What often begins in digital interaction is gradually carried into face-to-face communication, including everyday interactions on university campuses.

This phenomenon is visible at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), a university located in Semarang, a Javanese-speaking urban setting. Preliminary observations indicate that many students increasingly favor colloquial Jakartan Indonesian over local Javanese varieties in campus interactions. This colloquial variety, often referred to as *bahasa gaul* or *bahasa lo-gue*, developed in Greater Jakarta and is commonly associated with pronouns such as *gue* or *gua* for "I" and *lo* or *lu* for "you." In Indonesian sociolinguistic literature, *bahasa gaul* is frequently rendered in English as "slang," a convention also adopted in this study, although the variety itself is broader than slang in the narrow linguistic sense. Its expressions are partly influenced by Betawi Malay and have become widely circulated among young Indonesian speakers (Siregar, 2021; Siregar & Susanto, 2023). In Semarang, this variety is sometimes locally known as *bahasa Jabo*, a shortened reference to Jabodetabek, namely Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. For analytical consistency, this study uses the term Jakartan slang or simply slang throughout the article.

The growing preference for Jakartan slang among students is significant because it takes place in a Javanese-speaking environment where local language remains culturally important. Javanese itself consists of several regional and social varieties, including Mataraman Javanese and *basa Semarangan*, the local variety associated with Semarang. Although these varieties also contain rich local expressions, they appear to have less social appeal in certain peer interactions among students. Previous studies have shown that Javanese and other local languages in Indonesia are often associated with older, less modern, or less socially current forms of speech (Prastiti & Sudarwati, 2020). Such perceptions may encourage educated young speakers to shift toward linguistic varieties considered more modern, practical, and aligned with contemporary urban youth culture (Andriyanti, 2019; Bashori, 2026).

The presence of migrant students at UNNES may further shape this language preference. In linguistically mixed campus settings, colloquial Jakartan Indonesian and its slang expressions often function as a shared communicative resource because they are widely understood across regional and ethnic backgrounds. This variety is also perceived as modern and socially valued among Generation Z students (Abbas et al., 2025). Peer circles associated with Greater Jakarta may carry a cosmopolitan image, which encourages students from other linguistic backgrounds, including Javanese-speaking students, to adapt to their interactional style. Similar patterns have been observed in other Indonesian urban contexts, such as Malang and Bandung, where local students

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increasingly use varieties associated with Greater Jakarta students in everyday conversation (Alfiansyah, 2024; Manns, 2014; Trianto et al., 2025). The spread of Jakartan slang through social media also makes this variety familiar to students from different linguistic backgrounds, allowing them to participate more easily in broader peer networks (Budiasa, 2021; Saputra et al., 2023). By contrast, the use of local languages in mixed interactions may sometimes create barriers when not all participants share the same linguistic background. These conditions may encourage Javanese-speaking students to use Jakartan slang either to facilitate mutual understanding or to signal belonging to a wider peer community.

Several studies have discussed the growing use of slang among Indonesian Generation Z. Harahap and Alfikri (2023) and Oktavia et al. (2023) show that young speakers use slang to build closeness, solidarity, and informal peer-group communication. Fitriah et al. (2021) and Puspita and Ardianto (2024) further indicate that young people actively produce and circulate new slang expressions in everyday and digital communication. At the same time, language change should not be attributed exclusively to Generation Z, since similar patterns of youth language innovation have also been observed among earlier generations (Emha & Fatinova, 2021; Rezeki & Sagala, 2019). What distinguishes the current context is the speed and scale of circulation enabled by social media, which makes slang more visible, more widely shared, and more socially valued among young speakers (Gul & Rukh, 2025; Naqvi, 2025). In contrast, local languages are often viewed as less useful in educational, professional, and urban social settings (Alamsyah, 2024; Fitriati et al., 2025). Previous studies have also examined how the dominance of slang affects students' use of formal Indonesian in academic contexts (Br Bangun et al., 2023; Cahayu et al., 2024; Susilawati et al., 2024).

Despite this growing body of research, previous studies have largely focused on the forms, meanings, and social functions of slang, while less attention has been given to how slang may affect the use of local languages in campus-based peer interaction. Moreover, many studies have examined slang in large urban centers, particularly Jakarta, or in broader digital contexts, leaving its operation in non-Jakarta university contexts, such as Semarang, relatively underexplored. This study addresses that gap by examining Jakartan slang not merely as a linguistic trend, but as a generational identity marker among Generation Z students and as a factor that may reduce the space for Javanese in selected campus interactions. The focus is specifically on students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, where multilingual interaction, peer-group dynamics, and digital youth culture intersect in everyday communication.

To analyze this phenomenon, the study draws on Social Identity Theory developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (in Khadka, 2024). This theory explains how individuals construct a sense of self through their membership in social groups. It is particularly useful for examining how students use language to mark belonging, distinction, and social comparison. In this study, Social Identity Theory is applied through three interrelated concepts: social categorization, in which students use slang to align themselves with modern and urban peer circles; social identification, in which slang

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becomes part of their everyday linguistic identity; and social comparison, in which Jakartan slang is perceived as more socially current than Javanese in certain campus interactions. Based on this framework, the study aims to examine the increasing use of slang among Generation Z students at UNNES as a marker of generational identity and to explore its implications for the use of Javanese in campus peer interaction. Theoretically, this study contributes to sociolinguistic discussions on youth language, social identity, and cultural change. Practically, it offers insight into the importance of maintaining local languages amid rapid digital and social transformation. While Social Identity Theory serves as the main analytical framework, Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital is used as a supporting concept to explain the symbolic value attached to Jakartan slang in campus peer interaction.

B. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the use of Jakartan slang among Generation Z students at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) and its implications for the reduced use of Javanese in campus peer interactions. This approach was appropriate because the study aimed to describe naturally occurring language practices and interpret the social meanings attached to students' linguistic choices rather than to measure causal relationships statistically (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Villamin et al., 2025). The study was conducted from late January to early February 2026 at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang.

The study involved 20 Generation Z students, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. Most participants were born in 2003 or 2004 and were aged between 21 and 23 at the time of data collection. Of the 20 participants, 15 were female and 5 were male. Based on linguistic background, 17 participants were Javanese-speaking students, while 3 were migrant students from Greater Jakarta who used Jakartan slang as part of their everyday speech. The participants were selected purposively because they were actively involved in daily peer interactions at FISIP UNNES and were familiar with the use of slang in campus communication.

Table 1.
Participant Profiles and Data Sources

Participant group	Number	Linguistic background	Gender composition	Data source	Code
Interview informants	10	7 Javanese-speaking students; 3 Greater Jakarta students	8 female; 2 male	Semi-structured interviews	P1–P10
Questionnaire respondents	10	10 Javanese-speaking students	7 female; 3 male	Qualitative questionnaire	R1–R10

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Total	20	17 Javanese-speaking students; 3 Greater Jakarta students	15 female; 5 male	Interviews and questionnaire	P1–P10; R1–R10

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, qualitative questionnaires, and unstructured observation. The interviews explored students' use of Jakartan slang, the role of slang in forming generational identity, the intensity of slang use compared with Javanese, and the stereotypes or social judgments associated with both varieties. The questionnaire consisted of 28 questions covering three themes: slang use among Generation Z, the relationship between slang and Javanese use, and the formation of slang as an identity marker. Observations were conducted in classrooms, canteens, and informal gathering places such as *burjo* and cafés to record naturally occurring uses of Jakartan slang, Javanese, and code-mixing practices. Since these interactions occurred spontaneously, field notes were used when direct recording was not possible or appropriate. Secondary data were drawn from books and scholarly literature on slang, youth language, social identity, Javanese language use, and language shift.

The data were analyzed thematically by organizing interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, and field notes, then coding recurring themes related to slang use, Javanese use, peer interaction, social pressure, and identity formation. These codes were grouped into three main categories: the use of slang among Generation Z, slang vis-à-vis Javanese, and identity marker formation. The interpretation was guided by Social Identity Theory, particularly social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation by comparing interviews, questionnaire responses, and observational field notes. To protect confidentiality, interview informants were coded as P1–P10, while questionnaire respondents were coded as R1–R10. Given the limited number of participants, the findings are not intended to represent all UNNES students but to provide a contextual account of language use among selected Generation Z students at FISIP UNNES.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

This section presents the findings on the use of Jakartan slang among Generation Z students at FISIP UNNES. The findings are organized into three main themes: (1) the use of slang among Generation Z, (2) slang vis-à-vis Javanese, and (3) identity marker formation. The interview data are presented using informant codes P1–P10, while the questionnaire responses are used to complement the interview findings and are referred to as respondent data.

1) The Use of Slang among Generation Z

The interviews and questionnaire responses show that Jakartan slang is widely used by Generation Z students at FISIP UNNES in both face-to-face and digital interactions. Most participants reported using slang in everyday communication with

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friends, particularly in informal settings such as campus conversations, group chats, and social media. Slang was not described merely as a set of casual expressions, but as a familiar linguistic practice that students use to maintain closeness, express themselves more casually, and participate in peer-group communication.

Several interview informants stated that slang had become part of their daily communication and was often used unconsciously. P1 described slang as a language practice that appears naturally in both online and offline interactions:

> "I use slang pretty much every day, from the moment I wake up, checking my phone, replying to group chats, scrolling through social media, all the way to hanging out with friends or having casual discussions. At this point I use it without even thinking, it just comes out naturally because I'm so used to it." (P1, 21 years old, interview, 2026)

P2 emphasized the role of social media in encouraging the use of slang, especially because online communication involves a wider and more linguistically diverse audience:

> "I use slang a lot, especially for my Instagram stories. I mean, social media reaches so many people, if I posted in a local language, not everyone would get what I'm saying." (P2, 20 years old, interview, 2026)

Meanwhile, P3 indicated that familiarity with new slang expressions can affect students' position within peer interaction. Although students are not formally required to know current slang, unfamiliarity with newly circulating expressions may lead to teasing or playful exclusion within friendship groups:

> "It's not like you're required to know slang, but in a college friend group, if there's a new slang you don't get, people will kind of tease you or joke around about it." (P3, 21 years old, interview, 2026)

These statements indicate that slang use among the participants is closely connected to daily habits, social media exposure, and peer interaction. The data also show that slang circulates across online and offline settings. Expressions that become popular on social media are often carried into campus conversations, making slang a shared communicative resource among students. Several slang expressions frequently used by FISIP UNNES students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Slang Frequently Used among FISIP UNNES Students

No.	Slang example(s)	Description and context
1	***"Gua-lu".*** *"**Gua** abis kena copet di Cemtim maren."* (I just got pickpocketed in East Cempaka yesterday.) *"**Lu** kemana dah kaga keliatan seharian."* (Where have you been all day, haven't seen you at all.)	Replacing the standard Indonesian pronouns "*aku-kamu*" (informal) or "*saya-anda*" (formal), as well as the Javanese equivalents "*aku-kowe*" (low register) or "*kula-sampeyan/panjenengan*" (high register). Compare Millennials' "*gue-lo*."
2	***Anjay.*** *"**Anjay**, sepatu baru tuh? Second ori apa kw tuh? Hahaha*	Clipping of "*anjing*" (dog) in standard Indonesian, used as an exclamatory

	canda." (Whoa, new shoes? Are those second-hand original or just a knockoff? Hahaha just kidding.)	expression, with Javanese equivalent "*jancok*" or "*cok*," often considered derogatory though also commonly used in colloquial Jakartan. Compare Millennials' dated "*anjir*" and obsolete "*anjrot*," "*anjas*."
3	***Bagen.*** *"Uda,* ***bagen*** *aja napa, tu anak emang problematik. Noh tanya aja ke temen serombel kalo kaga percaya."* (Never mind, he's problematic. Go ask his classmates if you don't believe me.)	Replacing the standard Indonesian "*biarkan saja"* as well as the Javanese equivalent *"jarke wae."* Compare Millennials' *"biaren aje"* or *"biarin aja."*
4	***Koret.*** *"Minjem seratus napa,* ***koret*** *bener lu jadi orang."* (Just lend me a hundred, you're so stingy.)	Borrowed from Javanese "*koret*" (to scrape off dirt), recontextualized in slang to mean "stingy." Replacing the standard Indonesian "*pelit*" or "*kikir*," as well as Javanese equivalent "*medhit*." Compare Millennials' "*koretan*."
5	***Goroh.*** *"Noh kan be****goroh*** *lagi, apa kata gua maren di kelas dia aja berani kea gitu ke dosen."* (See, she's lying again. What did I tell you yesterday? He wouldn't even dare act like that to the lecturer in class.)	Borrowed from Javanese-Sundanese "*goroh*" (lying/dishonest), recontextualized as slang replacing the standard Indonesian "*berbohong*," as well as the common Javanese equivalents "*ngapusi*" or "*dhobol*." Compare Millennials' "*boong*."
6	***Sokin.*** *"Woi sini* ***sokin*** *skripsian di burjo, timbang ngerjain di kosan."* (Hey, come work on our thesis at the burjo, beats doing it at the dorm.)	Derived from "sini" (here) with the infix "-ok-" and the final rime elided, replacing the standard Indonesian "*sini*" as well as the Javanese equivalent "*mrene*" or "*rene*." Compare Millennials' obsolete "*sokit*."
7	***Tenggo.*** *"Gila udah tengah enem, ini kelas apaan daritadi kaga kelar-kelar? Gagal dah mau* ***tenggo****."* (Damn, it's already five thirty. What kind of class is this that won't end? So much for *tenggo*.)	Abbreviation of *"teng langsung go,"* originally popularized in Indonesian workplace culture to mean "leaving the moment the clock strikes," recontextualized in Generation Z student slang to carry the sense of leaving earlier than scheduled. Replacing the standard Indonesian *"pulang tepat waktu,"* with no known equivalent in previous generations.
8	***Bhap.*** *"****Bhappp****, iPhone 17 baru launching sebulan lu udah beli kocakk."* (*Bhap*, the iPhone 17 just launched a month ago and you already bought one, that's wild.)	Exclamatory expression used among Generation Z students to convey surprise or disbelief at something excessive or absurd, carrying a negative or sarcastic connotation, as opposed to its positive counterpart "*zham*."
9	***Zham.*** *"****Zhamm****, pantesan bisa kebeli motor lu, orang tiap hari*	Exclamatory expression used among Generation Z students to convey admiration

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	nganjem." (*Zham*, no wonder you could afford a motorbike; you've been doing delivery runs every day.)	or pleasant surprise at something impressive or remarkable, carrying a positive connotation, as opposed to its negative counterpart "*bhap*."

Source: Personal data compilation, 2026

Table 2 shows that the slang expressions used by students include pronouns, exclamatory forms, borrowed local terms, and recontextualized expressions. Some expressions replace standard Indonesian or Javanese equivalents, while others are used to create a specific informal tone in peer interaction. The table also indicates that several expressions are linked to digital youth culture and circulate as part of everyday Generation Z communication. In this sense, slang is not only a vocabulary choice but also a repertoire that students draw on to participate in informal peer-group interaction.

The findings also show two related patterns of language use. First, some Javanese-speaking students adopt Jakartan slang because it is more widely understood in mixed peer groups. Second, students use slang that is currently circulating among Generation Z, especially through TikTok, Instagram, and group chats, because older slang expressions are often perceived as outdated. These patterns suggest that slang functions both as a shared medium in multilingual campus interaction and as a marker of generational distinction.

2) Slang vis-à-vis Javanese

The data show that Javanese-speaking students do not completely abandon Javanese. However, Jakartan slang appears frequently in their interactions, including in conversations with fellow Javanese speakers. This occurs partly because Javanese is not a single uniform variety but a dialect continuum. The Javanese-speaking participants came from different parts of Central and East Java and brought different dialects into campus interaction. As a result, some students found it difficult to fully understand other Javanese varieties. For instance, an *Arekan* Javanese participant reported difficulty understanding *Ngapak* Javanese because of the linguistic distance between the two varieties. In such situations, colloquial Jakartan Indonesian and its slang expressions were often used as a practical middle ground.

At the same time, the shift toward Jakartan slang was not always positively received by fellow Javanese students. Some Javanese-speaking students who used Jakartan slang were perceived as *"sok Jabo"* or *"sok lu-gue,"* suggesting that their adoption of Jakartan slang could be seen as an attempt to sound Jakartan or accentless. Because of this, several students did not fully shift to Jakartan slang but instead combined Javanese with selected Jakartan slang expressions. This pattern was especially visible when students interacted with other Javanese speakers. However, when they interacted with students from Greater Jakarta, the shift tended to become more complete, with students using colloquial Jakartan Indonesian more consistently.

Among the 17 Javanese-speaking participants, 10 reported using Jakartan slang more often than Javanese in campus interaction. Several participants stated that their use of Javanese had decreased, particularly because their daily peer environment exposed

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them more frequently to Jakartan slang. Some also expressed concern that their Javanese vocabulary had become more limited or that they felt less comfortable using Javanese on campus.

> "Honestly yeah, I feel like I've been using Javanese less and less, probably because of my environment. Even when I go back home, I barely speak the language anymore." (P5, 21 years old, interview, 2026)

> "...there's been a bit of a decline. I've noticed my vocabulary in my Javanese has gotten more limited because I'm just so used to using [colloquial Jakartan Indonesian and its] slang. It feels more practical since most of my friends are mostly Jakartan." (P6, 20 years old, interview, 2026)

> "Honestly, I barely use Javanese at all anymore. And just so you know, I was never really fluent in *Krama* or *Krama Alus* [High Register Javanese] to begin with. I'm just terrible at it, not fluent at all." (P7, 21 years old, interview, 2026)

> "Yeah, the change is probably that there are some words in Javanese that I just don't understand anymore, so I often end up asking, 'What does that mean?' (P8, 22 years old, interview, 2026)

These interview excerpts indicate that the reduced use of Javanese among the participants was not experienced in a uniform way. Some students reported using Javanese less frequently, some described a decline in vocabulary, and others associated their reduced use of Javanese with the practical need to communicate with Jakartan peers. The findings therefore do not indicate a complete loss of Javanese, but they do show that the space for Javanese in daily peer interaction has become more limited for several participants.

The questionnaire data and field observations further show variation in the language repertoire of Javanese-speaking respondents. Some respondents were more dominant in using Jakartan slang or colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, while others continued to use Javanese as their dominant language. A third group used both repertoires through code-mixing.

Table 3.
Language Repertoire Distribution among Javanese Respondents

No.	Category	Distribution
1	Slang/colloquial Jakartan-dominant repertoire	6
2	Local language-dominant repertoire	1
3	Code-mixing repertoire	3

Source: Questionnaire responses and field observation, 2026

Table 3 shows that six of the ten Javanese-speaking questionnaire respondents tended to use a slang or colloquial Jakartan-dominant repertoire, one respondent tended to use a local language-dominant repertoire, and three respondents used a code-mixing repertoire. These categories describe tendencies rather than fixed language boundaries. The data were drawn from questionnaire responses and field observation, not from systematic frequency measurement. Therefore, the table should not be interpreted as evidence of a general decline in Javanese use across UNNES or broader Javanese society.

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Rather, it provides a limited but relevant picture of language-use patterns among the selected Javanese-speaking respondents.

3) Identity Marker Formation

The findings show that Jakartan slang is used not only for communication but also as a marker of generational identity among the participants. Several informants reported that using slang helped them feel connected to their peer group, especially in interactions with students from different regional and linguistic backgrounds. Slang was described as a shared linguistic resource that made communication easier, reduced distance among peers, and helped students adapt to campus life.

The data also indicate that slang is associated with a sense of belonging to Generation Z. Several participants stated that using slang made them feel part of a younger generation that shares similar expressions, references, and communication styles. Across the interview and questionnaire data, 10 participants indicated that slang circulating on Instagram and TikTok reflected their sense of belonging to Generation Z. They viewed these expressions as linguistic features that distinguish their generation from previous ones.

> "It really hits different being part of Gen Z. Using slang just shows you're part of the younger generation, you know." (P4, 22 years old, interview, 2026)

> "*Yeah* for sure, I feel like this is very much a Gen Z thing. When you use slang, it feels like there's this sense of togetherness and shared identity, knowing we're all from the same generation." (P1, 21 years old, interview, 2026)

The findings also show that some students compare Jakartan slang with Javanese in terms of social currency. For some participants, slang sounded more natural in casual campus interaction, while Javanese was sometimes perceived as less aligned with their peer-group style.

> "Honestly, when I hear someone speak Javanese in a casual hangout, it feels a bit out of place, like they're not really keeping up. Slang just feels more natural for our generation." (P8, 22 years old, interview, 2026)

These statements show that slang is linked to how students position themselves within their generation and peer environment. Although many participants grew up speaking Javanese, they also wanted to be seen as speakers who could follow current linguistic trends. This was particularly evident in their reference to slang circulating through social media. For several students, slang had become so habitual that it was used without much conscious effort, while Javanese was used less frequently in daily campus interactions.

Viewed descriptively, the results indicate three main patterns. First, Jakartan slang is widely used in both online and offline interactions among the participants. Second, Javanese-speaking students use slang for practical communication in multilingual peer groups, although this may reduce the use of Javanese in certain campus contexts. Third, slang functions as a generational identity marker because it allows students to signal

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belonging to Generation Z and distinguish themselves from speakers associated with older or more local linguistic repertoires.

2. Discussion

The findings show that Jakartan slang occupies an important position in the everyday communication of Generation Z students at FISIP UNNES. Its role, however, extends beyond casual expression. Slang operates as a linguistic resource through which students construct peer belonging, mark generational identity, and negotiate their position within multilingual campus interactions. This finding is consistent with Social Identity Theory, which explains that individuals develop a sense of self through their membership in social groups and through the distinction they make between in-groups and out-groups (Khadka, 2024). In the present study, Jakartan slang becomes one of the linguistic signs through which students recognize themselves as part of Generation Z and distinguish themselves from speakers associated with older or more local linguistic repertoires.

At the level of social categorization, students use Jakartan slang to align themselves with peer circles perceived as modern, urban, and socially current. The adoption of slang allows them to enter a broader communicative space that is not limited by regional language boundaries. This is particularly relevant in FISIP UNNES, where students come from different linguistic backgrounds and interact in informal campus settings. In such contexts, Jakartan slang functions as a shared repertoire that enables communication across regional differences. For Javanese-speaking students, this shift does not necessarily mean that they reject Javanese. Rather, it reflects their effort to participate in peer-group interaction where Jakartan slang is more widely understood and socially valued. This finding supports previous studies showing that slang is used by young speakers to build closeness, solidarity, and informal group membership (Harahap & Alfikri, 2023; Oktavia et al., 2023).

At the level of social identification, slang becomes internalized as part of students' everyday linguistic identity. Several participants stated that they used slang without conscious effort, suggesting that it had become habitual rather than occasional. This habituation indicates that slang is not simply borrowed for temporary stylistic effect but has become embedded in students' routine communication. Through repeated use in social media, group chats, and face-to-face interaction, slang becomes associated with what it means to speak as a member of Generation Z. This finding is in line with studies arguing that youth slang functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a marker of identity formation in digital and everyday interaction (Hijrah et al., 2024; Linarsih et al., 2025; Sitohang & Ristia, 2025). The present study extends this argument by showing that identity formation through slang also occurs in a multilingual campus setting where local language use remains culturally significant.

At the level of social comparison, students implicitly compare Jakartan slang with Javanese and with slang associated with previous generations. Jakartan slang is perceived by several participants as more practical, modern, and natural for peer interaction, while Javanese is sometimes viewed as less aligned with the communicative style of their

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generation. This comparison creates a hierarchy of linguistic value in which Jakartan slang carries greater symbolic appeal in certain campus interactions. The distinction between current Generation Z expressions and older slang forms also shows that slang is used to mark generational boundaries. Expressions associated with previous generations may be perceived as outdated, while newer expressions circulating through TikTok, Instagram, and group chats are treated as signs of being socially up to date. This supports the argument that language change is generational, although it is not exclusive to Generation Z (Emha & Fatinova, 2021; Rezeki & Sagala, 2019).

The role of social media is central to this process. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp accelerate the circulation of slang and make certain expressions widely recognizable among young people from different regions. Previous studies have shown that digital communication contributes to the rapid spread of new language forms among youth (Gul & Rukh, 2025; Naqvi, 2025). The present findings confirm this pattern, but they also show that digital circulation alone does not fully explain the shift. Slang becomes socially meaningful when it is carried into everyday campus interaction and reinforced through peer-group expectations. In other words, social media introduces and circulates slang, but peer interaction gives it social pressure and symbolic value. This distinction is important because it shows that language shift among students is shaped by both digital exposure and face-to-face social dynamics.

The findings also indicate that Jakartan slang may reduce the space for Javanese in certain campus peer interactions, especially among Javanese-speaking students who regularly interact with peers from Greater Jakarta or mixed linguistic backgrounds. However, this should not be interpreted as evidence of a general decline of Javanese at UNNES or in Semarang society. The data show a more specific pattern: among the selected participants, Javanese is used less frequently in some informal peer contexts because Jakartan slang is perceived as more practical, inclusive, and socially current. This finding is consistent with studies showing that Javanese and other local languages are often associated with older or less modern forms of speech among younger speakers (Alamsyah, 2024; Fitriati et al., 2025; Prastiti & Sudarwati, 2020). At the same time, the present study suggests that the reduced use of Javanese is not caused by stigma alone. It is also shaped by the practical need for mutual intelligibility in multilingual interaction and by the symbolic value attached to Jakartan slang.

The dialectal diversity of Javanese further complicates this situation. Javanese-speaking students at FISIP UNNES come from different parts of Central and East Java and do not always share the same dialectal repertoire. Because Javanese exists as a dialect continuum, mutual understanding may become difficult when speakers use different regional varieties (Conners, 2020; Gooskens & Van Heuven, 2021). In such situations, colloquial Jakartan Indonesian and its slang expressions can function as a neutral middle ground. This finding adds nuance to discussions of local language decline. The reduced use of Javanese among the participants is not merely the result of preference for a more prestigious urban variety; it is also connected to the practical challenge of communication

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among speakers of different Javanese dialects. Thus, the shift toward Jakartan slang involves both symbolic and functional dimensions.

The use of Jakartan slang also reflects a form of linguistic prestige on campus. Although this study primarily uses Social Identity Theory, the findings can also be read through Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital. In this context, Jakartan slang operates as a symbolic resource that gives students access to peer recognition, social acceptance, and a sense of cultural relevance. Students who understand and use current slang are more likely to be perceived as socially aware and aligned with contemporary youth culture. Conversely, students who are unfamiliar with current slang may risk being seen as outdated or outside the dominant peer style. This does not mean that Javanese has no cultural value. Rather, it suggests that in certain informal campus interactions, Jakartan slang has greater exchange value as a resource for peer-group belonging and generational identity.

This study therefore contributes to sociolinguistic discussions in three ways. First, it shows that slang among Generation Z functions not only as casual vocabulary but also as a mechanism of social identity formation. Second, it demonstrates that the relationship between slang and local language use should be understood in specific interactional contexts rather than through broad claims of language decline. Third, it highlights the importance of campus peer dynamics in shaping language preference among young speakers. While previous studies have emphasized the role of social media in spreading slang, the present study shows that the social value of slang is produced through everyday interaction, peer recognition, and the need to belong.

Practically, the findings suggest that efforts to maintain Javanese among university students should not rely only on formal language preservation. Since slang circulates strongly through peer interaction and digital culture, local language maintenance also needs to enter these same spaces. Student organizations, campus activities, and digital content production can provide opportunities for Javanese to be used in ways that feel socially current rather than merely traditional. This may include encouraging the use of Javanese in student forums, creative media, campus campaigns, and social media content. Such efforts are important not because Javanese is disappearing completely, but because its space in certain youth interactions may become increasingly limited when it is not connected to the communicative practices of younger speakers.

Nevertheless, the findings must be interpreted with caution. This study involved only 20 Generation Z students from FISIP UNNES and did not include participants from other faculties, universities, or older generations. The data also represent language practices within a limited period and cannot show long-term patterns of language shift. Therefore, the study does not claim that Jakartan slang has caused a general decline of Javanese. Rather, it shows that among the selected participants, Jakartan slang functions as a generational identity marker and may reduce the use of Javanese in certain peer interactions. Future research should involve larger and more diverse participants, include intergenerational comparison, and use longitudinal observation to examine whether this

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pattern reflects a temporary campus style or a more durable shift in language attitudes among younger Javanese speakers.

D. Conclusion

This study found that Jakartan slang functions as more than an informal communicative style among Generation Z students at FISIP UNNES. It operates as a generational identity marker through which students express peer belonging, social alignment, and distinction from older or more local linguistic repertoires. The findings show that students use slang not only because it is familiar in digital communication, but also because it carries social value in campus peer interaction. Through the lens of Social Identity Theory, Jakartan slang is connected to social categorization, social identification, and social comparison: students use it to align themselves with modern youth peer circles, internalize it as part of their everyday linguistic identity, and compare it with Javanese or older slang forms that are perceived as less current in certain informal settings.

The study also found that the use of Jakartan slang may reduce the space for Javanese in selected campus peer interactions, particularly among Javanese-speaking students who interact regularly in multilingual friendship groups. This does not mean that Javanese is disappearing from UNNES or from the students' linguistic lives more broadly. Rather, the findings indicate that Javanese is used less frequently in some informal peer contexts because Jakartan slang is considered more practical, inclusive, and socially valued. The contribution of this study lies in showing that the relationship between slang and local language use should be understood not only as a matter of linguistic preference, but also as part of identity negotiation, peer-group belonging, and the symbolic value of language in a multilingual campus environment.

Given the limited scope of the study, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The research involved only 20 Generation Z students from FISIP UNNES and did not include students from other faculties, universities, or older generations. The study also relied on interviews, questionnaire responses, and short-term observation, which means that it cannot determine whether the observed pattern represents a long-term language shift. Future studies should involve larger and more diverse participants, compare different generations and campus settings, and use longitudinal observation to examine whether the reduced use of Javanese in peer interaction is temporary, situational, or part of a broader change in language attitudes among younger Javanese speakers.

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