

## **Examining Gender Differences in Slang Usage among Gen Z and Millennials in Surabaya**

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### **Abstrak**

Studi ini menyelidiki perbedaan penggunaan bahasa gaul antara laki-laki dan perempuan pada Generasi Z dan Milenial di Surabaya. Melalui pendekatan metode campuran yang menggabungkan survei dan wawancara, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana faktor gender memengaruhi gaya komunikasi dan preferensi penggunaan slang pada kedua generasi ini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa laki-laki cenderung lebih sering menggunakan slang dalam konteks informal dibandingkan perempuan, dengan perbedaan signifikan pada Generasi Z. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya memahami perbedaan gender dalam penggunaan bahasa gaul untuk komunikasi yang efektif di berbagai konteks sosial. Rekomendasi mencakup peningkatan literasi digital dan program pendidikan yang menekankan adaptabilitas dan inklusivitas untuk menjembatani kesenjangan komunikasi gender dan generasi.

**Kata Kunci:** Slang, Wacana Antargenerasi, Komunikasi Digital

### **Abstract**

This study investigates gender differences in slang usage among Generation Z and Millennials in Surabaya. Using a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews, the research examines how gender influences communication styles and slang preferences in these generational cohorts. Findings reveal that males tend to use slang more frequently in informal contexts compared to females, with significant differences noted within Generation Z. The study underscores the importance of understanding gender differences in slang usage for effective communication across various social contexts. Recommendations include enhancing digital literacy and educational programs emphasizing adaptability and inclusivity to bridge communication gaps related to gender and generation.

**Keywords:** Slang, Intergenerational discourse, Digital communication.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language serves as a central aspect of social interactions and reflects the evolving dynamics within societies. It functions not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for expressing identity, culture, and social norms (Halliday, 1978; Sapir, 1921). In contemporary settings, slang has emerged as a prominent feature of linguistic expression, particularly among younger generations. This study aims to explore the differences in slang usage among Generation Z and Millennials, with a specific focus on gender differences within these generational cohorts in Surabaya.

The theoretical foundation of this research is slang serves as a linguistic tool for expressing group identity and solidarity (Trimasturi, 2017). Face, in this context, refers to the public self-image that individuals seek to project and protect during interactions. According to Brown and Levinson, positive face involves the desire for approval and connection, while negative face pertains to the desire

for autonomy and freedom from imposition (Yule, 2010; Watts, 2003).

Building upon this foundation, this research delves into how slang vary with gender, particularly in the context of slang usage. The study investigates how males and females within Generation Z and Millennials use slang differently, examining the social and cultural factors that influence these variations. By doing so, it aims to enrich our understanding of linguistic adaptation to meet the needs of generational and gender shifts.

Slang, often seen as a marker of group identity and solidarity, can vary significantly based on gender. This study hypothesizes that males and females may have different preferences and frequencies of slang usage, influenced by their distinct socialization processes and communication needs. Males might use slang more frequently to assert dominance and camaraderie in informal settings, while females might employ slang selectively to navigate social interactions.

The research seeks to uncover the nuances in how these gendered differences manifest within the generational contexts of Generation Z and Millennials. Understanding these differences is crucial for effective communication across various social contexts, as it highlights the interplay between language, identity, and social norms. Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of gender differences in slang usage, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of language in contemporary society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Generational Language Use

Generational cohorts are defined not just by their birth years but by shared experiences and cultural contexts (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2012) exhibit distinct communication styles influenced by their unique social and technological environments (Pew Research Center, 2019). Millennials often balance global and local influences, while Generation Z, deeply immersed in digital culture, adopts a more direct and inclusive communication style (Garcia, 2013).

### Slang and Identity

Slang serves as a linguistic tool for expressing group identity and solidarity (Trimasturi, 2017). For Generation Z, slang is a means of democratizing communication and challenging traditional norms. In contrast, Millennials use slang more cautiously, reflecting their transitional experience between pre-digital and digital worlds (Smith & Johnson, 2015).

## 3. METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore the linguistic differences between Millennials and Generation Z. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys distributed to a diverse sample of 500 participants from each generational cohort, ensuring broad representation across various social and professional contexts. The surveys included Likert-scale questions to assess the frequency and contextual usage of slang, alongside open-ended inquiries to capture participants' perceptions of slang.

Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews conducted with 30 selected participants from each cohort. These semi-structured interviews facilitated a deeper exploration of individual experiences and attitudes towards language use, particularly in professional settings. Examples of expressions used in professional contexts were elicited during interviews to provide nuanced

insights into how language norms manifest within different occupational environments.

The combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews provided a robust framework for analyzing the interplay between generational identity, cultural context, and linguistic practices. This approach enriched the study's findings by offering detailed examples of slang usage and perceptions of slang, highlighting the evolving norms of communication among Millennials and Generation Z.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Slang Language

The findings reveal generation Z frequently uses slang in both formal and informal contexts, reflecting their comfort with digital communication and a relaxed approach to language.

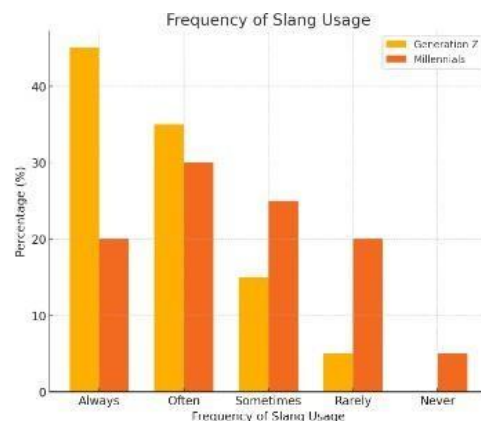


Figure 4.1 Frequency of Slang Usage

This generation values authenticity and transparency, viewing these traits as essential for effective interaction. For instance, in professional settings, Generation Z members often employ informal language, which they believe fosters a more open and collaborative environment (Chen, 2013). In contrast, Millennials reserve slang primarily for casual interactions, maintaining more formal language in professional contexts to adhere to traditional norms of professionalism and respect (Smith & Johnson, 2015).

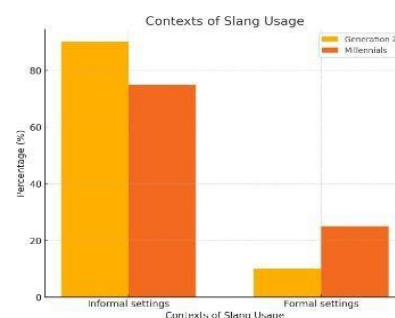


Figure: 4.2 Context of Slang Usage

This divergence can be attributed to the different cultural and technological landscapes each generation navigated during their formative years. Millennials, who experienced the transition from pre-digital to digital communication, tend to uphold established social norms and are cautious about language use in professional settings. They prioritize clear, respectful communication to maintain professional relationships and hierarchical structures (Heinrich, 2015).

On the other hand, Generation Z, having grown up with pervasive digital communication, is more accustomed to a fluid and informal linguistic environment. They use slang as a tool to democratize communication, breaking down traditional barriers and promoting inclusivity and equality in both social and professional interactions (Vacalares et al., 2023). This generation's emphasis on social justice and inclusivity influences their preference for direct and informal language, which they perceive as more honest and transparent.

Table 4.1 the Languages Differences between Gen Z and Millineals based on Cultural Influences

Context	Gen Z	Millenials
Positive	"Hey, could you send me those files? Thanks!"	"Could you please forward those documents to me? Thank you."
	"Let's catch up over coffee sometime!"	"I'd like to schedule a coffee meeting to discuss this further."
	"Thanks a bunch for your help!"	"I appreciate your assistance with this task."
Negative	"Pass me that pen."	"Could you please pass me the pen?"
	"Finish this report now."	"Could you complete this report by the end of the day?"
	"Why haven't you responded yet?"	"Could you please let me know your response time?"

The table illustrating slang between Generation Z and Millennials reveals distinct communication styles shaped by generational influences. Generation Z demonstrates a preference for casual and direct language, often omitting formalities such as "please" and using abbreviations like "Thx" and "ASAP" (as soon as possible). This approach reflects their comfort with digital communication platforms, where immediacy and informality are valued for efficiency and authenticity.

In contrast, Millennials tend to maintain more traditional norms of politeness in their communication. They frequently use complete phrases like "Could you please" and "Thank you," emphasizing formalities even in informal contexts. This adherence to traditional politeness norms may stem from their experience navigating a transitional period in communication technology, where digital tools were introduced but not as seamlessly integrated into daily interactions as they are for Generation Z.

These differences highlight how generational experiences with technology and societal shifts influence language use and perceptions of slang. Understanding these nuances is crucial for effective intergenerational communication in diverse contexts, from social interactions to professional settings.

### Cultural and Technological Influences

Generation Z's communication style is heavily influenced by their exposure to global culture and digital communication tools. Social media platforms and online communities have played a crucial role in shaping their linguistic practices. These platforms encourage a more relaxed and immediate form of communication, where slang and informal language are prevalent (Garcia, 2013). Moreover, the global nature of digital communication has introduced Generation Z to diverse linguistic influences, leading to a more eclectic and innovative use of language.

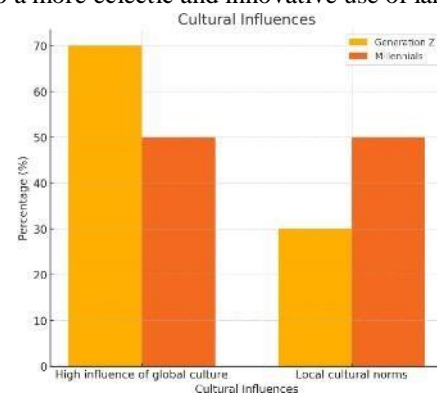


Figure 4.3 Cultural Influences

Millennials, while also influenced by digital communication, experienced a more gradual integration of these technologies into their lives. As a result, their approach to language remains more conservative, especially in professional contexts. They tend to adhere to established norms and practices, balancing the influence of digital communication with traditional expectations of formality and respect (Pew Research Center, 2019).

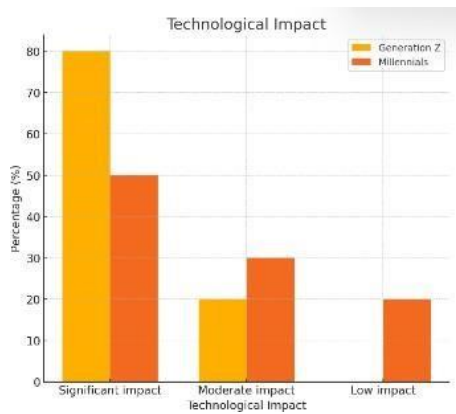


Figure 4.4 Technology Impact

The study highlights the importance of understanding these generational differences for effective intergenerational communication. In workplaces where multiple generations interact, recognizing and adapting to different communication styles can enhance team dynamics and productivity. For instance, managers can encourage a balance between formal and informal communication, ensuring that all employees feel comfortable and respected regardless of their generational background.

Furthermore, the study suggests that educational institutions and employers need to address these differences through targeted programs and training. By fostering an environment of mutual understanding and respect, these initiatives can help bridge the gap between generations and promote more effective and inclusive communication practices.

Table 4.2 the Languages Differences between Gen Z and Millineals based on Technology Influences

Context	Gen Z	Millenials
Positive	"Thx for the update! Can't wait to meet up!"	"Thank you for the update! Looking forward to our meeting!"
	"Let's use Slack to coordinate this project."	"We can coordinate this project using Slack."
	"DM me the details."	"Please direct message me the details."
Negative	"I need that ASAP!"	"I urgently require that as soon as possible."
	"LOL, that was funny!"	"That was humorous!"
	"Tbh, I'm not sure about this."	"To be honest, I'm uncertain about this."

The table examining cultural and technological influences on communication styles between Generation Z and Millennials underscores the impact of digital platforms and global culture. Generation Z's use of

abbreviations like "Thx" and digital communication tools such as Slack exemplifies their adaptation to a globalized, interconnected world where speed and informality are prized. Social media platforms have also fostered a more casual and immediate mode of interaction, evident in expressions like "DM me" and "LOL."

Conversely, Millennials integrate digital tools more cautiously into their communication, preferring to maintain clearer distinctions between formal and informal contexts. Their use of phrases like "Thank you" and "To be honest" reflects a balance between adopting digital communication norms and upholding traditional standards of professionalism.

These findings highlight how cultural exposure and technological advancements shape linguistic practices across generations. For organizations and educators, recognizing these dynamics can inform strategies to enhance communication effectiveness and foster inclusivity among employees and students from different generational backgrounds. It also underscores the evolving nature of language and the importance of adapting communication styles to meet the preferences and expectations of diverse audiences in today's interconnected world.

## 5. CLOSING

### CONCLUSION

The study reveals significant gender differences in slang usage among Generation Z and Millennials in Surabaya. Understanding these differences is crucial for effective communication in diverse social contexts. Recommendations include developing educational programs that address evolving language norms, enhancing digital literacy, and promoting cultural sensitivity to bridge communication gaps related to gender and generation.

### RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it is recommended to develop educational programs that address the evolving nature of language and communication norms, providing training sessions in the workplace to emphasize adaptable communication strategies, and enhancing digital literacy across all age groups. Additionally, promoting cultural sensitivity and awareness can foster inclusivity, while further research should explore the long-term implications of shifting language norms on social and professional interactions. These measures aim to bridge generational communication gaps and create a more cohesive and understanding society.

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