

The Perceptions Of Youth Community On The Use Of Slang Language On The Maintenance Of Mother Tongue In Pematangsiantar

Persepsi Komunitas Pemuda Tentang Penggunaan Bahasa Slang Dalam Pelestarian Bahasa Ibu Di Pematangsiantar

Ribka Panjaitan^{1*}, Bertaria Sohnata Hutauruk², Bobby Pramjit Singh Dhillon³

Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

Email: ribpanjaitan@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the the perceptions of youth community found on the use of slang language on the maintenance of mother tongue and the types of slang used by the youth community in Pematangsiantar. This research uses qualitative descriptive research. Data were taken from the transcript of an interview and youth conversation recordings. The analysis focused on the perceptions of youth community based on Joanes et al. (2014) theory : auditory perception, visual perception, kinesthetic-tactile perception, social perception, extra-sensory perception. The results showed that out of 50 expressions of perception, two out of five types of perception were identified. 48 expressions were categorized as social perception, while the remaining 2 were categorized as auditory perception. In addition, the emergence of filler expressions such as eee, umm, and hmm while the interview process indicates additional oral strategies to maintain the flow of conversation, provide time to organize thoughts, mark hesitation, and also serve as a form of habit. Next, this study identified out of 20 expression of slang language, 17 of them were categorized into seven types of slang language based on theory of Allan & Burridge (2006, as cited in Mulyantini et al., 2023) and Hidayat et al. (2020, as cited in Hasanah 2022) including imitative, clipping, blending, borrowing, multiple process, fresh and creative, and flippant, while the remaining 3 were catergorized into uncategorized slang language. In conclusion, this study confirm that slang is not merely a linguistic variation, but also serves as a social tool supporting interaction, self-expression, and the management of informal conversations.

Keywords: Perception, Slang Language, Youth Community

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi masyarakat pemuda mengenai penggunaan bahasa gaul dalam menjaga bahasa ibu dan jenis-jenis bahasa gaul yang digunakan oleh masyarakat pemuda di Pematangsiantar. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Data diambil dari transkrip wawancara dan rekaman percakapan pemuda. Analisis difokuskan pada persepsi masyarakat pemuda berdasarkan teori Joanes dkk. (2014): persepsi pendengaran, persepsi visual, persepsi kinestetik-taktil, persepsi sosial, dan persepsi ekstrasensori. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari 50 ekspresi persepsi, dua dari lima jenis persepsi teridentifikasi. 48 ekspresi dikategorikan sebagai persepsi sosial, sedangkan sisanya 2 dikategorikan sebagai persepsi pendengaran. Selain itu, munculnya ekspresi pengisi seperti eee, umm, dan hmm selama proses wawancara menunjukkan strategi lisan tambahan untuk menjaga kelancaran percakapan, memberikan waktu untuk mengatur pikiran, menandai keraguan, dan juga berfungsi sebagai bentuk kebiasaan. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dari 20 ungkapan bahasa gaul, 17 di antaranya dikategorikan ke dalam tujuh jenis bahasa gaul berdasarkan teori Allan & Burridge (2006, sebagaimana dikutip dalam Mulyantini dkk., 2023) dan Hidayat dkk. (2020, sebagaimana dikutip dalam Hasanah 2022) termasuk imitatif, pemotongan, pencampuran, peminjaman, proses ganda, segar dan kreatif, dan sembrono, sedangkan 3 sisanya dikategorikan ke dalam bahasa gaul yang tidak terkategori. Kesimpulannya, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa bahasa gaul bukan hanya variasi

linguistik, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai alat sosial yang mendukung interaksi, ekspresi diri, dan pengelolaan percakapan informal.

Kata kunci: Persepsi, Bahasa Gaul, Komunitas Pemuda

1. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with diverse cultures and languages. Despite the fact that Indonesian language or Bahasa Indonesia is the national language, Yohantho (2025) in an official article published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbud Ristek), reports that there are more than 700 regional languages used in each region. In addition to the Indonesian language, people also use regional languages as their mother tongue. Where the mother tongue is the first language introduced and taught from early childhood by family members or those closest to the child. As emphasized by Ali (2016, as cited in Waningyun and Awalussangadah, 2025), mother tongue is the first language acquired by a person from the beginning of life through interactions with other members of speech community such as family and the surrounding society. Likewise, Nishanthi (2020) highlights that a child begins to understand their spoken by their mother communication, starting even before they are born and continuing throughout their life.

As time goes by, the use of everyday language has undergone many changes. It is no longer uniform, but varies depending on the situation, age, and other factors. However, these changes and developments are not surprising for the Indonesian people. This is because the Indonesian language has experienced various transformations since long ago, both in terms of spelling and vocabulary. For instance, in the past, people used the word book in Indonesia as "boekoe" but now "buku" but that term is no longer used due to language changes. These changes show that there is an adaptation that occurs to the needs of the times according to the speakers.

This is also what is happening today, where everything has become more advanced due to the flow of globalization and technological developments, including in the field of language. The use of language in daily life has undergone many changes. one form of such change is the emergence of slang. Slang is an informal language variant used by a group of people to communicate in a relaxed manner and is sometimes considered contemporary by mixing words from various regional languages, foreign languages, and unofficial abbreviations and acronyms. Furthermore, Mulyana (2008, as cited in Suleman and Islamiyah, 2018), explains that slang is a number of words or terms that have a special, unique, deviant or even contradictory meaning when used by people from certain subcultures.

The widespread use of slang among youth is not limited to just one region but can be found in many areas, including the city of Pematangsiantar. Youth in Pematangsiantar often use slang in their daily communication. For example, instead of saying "just message my number," they might say in Indonesia "japri aja" or in English "japri me," which is short for *jalur pribadi* (private message). Or perhaps more commonly nowadays, when someone is on their way to a place, they no longer say "wait, I'm on the way," but simply say "OTW".

Sometimes, such language can cause concern among parents, as not all of them understand these terms especially when their children use slang language within the family environment. This concern is not only felt by parents, but also relates to the mother tongue. This linguistic gap may lead to communication barriers between generations and raises concerns about the diminishing use of the mother tongue at home. This intergenerational communication gap is included in the study of sociolinguistics, which shows the relationship between language and society, especially how identity, age, and social groups influence the way a person speaks. In this context, the emergence of language variations such as slang is a form of linguistic adaptation influenced by social, cultural, and developmental factors. However, on the other hand, the widespread use of slang can shift the dominance of the mother tongue, especially if used continuously without being realized. Therefore, it is important to see to what extent the

use of this slang affects the maintenance of the mother tongue, especially among teenagers, so that there is no shift or even loss of the ability to speak the mother tongue slowly.

While several studies have discussed the use of slang among youth, and on social media, few have specifically examined slang in relation to the maintenance of mother tongue. A particularly relevant study related to this research was conducted by Manurung et al. (2025), who examined how regional languages function in maintaining cultural identity among university students. The findings of this study indicate that regional languages serve as symbols of identity and social cohesion among community members. However, the primary focus of this study was on the general functions and challenges faced by regional languages, rather than specifically on young people's perceptions of slang and its connection to efforts to preserve the mother tongue.

Additionally, the approach used in the study is relatively general and does not explore in depth the experiences of specific youth communities with distinct geographical and cultural backgrounds. For instance, few studies have explicitly examined the youth community in Pematangsiantar, which exhibits unique linguistic characteristics, a dynamic mix of Indonesian, regional dialects, and mother tongue used in everyday communication. In Pematangsiantar, the phenomenon of slang has evolved in a distinctive way, forming a local language variant that is strongly influenced by social and cultural factors specific to this area.

Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding how youth communities in certain regions perceive slang and the types of slang they use, as well as how this relates to their attitudes toward the maintenance of their mother tongue. This study aims to fill that gap by specifically examining young people's perceptions of slang and the various slang variations that develop among them. Additionally, the study will explore youths' attitudes toward efforts to maintain their mother tongue amid ongoing social, cultural, and technological changes. By understanding their perceptions and patterns of slang use, this research is expected to contribute new insights to the field of sociolinguistics, particularly concerning the maintenance of regional languages in the modern era, which is increasingly influenced by the use of informal language.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in investigating the perceptions of youth toward the use of slang language and how it affects the maintenance of the mother tongue. This research focuses on youth community aged 17 to 25 years in Pematangsiantar, as they are considered to have sufficient cognitive and language maturity to express their perceptions clearly. They are also in the stage of forming their identity, including language and cultural identity, which makes them relevant for exploring views on the use of slang and the maintenance of the mother tongue. Furthermore, this age group still belongs to the youth community, in line with the focus of the study. From an ethical perspective, participants in this age range are generally able to give consent independently, which helps to facilitate the research process.

2. Research Methods

A. Research Design

This study uses qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive qualitative as explained by Sugiyono (2019, as cited in Fiantika et al., 2022) is a method based on the principles of post-positivism philosophy. This method is used to investigate objects in their natural state where the researcher acts as the main tool. This method is used in the study because it aligns with the research objectives, which focus on the perception of the youth community regarding the use of slang in maintaining the mother tongue, as well as the types of slang used by the youth community in Pematangsiantar.

B. Research Location

This research will be conducted in the city of Pematangsiantar. Considering that the city of Pematangsiantar is relatively large, the research will be carried out in several selected areas. These areas were chosen based on strategic and practical considerations, particularly accessibility and the feasibility of conducted fieldwork. Within the selected areas, there are many places frequently visited by youth communities, including coffee shop, as well as ice cream and tea shop. The selected areas include districts of Siantar Timur and Siantar Barat. Both areas include, Jl. Sutomo No. 12, Proklamasi, Kec. Siantar Barat, Jl. Sutomo No. 38A, Proklamasi, Kec. Siantar Barat, Jl. Bandung No.10, Dwikora, Kec. Siantar Barat, Jl. Sutomo, Pardomuan, Kec. Siantar Timur, Jl. Pendeta Justin Sihombing No.194, Siopat Suhu, Kec. Siantar Timur.

C. Research Participants

The participants in this research are members of a youth community in Pematangsiantar aged between 17 to 25 years old. This age range is selected for several reasons. Individuals aged 17 to 25 are in a phase of active social interaction, both real life and social media, and tend to be more expressive. They are also mature enough for in-depth discussions, unlike younger teens. Meanwhile, those over 25 often shift focus to work or family and become more selective in language use. Therefore, the 17–25 age group is considered the most appropriate for exploring perceptions and the use of slang in relation to mother tongue maintenance. Participants are selected based on purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique as highlighted by Nasution (2023,p.80), is also known as judgment sampling, where the sample is selected based on the researcher's criteria. This study involves a total of 21 participants who are organized according to the needs of the research. Of these, 10 participants are chosen to be interviewed in order to provide in-depth insights regarding the perceptions of youth on slang language and its relation to mother tongue maintenance. Meanwhile, the other participants serve to strengthen the interview findings by providing evidence of language use, which is then categorized into different types of slang language relevant to the objectives of the study.

D. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedures in this research are conducted in the following stages:

1. Preparation

The researcher develops interview questions and closed-ended questionnaires relevant to the study. The researcher prepares recording devices, questionnaire forms, and field notes to support data collection.

2. Observation Implementation

Observing interactions and slang language use in social situations within the youth community. Taking field notes on the context, situations, and examples of slang and mother tongue use.

3. Interview Implementation

The researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with selected participants at predetermined locations within the youth community of Pematang Siantar. Each interview lasts approximately 30–45 minutes. The researcher records the interviews with participants' consent for transcription purposes.

4. Questionnaires Distribution and Completion

The researcher distributes questionnaires to the same participants or additional representatives of the youth community in Pematangsiantar. The researcher provides brief explanations of the questionnaire's purpose and instructions for completion. The researcher collects completed questionnaires for analysis.

5. Documentation Collection

The researcher gathers supporting documents such as recorded conversations, social media posts from the community, or writings related to slang and mother tongue usage.

6. Data Organization

The researcher organizes interview transcripts, questionnaires, observation notes, and documents for further analysis. The researcher conducts initial transcription and coding of the data.

E. Technique of Analysis Data

In the view of Bogdan (as cited in Nasution, 2023), data analysis in qualitative research is the process of systematically searching for and compiling data obtained from interviews, notes, fieldwork, and other materials so that it is easier to understand and the findings can be communicated to others. Equally important, Sugiyono (2018, as cited in Nasution, 2023) states that qualitative data analysis techniques are inductive, where analysis is based on the data obtained, which is then developed into certain patterns of relationships or hypotheses. Based on these hypotheses, data is repeatedly sought until it can be concluded whether the hypotheses can be accepted or rejected.

Based on this explanation, inductive data analysis involves processing, organising, and interpreting data collected from the field to answer research questions and achieve predetermined objectives. This study employs the Miles and Huberman data analysis model. In this model, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that there are four stages in analysis data, data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, but there are three main stages in qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. Data Reduction

Data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation is selected, reduced, and focused according to research needs. This stage involves organising data based on the primary research focus related to young people's views on slang, as well as the use of slang related to the preservation of the mother tongue.

2. Data Display

After the data is reduced, the next stage is data presentation. In presenting the data, it is organised in a descriptive narrative format and a neat format such as tables to clarify understanding. This presentation aims to make the relationships between data components clearly visible. For example, the relationship between the use of slang and the sustainability of the mother tongue among young people.

3. Drawing Conclusions/Verification

The third step is drawing conclusions. At this stage, initial conclusions are drawn based on the results obtained from the field, which are then verified by comparing them again with information from observations, interviews, and documentation. This process is carried out continuously to ensure the validity of the data and confirm that the conclusions reached are scientifically sound. Through this step, researchers can describe and understand in greater depth the views of the youth community regarding the use of slang language in relation to the attitudes and awareness of young people towards the preservation of the mother tongue in Pematangsiantar.

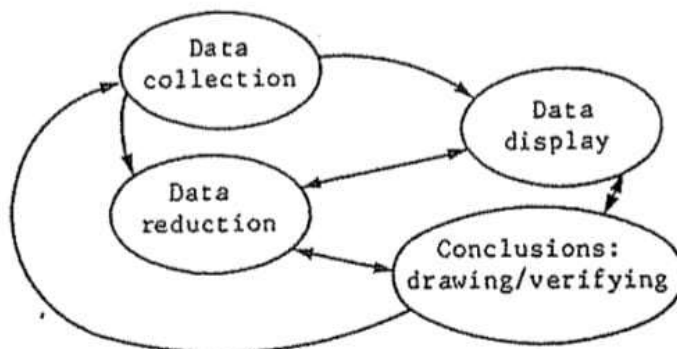


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman (1994)

3. Results

To answer research questions, it can be seen from the data analysis conducted by the researcher on the youth community in Pematangsiantar. The researcher divided the analysis into two parts based on the research problems. The first question, "what are the perceptions of youth community found on the use of slang language on the maintenance of mother tongue in Pematangsiantar?" Based on the data obtained from interviews with eight informants, there were 50 expressions that indicated perceptions. These perceptions characterised by social perceptions and auditory perceptions based on the theory of Joanes et al. (2014). In addition, there were additional findings that were not included in the main focus of the study, which was the emergence of fillers when informants answered the questions asked by the researcher in the interviews. Then, regarding the second question, "what are the types of slang used by the youth community in Pematangsiantar?" Based on the analysis of the types of slang used by youth community through recorded conversations, 20 expressions were found that indicated the use of slang. 17 of these were categorised based on the theories of Allan & Burrige (2006, as cited in Mulyantini et al., 2023) and Hidayat et al. (2020, as cited in Hasanah, 2022), while 3 of those were not fully categorised based on the theories mentioned.. The following is a further explanation.

1. Youth Perceptions on the Use of Slang Language

Youth perceptions of slang are mainly related to social perceptions. Respondents tended to share their views on slang and their mother tongue based on observations made through social interactions and situations. The data also revealed several points of focus in these social perceptions, includes: , the function of language in social interaction, changes to the social context, language strategies in interaction, the impact of language in social interaction, the role of language in social interaction, and language maintenance in social interaction.

Furthermore, the analysis also revealed the occurrence of filler expressions used by the informants during the interviews. The natural use of fillers by the informants indicates a pause while thinking of the next sentence, as well as being a habit.

2. Types of Slang Used by the Youth Community in Pematangsiantar

This study identified 20 slang expressions used by youth in their interactions. These expressions were categorised into eight types of slang. The slang expressions largely align with existing theoretical classifications, as follows: imitative, clipping, blending, borrowing, multiple process, fresh and creative, and flippant. The rest are expressions that do not fully comply with existing theoretical categories.

4. Discussion

In this section, the researchers describe on the previously findings presented, which regarding two research questions: first, the perceptions of youth community regarding the use of slang on the maintenance of mother tongue in Pematangsiantar; and second, the types of slang used by the youth community in Pematangsiantar. Based on these two aspects, youth perceptions were analysed using the theory proposed by Joanes et al. (2014) and slang language by Allan & Burrige (2006, as cited in Mulyantini et al., 2023) and Hidayat et al. (2020, as cited in Hasanah, 2022). Of the five types of perception identified by Joanes, the findings revealed that out of 50 perceptions, 48 were social perception and 2 were auditory perceptions. This indicates that youth perceive slang through social interaction and social situations, rather than solely based on how it sounds.

Although previous studies, such as those by Hasanah (2022), Tama (2019), and Fuad Arsyad (2023), did not specifically examine youth perceptions, their findings regarding the types, functions, and use of slang provide a relevant context. For example by Hasanah (2022) found that students use slang to express emotions, maintain solidarity, and create relaxed, informal communication, which aligns with the social aspects of perception identified in this study.

Furthermore, the social perceptions in this study are reflected through several focuses, including the role of language, the function of language, language strategies, changes in social context, the impact of language, and language maintenance. These findings support the research by Tama (2019), who reported that adolescents use slang to express identity and strengthen relationships with peers, indicating that the use of slang is strongly influenced by social motivation.

Another interesting finding is the emergence of filler expressions in the respondents' speech, such as 'umm', 'hmm', and 'eee'. These expressions occur naturally and serve to maintain the flow of conversation, give the speaker time to organise their thoughts, and signal uncertainty in informal communication, even the habitual during communication. Previous research has not specifically highlighted filler expressions, so this finding provides new insights into how youth manage verbal interactions in informal contexts.

Regarding the types of slang, this study identified 20 slang expressions classified into eight types based on word-formation processes, such as imitative, clipping, blending, borrowing, multiple process, fresh and creative, flippant and uncategorized slang language. Most of these types align with the theoretical classification used in this study. These findings are consistent with those of Hasanah (2022) and Arsyad (2023), who also found that slang expressions are formed through specific linguistic processes and serve social functions, such as expressing emotions, fostering solidarity, and facilitating informal communication.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that youth community have different perceptions toward the use of slang language in daily communication. Most youth showed a social perception of slang, evaluating it according to its role and function in social interactions rather than merely its sound or auditory aspects which proposed the perception theory by Joanes et al. (2014). Out of 50 perception expressions analyzed, 48 were categorized as social perceptions, while only 2 were auditory perceptions. This indicates that slang is understood as a tool to express ideas, maintain social relationships, and adapt to informal communication contexts.

In addition, the emergence of filler expressions such as umm, hmm, and eee indicates additional oral strategies to maintain the flow of conversation, provide time to organize thoughts, and mark hesitation, which constitutes a new contribution of this study since previous studies rarely addressed the role of fillers in informal youth communication.

The study identified 20 slang expressions, classified into eight types based on word formation processes by Allan & Burrige (2006, as cited in Mulyantini et al., 2023) and Hidayat et al. (2020, as cited in Hasanah, 2022), including imitative, clipping, blending, borrowing, multiple process, fresh and creative, and flippancy, also uncategorized slang language. These expressions were used by youth to express emotions, strengthen group solidarity, and facilitate informal communication.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that slang is not merely a linguistic variation but also serves as a social tool that supports interaction, self-expression, and the management of informal conversations. Social perception, slang types, and filler strategies are interrelated in youth communication, showing that slang enables youths to express themselves, build solidarity, and manage interactions effectively. This study offers new insights for sociolinguistic research, particularly in understanding perceptions, slang usage, and oral communication strategies in everyday informal interactions.

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