



Pengaruh Media Digital terhadap Variasi Bahasa di Kalangan Mahasiswa

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Abstract. *This study aims to explore the influence of digital media on language variation among college students. Using qualitative methods and a literature review design, this study analyzes how digital media, such as social media, online communication platforms, and instant messaging applications, influence language use among college students. The results show that digital media triggers the emergence of language variation that includes digital slang, changes in grammar and spelling, and the transfer of foreign culture and vocabulary. Although digital media provides a space for students to express themselves creatively, there are concerns about the negative impact on formal language proficiency. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts from educational institutions and students to maintain a balance between linguistic creativity and the preservation of formal language.*

Keywords: Digital Media, Language Variation, College Students, Sociolinguistics, Communication.

1. BACKGROUND

The development of digital media has undeniably transformed the landscape of communication, particularly among students, who are immersed in a constant stream of online interaction. This immersion has had a profound impact on language variation, fostering a dynamic and continuously evolving linguistic environment. From social media platforms to online games and instant messaging, students are both exposed to and actively engaged in a range of linguistic practices that diverge from traditional norms (Lee, Stephanie, 2024). This essay aims to explore the multifaceted influence of digital media on language variation among students, examining the emergence of new linguistic forms, their impact on formal language proficiency, and the sociolinguistic implications of these changes.

One of the most evident effects of digital media is the rapid creation and dissemination of new linguistic features (Han, 2024). Students frequently use abbreviations, acronyms, emojis, and internet slang, contributing to a distinctive digital vernacular. These linguistic innovations, often characterized by brevity and informality, facilitate fast and efficient communication in online spaces. The use of expressions such as “LOL,” “BRB,” or an array of emojis, for instance, enables students to convey complex emotions and ideas with minimal typing. Furthermore, the global nature of digital media exposes students to a wide range of linguistic influences from various cultures and subcultures, leading to the adoption and adaptation of foreign words and phrases (Dembe, 2024). This cross-cultural linguistic exchange

enriches students' linguistic repertoires, while simultaneously contributing to the blurring of traditional language boundaries.

However, the widespread use of informal digital language raises concerns about its potential impact on students' proficiency in formal language. Constant exposure to abbreviated and grammatically simplified forms may hinder their ability to write and speak in standard English or other formal languages. Some argue that the casual, often error-laden language of digital communication may permeate academic writing and professional discourse, thereby impairing students' capacity to express themselves effectively in formal contexts. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge that students often possess code-switching abilities, allowing them to distinguish between formal and informal language use depending on the context. This ability enables them to navigate the diverse linguistic demands of their lives.

Lastly, the sociolinguistic implications of digital language variation are highly significant. Digital media provides a space where students can express their identities and affiliations through language (Darwin, 2024). The use of slang, jargon, or specific online dialects can signify membership in particular digital communities or subcultures. These linguistic choices reflect students' social identities and contribute to the formation of online social groups. Additionally, the anonymity and accessibility of digital platforms can empower marginalized groups to express themselves and challenge dominant linguistic norms. While this may lead to greater inclusivity and diversity, it can also create linguistic gaps and exacerbate existing social inequalities. Understanding the dynamic interplay between digital media and language variation is crucial for educators, linguists, and policymakers to navigate the evolving linguistic landscape and ensure that students develop the language skills necessary for success in both digital and offline contexts.

Based on the above discussion, the author is interested in conducting a study titled "**The Influence of Digital Media on Language Variation Among University Students.**"

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Language

Language is a system of communication used by humans to convey thoughts, ideas, emotions, and information. It is not limited to spoken words but also includes writing, gestures, and other forms of expression. As a distinctive human trait, language plays a vital role in daily life, enabling us to interact, collaborate, and understand one another. Through language, humans can express complex ideas, shape cultures, and document history and knowledge to be

passed on to future generations. Moreover, each language has its own uniqueness, reflecting the identity, traditions, and values of the society that uses it. Language is a reflection of human creativity that evolves over time (Situmorang, 2024).

Language is a form of communication comprising objectives and symbols based on symbolic systems. Humans begin to acquire language in childhood, starting with communication with their environment and the use of early child language. Language serves as a means to convey messages to others in a way that is understandable to listeners or interlocutors through spoken words. Language allows people to share thoughts, information, and ideas. Furthermore, it functions as a tool for self-expression, social relationship building, and cultural preservation (Situmorang, 2024).

Language is a tool for communication among members of society in the form of sound symbols produced by the human speech apparatus (Setianingsih & Aziz, 2022). In the modern era, language takes on various interpretations, both spoken and written. Specifically, Indonesian is not only a communication tool in direct conversation but also in mediated communication, including social media—TikTok being a notable example in this study. Thus, it is important to recognize that social media, especially TikTok, significantly impacts the reality of language use in society, particularly among youth and university students. This influence can have both positive and negative effects on linguistic communication behavior (Dewani, 2024).

Language Varieties

Language varieties are language variations used by speakers in specific contexts based on situations, purposes, and interlocutors. These varieties can be distinguished by factors such as formality, communication medium, and domain of use. In formal settings like official speeches or academic writing, language tends to be more structured, standard, and grammatically correct. In contrast, informal or casual interactions often employ relaxed and freer expressions. Commonly used varieties in society include casual and familiar forms, which are considered easy to understand in everyday communication (Halawa, 2024).

Language variety is a dynamic form that changes depending on the topic being discussed. Language evolves over time through human interaction in various social and geographical contexts. Every language has a long history influenced by culture, migration, conquest, and cultural exchange. Technological advancement and globalization have expanded intercultural and interlingual interactions, leading to the adoption of new words, changes in language usage, and even the emergence of new pidgin or creole languages. Language varieties shift according

to their communicative function for instance, language used in daily communication tends to be more relaxed and informal than that used in formal situations (Situmorang, 2024).

Language varieties are also shaped by communication media, such as spoken and written language. Spoken language often relies on intonation, facial expressions, and gestures to support understanding. In contrast, written language emphasizes grammar and sentence structure to convey messages clearly. Furthermore, specific fields like law, education, or technology have their own language varieties reflecting relevant terminology and concepts. This diversity demonstrates language's adaptability to the complex and varied needs of human communication and serves as evidence of cultural richness and human creativity.

The emergence of language varieties implies at least two main influencing factors: social and situational. These factors are complex and interconnected, providing a framework for understanding language evolution. In the context of Indonesian language use, social factors play a particularly significant role. These include social class, education, and culture, all of which affect everyday language usage. Changes in social structures can lead to variations in language (Ulya, 2024).

Social class can shape language variety. For instance, terms and expressions used by one social group may differ from another, creating group identity through language and illustrating the complexity of social interaction. Education also plays an important role. Language style and formality levels often vary among individuals with different educational backgrounds, making education a significant indicator in analyzing language variety (Ulya, 2024).

Sociolinguistic Theory

Sociolinguistic theory is a branch of linguistics that examines the relationship between language and society. It focuses on how language use is influenced by social factors such as age, gender, social class, education level, ethnicity, and cultural context. A core principle of sociolinguistics is that language variation reflects social dynamics within a community manifested in dialects, accents, speech styles, and word choices based on context. The theory also explores how language contributes to building and reinforcing social identity as well as to social integration and stratification. By studying this relationship, sociolinguistics offers deeper insight into human communication and its impact on social structure and function.

In everyday life, humans are inseparable from language use. Through language, individuals express ideas, thoughts, opinions, and desires (Aprilianti, 2024). Language mirrors social identity. For example, slang is often used by specific social groups to express their identity. Its use on social media strengthens group identity, especially among university students who wish to demonstrate closeness or shared social status (Tuto, 2024).

Theory of Social Media's Influence on Language

The theory of social media's influence on language explores the dynamic and evolving relationship between digital communication platforms and linguistic practices. Social media has revolutionized how language is used, adapted, and transformed in modern society. Instant communication on these platforms emphasizes brevity and creativity, giving rise to new linguistic elements such as acronyms, emojis, hashtags, and internet slang. These elements not only reshape meaning but also impact global syntax, grammar, and vocabulary.

Social media also fosters multilingual expression, allowing users to blend languages and create unique hybrid expressions that reflect their diverse cultural identities. At the same time, it accelerates the spread of linguistic trends across ages, professions, and regions. Viral hashtags or phrases often transcend their digital origins and enter everyday discourse. Despite concerns about oversimplification and the erosion of linguistic norms, social media democratizes language providing platforms for marginalized dialects and expressions to gain visibility and recognition globally. This interaction emphasizes social media's profound and varied influence on how we use, understand, and adapt language in the digital age.

Social media is a catalyst for language evolution. It facilitates the rapid creation and dissemination of new terms. It enables the adoption of expressive, relaxed, and informal vocabulary. The widespread use of slang on social media is driven by the ease and speed of communication on these platforms (Tuto, 2024).

Language Learning Theories

Language Learning Theories encompass various perspectives and frameworks explaining how individuals acquire, process, and utilize language. These theories examine both first language acquisition and second language learning, analyzing cognitive, social, and environmental influences. One key approach is Behaviorism, which emphasizes imitation, practice, and reinforcement. Children learn language by mimicking adults and receiving positive feedback for correct usage.

Conversely, the Innatist Theory by Noam Chomsky suggests that humans are born with an innate language acquisition device that enables natural learning when exposed to linguistic input. Another major perspective is the Interactionist Theory, which stresses the importance of social interaction and meaningful communication in learning language. Similarly, Cognitive Theory links language learning to broader cognitive development, suggesting learners progress through stages as understanding deepens.

In second language acquisition, Krashen's Input Hypothesis highlights the role of comprehensible input, while sociocultural theories emphasize cultural and social dynamics.

These frameworks collectively offer educators effective strategies and insights into the complexity of language acquisition.

Social media is an online medium. Users can easily participate, share, and create content such as blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds forms of social media widely used globally (Dinda, 2024). The social environment plays a crucial role in language development. Slang on social media acts as linguistic input for students, enriching their vocabulary and influencing daily communication patterns. Frequent exposure to informal language shapes students' linguistic habits (Tuto, 2024).

Theory of Language Change by Technology

The theory of language change through technology investigates how advancements in communication tools reshape linguistic practices over time. Technology has profoundly influenced language introducing new vocabulary, altering grammar, and changing how we interact and convey meaning. The rise of digital communication, for example, has led to abbreviations, emojis, and acronyms that meet the demands for speed and efficiency on platforms like text messaging and social media. These innovations reflect language's adaptability to new technological media.

Technology also enables cross-cultural and multilingual interaction, fostering integration of various languages and dialects. This results in linguistic blends and global expressions. Meanwhile, tools like machine translation and linguistic software are transforming language learning and usage, breaking down barriers and increasing access.

However, critics argue that tech-driven change may erode traditional norms as informal communication dominates. Nonetheless, the mutual relationship between language and technology underscores language's dynamic nature in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Digital technologies, especially phones and the internet, have significantly changed communication methods. Language on social media is often shaped by character limits and time-saving needs, leading to abbreviations, acronyms, and new expressions (Tuto, 2024).

Slang and Student Communication

Slang is a language variety developed within specific social groups, eventually becoming part of pop culture. Among university students, slang is not only a communication tool but also a means to signify group membership especially in digital spaces. Its use on social media allows students to communicate more flexibly but also presents challenges in maintaining formal language in academic contexts (Tuto, 2024).

Impact of Slang on Formal Language Quality

Pratama (2020) discusses the impact of slang on the quality of formal Indonesian among Indonesian Language and Literature Education students. The study found that students who frequently use slang common in youth social dialects often struggle with formal language. Excessive use of slang impairs their ability to use standard Indonesian, which is crucial in academic contexts. The research aims to explore how much slang affects students' formal language skills and to describe questionnaire results examining slang's role in the development of their Indonesian language proficiency (Pratama, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is qualitative. According to Sugiyono (2023), qualitative research is a method based on post-positivist philosophy, used to examine natural conditions in which the researcher serves as the key instrument. Data collection and analysis in qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than quantification.

The data collection technique employed in this study is a **literature review research design**. A literature review is an activity that involves reviewing or re-examining various works previously published by academics or other researchers that are relevant to the topic being investigated (Sugiyono, 2023).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including language use. Digital media such as social media platforms, online communication tools, and instant messaging application have become the primary means of interaction among university students. This phenomenon has given rise to language variations that reflect both linguistic creativity and the dynamics of digital culture.

Social media includes a wide range of platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp, all of which are highly popular among teenagers and the general public. These platforms provide easy access without necessarily considering their positive or negative consequences. Society's materialistic inclinations can result in reduced attention to spiritual aspects, potentially leading individuals astray due to the increasing influence of globalization (Abidin & Fahmi, 2019; Putri & Febriana, 2023; Nurul & Mayong, 2022). Social media, regarded as the most advanced communication tool today, presents a wide array of content that is not only appealing but also influential. It encompasses information, news,

education, social aspects, and even spiritual and religious discourse. Furthermore, social media can significantly influence youth behavior causing addiction, reducing social engagement, encouraging laziness in studying, and impacting language use among young people (Aliah & Nurfaizri, 2023; Nisa et al., 2023; Bakistuta & Abduh, 2023).

The media, as a tool for conveying information, not only disseminates news but also acts as a trendsetter, shaping fashion and linguistic styles. Students, as part of the younger generation navigating unstable social and cultural development, are especially susceptible to media influence. This leads them to adopt various language styles, including slang, which is frequently used on social media platforms (Dewani & Presida, 2024; Lestari et al., 2022). This phenomenon illustrates the media's significant role in shaping students' linguistic style, potentially affecting their ability to use formal language in academic settings. Social media is not only a communication platform but also a space where young people can learn and develop their language. Given the rapid pace of technological advancement and the popularity of social media, this influence continues to evolve over time. The language style commonly used by today's youth often referred to as "slang" is frequently employed for sharing opinions or comments on social media, as well as during face-to-face conversations with peers who are also familiar with these expressions via social platforms (Dewani, 2024).

Language is one of the most distinctive traits that separates humans from other creatures. It not only functions as a tool for communication but also as a medium for expressing individual cultural and social identity. This aligns with the view of Habibi and Kusdarini (2020), who emphasized that language is a vital human expression for building interpersonal relationships in society. Humans possess the potential to understand and use language to interact, convey ideas, and establish societal norms and culture. Therefore, language is not merely a communication tool but a fundamental characteristic that differentiates humans from other beings (Habibi & Kusdarini, 2020). Every individual uses language as a form of communication to express thoughts, feelings, and to interact with others. For students, language proficiency is developed not only through classroom learning but also through social life, including on social media (Alfianda, 2025).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between language, digital media, and the younger generation. One such study by Yulianti (2023) aimed to describe the use of millennial teen slang on the social media platform TikTok. The study found that over time, the number of slang terms used by millennial teens has increased, and these terms are integrated into their daily lives. Meanwhile, a study by Amelia (2023) investigated the language variety used by teenagers on TikTok and found that many different language styles are employed.

However, these studies have not yet explored how such language variations can influence or change the younger generation, nor the consequences if these changes are not wisely managed.

Digital media offers students a space to express themselves using more flexible and creative language. For example, the use of slang on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter reflects students' adaptation to a dynamic social environment (Tuto, 2024). New terms popularized on social media are often adopted into daily conversations as symbols of modernity and relevance.

However, the influence of digital media is not limited to the emergence of slang. It also impacts grammar and correct Indonesian spelling. Research has shown that while social media has increased accessibility to the Indonesian language, it has also introduced changes in grammar and spelling conventions (Bangun, 2024). This highlights the double-edged nature of digital media: on one hand, it enriches language; on the other, it may threaten the continuity of formal language.

In addition, digital media facilitates the transfer of cultural practices and communication styles from various countries. This enables students to enrich their vocabulary with foreign terms that are often adapted into Indonesian. Nevertheless, this phenomenon presents challenges in preserving the identity of the Indonesian language amid the current of globalization (Adnyani, 2024).

Digital media has a significant influence on language variation among university students. This influence includes the formation of slang, changes in grammar and spelling, and the integration of foreign cultural and linguistic elements. Therefore, efforts must be made to maintain a balance between linguistic creativity and the preservation of formal language. As the nation's future generation, students play a crucial role in safeguarding the identity of the Indonesian language in the digital era.

DISCUSSION

The topic of digital media's influence on language variation among university students reveals a complex phenomenon involving the interplay between linguistic creativity and the preservation of formal language. Digital media, through its diverse platforms, has become a primary space for students to interact, express themselves, and build identity. In this context, language variations emerge as adaptations to the dynamic digital environment evident in the use of slang, abbreviations, acronyms, and emojis. This phenomenon not only reflects students' linguistic creativity but also their ability to adapt to evolving digital trends and cultures.

However, behind this creativity lies a concern regarding the impact on formal language proficiency. Continuous exposure to informal language on digital media raises fears of

diminishing students' abilities to use standard language, both in writing and speech. Changes in grammar and spelling, influenced by common usage on social platforms, are tangible examples of this concern. Additionally, the cultural and lexical transfer from other languages via digital platforms poses a challenge in maintaining the identity of the Indonesian language amidst globalization.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language variation on digital media also reflects students' social identity and affiliations. The use of slang and specific jargon can indicate membership in certain groups or online subcultures. On the flip side, this may also create linguistic divides and exacerbate existing social inequalities. Therefore, it is essential for students to possess **code-switching skills** the ability to distinguish and appropriately use formal or informal language depending on the context.

To maintain the balance between linguistic innovation and the preservation of formal language, a collaborative effort is needed. Educational institutions must actively equip students with comprehensive language skills suited for both formal and informal contexts. Students, in turn, need to develop an awareness of the importance of maintaining the Indonesian language's identity in the digital age. Furthermore, more in-depth research is required to better understand the long-term impacts of digital media on language variation.

5. KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that digital media has a significant influence on language variation among students. This influence includes the formation of unique digital slang, changes in grammar and spelling, as well as the transfer of foreign culture and vocabulary. On one hand, digital media provides students with a space to express themselves creatively and flexibly through language. However, on the other hand, constant exposure to informal language in digital media is feared to erode students' ability to use formal language. Therefore, collaborative efforts from various parties, including educational institutions and students themselves, are needed to maintain a balance between linguistic creativity and the preservation of formal language. Code-switching ability, which is the ability to distinguish between the use of formal and informal language according to the context, is crucial in addressing this challenge. Additionally, further research on the impact of digital media on language variation is needed to provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and formulate appropriate strategies to address it.

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