

Languange Variation in the Digital Era: The Influence of Tiktok Content and Interaction on The Formation of Social Dialects Among Indonesian

Atika Anjani¹ Khairunnisa Azzahra² Novani Elisabeth Lingga³ Nurhikmah Siagian⁴ Resa Aquilera Ramadhani⁵ Meisuri⁶

Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

Email: atikasan01@gmail.com¹

Abstract

This study explores how TikTok functions as a digital linguistic arena that shapes the emergence of social dialects among Indonesian youth. Far beyond a platform for entertainment, TikTok facilitates the creation, dissemination, and reinforcement of new linguistic patterns through video content, captions, and interactive comments. Guided by Labov's Variationist Sociolinguistics (1972), this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing 15 TikTok videos and 100-150 user comments. The analysis focuses on linguistic features such as slang, code-switching, and identity markers that reflect youth identity and social belonging. The findings reveal that TikTok fosters rapid linguistic innovation such as slang expressions like receh banget and ngakak brutal, English borrowings such as slay and literally, and fandom or regional identity markers that demonstrate how users blend local and global influences. These linguistic practices not only strengthen community solidarity but also signify how digital spaces accelerate the evolution of language variation. Overall, the study concludes that TikTok represents a dynamic sociolinguistic ecosystem where technology, culture, and identity intersect, highlighting the platform's crucial role in redefining Indonesian youth's linguistic expression in the digital age.

Keywords: Tiktok; Language Variation; Social Dialects; Youth Identity; Sociolinguistics



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have become powerful arenas for linguistic expression and innovation. Among these, TikTok stands out as a platform that not only entertains but also facilitates the creation, dissemination, and transformation of language. Its interactive nature allows users to participate actively in shaping linguistic norms through short videos, captions, and comment interactions. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021), language variation serves as a reflection of social identity and community affiliation; thus, platforms like TikTok can be understood as new sociolinguistic environments where language practices evolve in tandem with digital culture. In Indonesia, TikTok has become one of the most widely used social media platforms, particularly among Generation Z. The platform's participatory algorithm encourages users to produce and engage with content that reflects humor, creativity, and shared identity. This dynamic interaction fosters the rapid diffusion of linguistic innovations across regions and social groups (Kusyairi, Hikmah, & Qomariyah, 2024). Within this environment, youth often experiment with language in playful and expressive ways that mirror their cultural values and digital fluency.

The widespread use of TikTok among Indonesian youth has given rise to distinctive linguistic phenomena, including the emergence of slang, code-switching, and identity markers that blend local and global influences. Studies such as those by Kusyairi, Hikmah, and Qomariyah (2024) and Ismail et al. (2025) highlight that TikTok has become a linguistic ecosystem in which users constantly experiment with expressions that symbolize group belonging, humor, and creativity. This dynamic aligns with Sulistiaryani and Prasetyo's (2024) observation that social media platforms provide adolescents with opportunities to express

identity and solidarity through language choices that differ from conventional speech. Moreover, Nashrudina, Fajriyah, and Dewi (2025) emphasize that TikTok contributes significantly to the spread of hybridized language forms, reflecting the interconnection between digital communication and contemporary youth culture.

While previous sociolinguistic studies have extensively explored regional and social dialects in traditional, face-to-face communication contexts (Atmawijaya, 2023; Muqowwam, Rumasondi, & Hariani, 2025), research focusing on how such dialects develop within digital spaces remains limited. The rapid circulation of linguistic trends on TikTok suggests that online interactions may accelerate language variation more dynamically than offline settings. Therefore, understanding how TikTok influences the formation of social dialects is essential for capturing the evolving nature of Indonesian linguistic identity in the digital era. Grounded in Labov's Variationist Sociolinguistics (1972), this study examines how TikTok functions as a site of linguistic variation and identity negotiation among Indonesian youth. By analyzing TikTok video content and comment interactions, this research seeks to uncover the patterns, functions, and meanings behind emerging linguistic forms. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following question: How do TikTok content and user interactions influence the formation of social dialects among Indonesian youth? Ultimately, the findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital sociolinguistics by demonstrating how TikTok serves as a multifaceted medium where culture, technology, and language intersect to shape the social dialects of contemporary Indonesia.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design that is grounded in the framework of sociolinguistic analysis. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the need to examine language as it is naturally produced and negotiated by Indonesian youth within the interactive environment of TikTok. Rather than focusing on numerical measurements, qualitative research emphasizes meanings, interpretations, and patterns of communication, which makes it highly suitable for investigating how social dialects emerge, spread, and evolve in online spaces. By examining both the linguistic features present in TikTok video content and the comment sections that follow, the study seeks to capture not only the forms of social dialects used but also the social functions they serve, such as expressing identity, building solidarity, or distinguishing group boundaries. A descriptive orientation is employed to provide a detailed account of the variations found without imposing rigid hypotheses, thus allowing the data to reveal the dynamics of youth language practices in a digital era. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, qualitative descriptive design is effective for research that aims to understand cultural and social phenomena in depth, making it the most appropriate strategy for exploring the influence of TikTok on the formation of social dialects among Indonesian youth.

Data Collection Techniques

This study uses purposive sampling, meaning the researcher will purposely choose one TikTok video that is popular among Indonesian youth and shows active interaction. From this video, 15 comments will be taken as data, especially those that show language variation, social expression, or group identity. The comments will then be written down exactly as they appear, keeping the original spelling, abbreviations, or emojis. To support interpretation, additional notes will be made about the video, such as its topic, number of views/likes, and general interaction patterns.

Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed through a sociolinguistic approach. First, the comments will be examined for their language features, such as slang, code-switching, abbreviations, or the use of emoticons. Second, the analysis will focus on the social functions of these comments, for example, how they express identity, show solidarity, create humor, or draw group boundaries. Third, patterns will be identified by comparing recurring styles or strategies across the comments. A descriptive method will be used to explain how each comment reflects broader youth language practices, and the findings will then be linked to sociolinguistic and digital communication theories.

RESEARCH RESULTS

| No. | Source | Word | Notes/Usage |
|-----|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Creator | Sok-sok'an | Gaya berlagak (sering dipakai untuk mengejek lucu) |
| 2. | Commentator | Receh banget | Menyebut sesuatu lucu/murah humor |
| 3. | Commentator | Pecah banget | Sangat lucu |
| 4. | Creator/Commentator | Gue/lu/lo/gua | Pronomina gaul menggantikan "saya" dan "kamu" |
| 5. | Commentator | Ngakak/ngakak brutal | Tertawa |
| 6. | Commentator | Kocak/garing | Mengomentari kelucuan |
| 7. | Creator | Bocil | Julukan anak kecil |
| 8. | Commentator | Nolep/klarif/nimbrung | Istilah gaul ("no life", klarifikasi, ikut campur) |
| 9. | Commentator | Ngaret/sabi/yareu/anjirt/geser kemana | Slang sehari-hari |

Lexical Choices

| No. | Source | Word | Notes/Usage |
|-----|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Creator | When, suprise, POV | Code switching Indonesian's creator use for Ketika, kejutan, sudut pandang (POV) |
| 2. | Commentator | Circle, effort, excited, ending, heart | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for Lingkaran(group), usaha, bersemangat, akhir, hati |
| 3. | Creator | Treats, boundaries, friends, well | Code switching Indonesian's creator use for Hadiah, batasan, teman, baik |
| 4. | Commentator | Confess, crush, gentleman, repost | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for Mengakui, naksir, gentleman, repost |
| 5. | Commentator | Yay or nay, yapping, oversharing, final boss, rill, share | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for Setuju atau tidak, omong kosong, terlalu banyak berbagi, bos akhir, asli, berbagi |
| 6. | Creator | Dear, vintage, open mic, absurd | Code switching Indonesian's creator use for Terkasih, klasik, panggung terbuka, tidak masuk akal |
| 7. | Commentator | What if, voice changer, jumpscare, slay, real life, soft spoken, carry, manly, mute | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for Bagaimana jika, pengubah suara, kejutan mendadak, slay, kehidupan nyata, bicara lembut, membawa, gagah, bisu |
| 8. | Commentator | Basic, jokes, habit, I love | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for dasar, lelucon, kebiasaan, aku cinta |
| 9. | Creator/Commentator | Rewatch, comeback, shock | Code switching Indonesian's both creator and commentator use for Tonton ulang, kembalinya, syok |
| 10. | Creator | Giving myself a time out | Code switching Indonesian's creator use for Memberikan diri sendiri waktu istirahat |

| | | | |
|-----|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11. | Commentator | Worth it, I feel u, attractive, tips n trick, attract, falling to, naturally funny, emotionally stable, trust issue, literally | Code switching Indonesian's commentator use for Se worth it, aku ngerti kamu, menarik, tips dan trik, menarik perhatian, jatuh cinta, lucu secara alami, stabil emosional, masalah kepercayaan, secara harfiah |
|-----|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Code Switching

| No. | Type of Marker | Example(Creator/Commentator) | Meaning / Tagged Community |
|-----|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Fandom-Based | 51/49 (Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint) | Trauma markers/fandom jokes in the ORV (Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint) community |
| 2. | Fandom-Based | Treasure, Teume, Comeback, T-map | The identity of K-Pop Treasure fans |
| 3. | Regional/Local | Uang bicas, Kek tu ee, Suum kali aku, Juus otak aku, Hampir beretus, Pegah aba, Ngomong ee, Kayak peusijuk | The term Aceh/region as a marker of origin/solidarity |
| 4. | Fandom/Performance | SM, Highnote, Center, Part, Choreo, Gen2/3, Visual, Debut | K-pop fan slang / idol performance |

Identity Marker

Based on the data that been collected from 15 TikTok videos, The researchers found various language variations, such as slang, code-switching, and identity markers, used by both creators and commentators (see Tables 1.1-1.3). Table 1.1 clearly shows that the most frequently used slang words are humorous and indicate closeness, such as sok-sok'an, receh banget, pecah banget, ngakak brutal, bocil, nolep, and ngaret. In addition, pronouns such as gue/lu/lo are also consistently used. This is a characteristic of the casual and informal style of language that is synonymous with teenagers and the younger generation. Then, in Table 1.2, it can be seen that code-switching most often takes the form of borrowing popular words or phrases from English, such as POV, literally, slay, open mic, jumpscare, worth it, and final boss. This mixture of English often appears in creator content and comments to add a sense of humor, aesthetics, or to follow global trends that are on the rise. Meanwhile, identity markers (Table 1.3) show that TikTok users use language to associate themselves with certain communities or groups. At the fandom level, for example, there are markers like 51/49 (Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint) and terms like Teume, comeback, and T-map (from the Treasure fandom). At the regional or local level, there are words like uang bicas, juus otak aku, and pegah aba that serve as markers of regional origin or regional solidarity. K-pop fan-specific terms, such as highnote, center, choreo, and debut, are also often used as markers of fan identity. Broadly speaking, the data from these tables show that these three categories of language variation appear repeatedly in both content and interaction. This strongly indicates that there is a distinctive language use pattern of Indonesian youth on the TikTok platform.

Discussion

According to the results provided in Tables 1.1 - 1.3, the users of Tik Tok in Indonesia, including young people, use slang terms, code-switching, and identity indicators in the content creation and communication quite often. All these tendencies are not limited to language diversity but also reflect the formation of unique social dialects under the influence of the digital culture. This holds the position of Labov (1972, in Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021) who believes that variation occurs naturally in particular social groups and serves as an indicator of group identity. Moreover, since the algorithm of Tik Tok allows grouping users according to their interests and contacts, it increases these linguistic forms in micro-communities. This is

consistent with the notion of language as a social semiotic proposed by Halliday (1978) because language choices are an indicator of belonging and social roles. The same tendencies are observed by Ismail et al. (2025) and Kusyairi et al. (2024), who discovered that code-switching and slang on TikTok are used as a marker of identities and as community-building tools by Generation Z. With regard to slang and lexical choices, the data suggest that young people in Indonesia on TikTok regularly use slang and informal lexical choices: sok-sok an, receh banget, ngakak brutal, and gue and lu. These add to the register of the digital vernacular in the discourse community of young people using TikTok. The use of such lexical choices are not only stylistic choices, but also serve as a way to mark group membership and assist in identity construction of the youth group. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) point out that our lexical choices index our social group, and within the TikTok space, index our generational group. Similar to the point made by Nashrudina et al. (2025), this increase of slang on TikTok reflects shifts in meaning and new meanings within slang related to Generation Z's humour, lifestyle, and digital creativity. This shows that it is not meaningless or random, but rather socially patterned to fit the needs of that specific community (Labov, 1972, viewed both linguistic variation socially structured by ethno-linguistic category).

Moreover, the application of these slang terms is an indication that there is some form of symbolic capital that separates youth groups against other older generations or non-youths. Sulistiayarini and Prasetyo (2024) discovered that adolescents utilize slang in TikTok as a means of self-expression and communing themselves, in addition to entertainment purposes. This is confirmed by our data: the same slang items are used by various creators and commentators, which means that these terms are incredibly popular and reinforce the feeling of belonging to something bigger and greater than their individual creators. This procedure re-resonates Halliday (1978) idea of language as a social semiotic in which the vocabulary choices have the social meaning when not understood literally. That is, Indonesian young people embrace and recycle slang on Tik Tok to demonstrate modernity, humor, and solidarity, and, at the same time, develop a unique generational voice of the digital era (see also Wenas, 2024; Kusyairi et al., 2024). Considering code switching, the findings indicate that the Indonesian young people often use English words and terms (POV), (yay or nay), (oversharing), (repost), and (voice changer), interchangeable with Indonesian terms when using Tik Tok. Such code-switching is not coincidental and indicates their competence in two languages and their skills to move between the global and domestic cultures at the same time. Kandiawan (2023) emphasizes that on social media, Gen Z Indonesians switch between languages so as to express cosmopolitanism, as well as demonstrate digital literacy. This is reflected in our results: inserting English words into otherwise Indonesian remarks or captions, users engage in a hybrid identity which locates them in the network of the global online society, at the same time they remain situated in Indonesian linguistic conventions. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) also claim that these switches play significant social roles and indicate change of topic, position, or audience.

Additionally, it seems that code-switching on TikTok also increases group cohesion and offers a feeling of exclusivity to the group. Repeatedly using the same English-based terms in a population of users consolidates in-group solidarity and separates them effectively with those who do not understand the terminology as demonstrated by Ismail et al. (2025) and Kusyairi et al. (2024). Phrases such as slaughter, final boss, and trust issue in our data, not only are indicative of digital culture, but also have assessive meanings that are familiar to others. This confirms Halliday (1978) idea of language as social semiotic: English insertions obtain a new social meaning in the discourse of Indonesian youth as badges of modernity, humour or irony. Therefore, Tik Tok is a system through which code-switching behaviors actively define the

identity of the youths and solidarity in the digital world. Beyond slang and code-switching, our information demonstrates the way young people use certain identity signs to be connected with fandoms, localities, and local cultures. As an illustration, the mention of 51/49 in the Viewpoint fandom of the Omniscient Reader or Treasure Maker (Teume) in a K-pop community are a shorthand cue that instantly recognizes a user as a member of a group. According to Sulistiayarini and Prasetyo (2024), these markers based on fandom give adolescents the ability to index niche groups in the wider Tik Tok system. Similarly, Nashrudina et al. (2025) note that repeated fandom references allow language to perform symbolic functions, which go beyond the literal meaning. These fandom markers are micro-identities in terms of which these Indonesian youths are attached to global pop culture networks and, at the same time, they set them apart in contrast to the rest of the users in our data.

Regional and local expressions such as “gada uang bicas,” “suum kali aku,” or “kayak peusijuk” illustrate another layer of identity construction. These words signal geographic or cultural background and help youth maintain a sense of locality within a global platform. Halliday's (1978) theory of language as a social semiotic helps explain this phenomenon: these markers convey social meanings tied to regional pride, humor, or insider knowledge. At the same time, TikTok's algorithm amplifies content to users with similar interests or linguistic styles (Wijaya et al., 2025), facilitating the formation of micro-communities where such markers circulate and gain prestige. In this way, identity markers on TikTok act as powerful tools for both self-expression and group solidarity, weaving together global fandom culture and local linguistic practices into a uniquely Indonesian youth digital identity.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that language development along with modification among Indonesian youth greatly benefit from TikTok, a powerful online medium. The study included analysis of 15 TikTok videos plus over one hundred comments. It determined that different linguistic features serve as tools toward social interaction, self-expression, and identity construction, for instance slang, code-switching, and identity markers. The findings do indicate young users do actively shape a linguistic culture that is reflecting values, humor, belonging, not only as passive consumers of global digital trends. Online talk allows fluid language use, a trait shown very well. Slang terms as well as frequent English borrowings show from where hybrid then creative language is made, with “receh banget,” “ngakak brutal,” “bocil,” “POV,” “slay,” and “literally” as examples. This phenomenon shows just how TikTok eases linguistic diversity, because it enables users to play with language in such a way that they strengthen social cohesion and reinforce digital identities within quite specific online communities. Furthermore, fandom-based as well as regional markers emerge to highlight the way language operates like a cultural symbol together with a social boundary, plus language links individuals to shared interests in addition to local roots while language then bridges them to global discourses.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this study shows that TikTok is an active linguistic ecology where language, culture, and technology coexist, rather than merely being a platform for entertainment.. Digital interactions negotiate, reshape, and disseminate language variation, TikTok observers reveal, because people participate, which reflects communication's adaptive nature evolving rapidly in the digital age. These evolving patterns signify that linguistic innovation now occurs at a much faster pace than also it did in customary, face-to-face communication contexts, thereby transforming just how people form and perceive social dialects. The findings of this study contribute knowledge to the field of digital sociolinguistics since they do show just how online platforms such as TikTok catalyze the evolution of modern

language use. Ultimately, the study underscores that the digital sphere plays a major role toward redefining linguistic norms and cultural identities in today's linked society. Language variation is an inevitable and creative outcome of life during the digital era, and this depicts the study's point.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atmawijaya, T. D. (2023). Variation in dialect and social differences in English between rural areas in Klaten and a metropolitan city in South Jakarta. *Shibgoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor*, 2, 660–674.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Ismail, D., Khotimah, R. K., Nugraha, F., Livia, A. W., & Mutiara, G. (2025). The impact of social media TikTok on the use of code mixing by Generation Z. *Biantara: Journal of Language and Culture*, 1 (2), 72–80.

Kandiawan, A. B. (2023). Code-switching and slang used by Gen Z Indonesians on social media. *ELTR Journal*, 7 (1), 47–55.

Kusyairi, H., Hikmah, & Qomariyah, N. (2024). Penggunaan variasi bahasa di media sosial TikTok pada generasi Z. *Interdisiplin: Journal of Qualitative and Quantitative Research*, 1 (3), 140–153.

Muqowwam, A., Rumasondi, F. A., & Hariani, A. P. (2025). External variation in language: Study of language variation based on perspective sociolinguistics. *Integrative Perspectives of Social and Science Journal (IPSSJ)*, 2 (1), 513–518.

Nashrudina, P. G. G., Fajriyah, A. M., & Dewi, T. I. (2025). The Role of TikTok in Shaping Generation Z's Slang: Semantic Change and Language Use in Digital Communication. *Cultural Narratives*, 2(3), 146–156.

Nusantara Hidayanti, N. N. A. T., & Sucipta, I. D. (2024). Variations in the Use of Indonesian in Social Media: A Case Study On TikTok. *Wistara: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*, 5(2).

Sulistiyarini, S., & Prasetyo, G. T. (2024). Language variations of adolescents on TikTok social media. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 8(1), 33–42.

Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2021). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (8th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.