

The dynamics of Indonesian language adaptation in virtual communication among Generation Z using acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing

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Abstract

The primary objectives of this research were to identify the dominant patterns of acronyms and abbreviations, analyze the linguistic and social factors underlying their usage, and evaluate the impact of this phenomenon on the effectiveness, clarity, and communication norms among Generation Z in Bali. The research employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, involving 450 respondents aged 13-28 years. The research findings indicated a high prevalence of acronyms and abbreviations in Gen Z's communication. The ten most dominant acronyms, such as "baper" (16.1%), "pansos" (12.6%), and "bucin" (11.2%), not only serve an efficiency function but also possess rich pragmatic implications. Similarly, abbreviations like "yg" (18.7%), "udah" (16.3%), and "ga" (15.1%) are frequently used, reflecting a strong preference for typing efficiency. Analysis also revealed that code-mixing occurred in 68.3% of the conversations examined, with lexical insertion (75.2%) being the most dominant type. The primary motivations behind these linguistic adaptations include a strong drive for communicative efficiency (saving typing time), the need to construct identity and foster in-group affiliation, and aspirations towards modernity and globalization.

Keywords

Abbreviations, acronyms, code-mixing, Generation Z, virtual communication

Article History

Received 01 June 2025

Accepted 13 September 2025

How to Cite

Wirahyuni, K., Putrayasa, I. B., Paramarta, K., Suandi, N., & Rasna, W. (2025). The dynamics of Indonesian language adaptation in virtual communication among Generation Z using acronyms, abbreviations, code-mixing. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE |*, 9(2), 1254-1272. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i02.48326>

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Introduction

Language is never static; it constantly evolves in response to societal, cultural, and technological changes (Satibaldieva, 2024). In the contemporary digital era, one of the most potent forces reshaping language is the proliferation of online communication. Social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online communities have transformed how individuals, particularly younger generations, use language daily. The communicative environment of digital platforms is characterized by speed, brevity, informality, and multimodality, where images, emojis, and text intermingle to create new forms of meaning. Within this environment, Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012—stands out as the first cohort of true digital natives (Reid et al., 2023). Unlike previous generations, their linguistic development has been inseparable from technology, the internet, and social media. As a result, their communicative practices provide a unique window into how language adapts and innovates in virtual spaces.

In Indonesia, linguistic adaptation in digital communication has become highly visible. The Indonesian language, functioning both as a tool of everyday communication and a symbol of national identity, has been creatively reshaped by Generation Z (Jayaputri & Aziz, 2024). Among the most salient features of this adaptation are the widespread use of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing. Acronyms such as "baper" (bawa perasaan), "pansos" (panjat sosial), and "bucin" (budak cinta) have moved far beyond their original denotative meanings and become loaded with pragmatic and social functions. These expressions compress complex emotional or social judgments into brief, catchy forms easily circulated in online conversations. Abbreviations such as "yg" (yang), "udah" (sudah), and "ga" (tidak) reflect a strong preference for linguistic economy, enabling users to save time and effort in fast-paced digital exchanges. At the same time, code-mixing between Indonesian and English has become almost ubiquitous, with phrases like "lagi scroll TikTok" or "It was literally so random" reflecting the globalized cultural environment in which Indonesian youth participate. These practices serve communicative efficiency and reflect deeper social motivations, including identity construction, creativity, and aspirations toward modernity.

Globally, scholars have long been interested in how digital communication transforms language. In English-speaking contexts, researchers have documented the rise of internet slang, emoticons, clipped forms, and hybrid expressions that reflect the distinct culture of online spaces. Abbreviations such as "LOL" (laugh out loud), "BRB" (be right back), or "OMG" (oh my God) are not simply tools for speed but carry social connotations of informality, humor, or solidarity. Similarly, code-mixing has been associated with the influence of English as a global lingua franca and with identity performances that align speakers with internationalized cultural communities (Rahman et al., 2025). These studies demonstrate that online language is not deficient or careless but creative, adaptive, and responsive to the social needs of its users. However, much of this research focuses on Western languages and contexts, particularly English. Far less attention has been given to how non-Western languages are reshaped in digital environments, even though millions of young people worldwide engage in linguistic innovations daily.

Indonesia offers a particularly compelling case for examining this phenomenon. As the national language, Indonesian has a unique sociolinguistic role: it unifies a highly diverse nation composed of hundreds of local languages and ethnic groups (Zein, 2020). While standard

Indonesian is promoted in education, governance, and media, the language is constantly influenced by local dialects, youth slang, and global forces. In digital spaces, these influences converge and accelerate, producing local and global hybrid linguistic forms simultaneously (Windle & Ferreira, 2019). Generation Z, simultaneously rooted in Indonesian culture and deeply embedded in global internet culture, navigates multiple linguistic repertoires daily. They can switch seamlessly between standard Indonesian, colloquial slang, and English expressions depending on the communicative context.

This dynamic is vividly illustrated by the emergence of terms such as “bucin,” which condenses the complex idea of being “enslaved by love” into a short, humorous label that can tease friends or critique behaviors. Similarly, Gabut succinctly captures a feeling of boredom and idleness that resonates strongly with digital natives accustomed to constant online stimulation. On the other hand, the integration of English expressions such as “literally,” “vibes,” or “random” into Indonesian sentences illustrates the practical filling of lexical gaps and an orientation toward modernity and cosmopolitan identity. These terms carry prestige, indexing familiarity with global culture and media, and thus serve both communicative and symbolic functions.

Despite the visibility of these phenomena in everyday life, scholarly attention to Indonesian language adaptation in digital spaces remains limited. Existing studies in Indonesia have often concentrated on isolated aspects, such as either acronyms or code-mixing, without offering an integrated analysis of how these elements interact in shaping new communication practices. Furthermore, much of the research has focused on Millennials or older cohorts, whose language practices differ from those of Generation Z. As true digital natives, Generation Z demonstrates distinctive linguistic behaviors that warrant focused and comprehensive research. In addition, earlier research has often relied primarily on qualitative approaches, such as analyzing examples of slang or borrowed words. While these approaches provide rich insights, they lack the quantitative dimension to measure prevalence, frequency, and distribution across different platforms. Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that employs a mixed-methods approach, combining statistical analysis with qualitative exploration, to capture the phenomenon's breadth and depth.

The urgency of this research lies in documenting how Generation Z communicates and understanding what their language practices reveal about broader cultural and linguistic shifts in Indonesia. Language is a mirror of identity and society. When Indonesian youth choose to say “baper” instead of “bawa perasaan” or to write “yg” instead of “yang,” they are not only economizing effort but also participating in a shared culture of meaning-making. When they insert English words into Indonesian sentences, they engage with globalization, express cosmopolitan identities, and sign membership in transnational communities. These practices highlight the flexibility of language as well as its role in negotiating identity, belonging, and modernity.

The significance of examining these dynamics extends beyond linguistics. For educators, the findings can shed light on the gap between formal language instruction and the actual linguistic practices of students. For policymakers and cultural leaders, understanding these patterns is crucial in developing language policies that acknowledge the realities of youth communication while promoting the vitality of Indonesian as a national language. For communication practitioners, from marketers to public servants, the insights can help craft messages that resonate with younger audiences. Theoretically, the research contributes to

digital sociolinguistics by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western context, enriching global discussions on how languages evolve in virtual environments.

This research, therefore, aims to explore the dynamics of Indonesian language adaptation in virtual communication among Generation Z, focusing on acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing. It seeks to identify the dominant usage patterns, uncover the social and linguistic motivations behind these practices, and assess their implications for communication effectiveness and norms. By adopting a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, this research combines the statistical power of quantitative analysis with the depth of qualitative exploration. It offers a comprehensive account of how Indonesian youth are reshaping their language in the digital age. Ultimately, the investigation contributes not only to understanding the linguistic behavior of Generation Z but also to mapping the trajectory of Indonesian as it adapts, innovates, and thrives in an increasingly digital and globalized world.

Methodology

This research used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. This design involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by collecting and analyzing qualitative data to help explain or deepen the quantitative findings (Khabibullah & Sholahuddin, 2024). This design operationally involved two main phases, namely the quantitative phase (initial exploration): quantitative data collection and analysis are carried out first to identify general patterns or trends regarding the adaptation of Indonesian in virtual communication among Generation Z and the qualitative phase (explanation and deepening): based on the quantitative findings, qualitative data collection and analysis were carried out to provide a more profound explanation, context, and understanding of "why" and "how" the pattern emerged. The results of the quantitative phase formed the basis for formulating questions in the qualitative data collection, ensuring the relationship between the two types of data.

The research subjects were Generation Z members who actively use virtual communication platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook; instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Line; online forums; or gaming platforms with communication features). The subjects were members of Generation Z who actively used virtual communication platforms. Operationally, the criteria for the subjects of this research were as follows. First, age range: individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (according to the general definition of Generation Z). Second, frequency of use: using the platform at least four times weekly for personal or group communication purposes. Third, communication skills: willing and able to provide information regarding their language adaptation habits. Finally, the location is domiciled in the Bali region to facilitate observation and interviews. The next step involves determining the subjects. In the quantitative phase, subjects were recruited by distributing online questionnaires on social media platforms widely used by Generation Z. The questionnaire included screening questions to ensure the subject criteria were met. The quantitative questionnaire respondents selected 15-20 subjects for qualitative interviews based on the variation in language adaptation patterns found in the quantitative data (e.g., dominant acronym users, mixed language users, etc.) and their willingness to participate further.

The object of this research was the phenomenon of Indonesian language adaptation in virtual communication among Generation Z, which specifically included the use of acronyms (baper, pansos), the use of abbreviations (yg, a.k.a.), and the use of mixed language ("Aku lagi

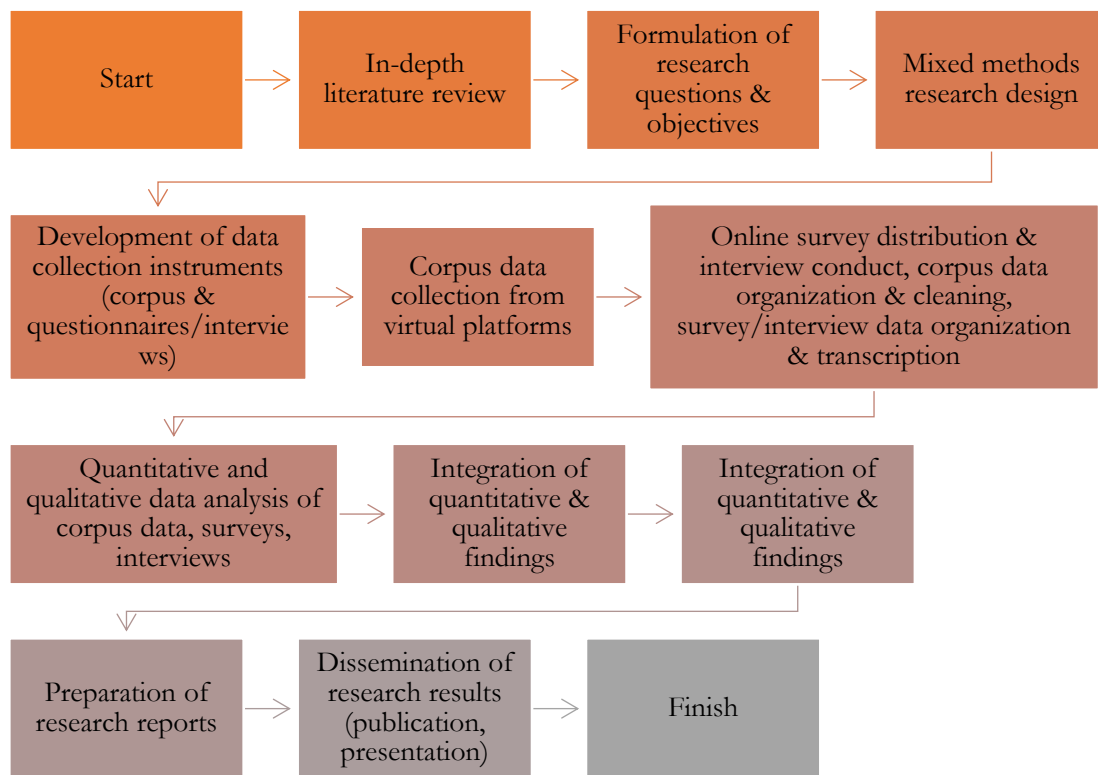
scroll TikTok," "Dia literally tidak percaya"). Research Scope: This research was limited to the forms of Indonesian language adaptation mentioned above, which occurred in text and chat communication on virtual platforms, and did not include more complex syntactic, morphological, or phonological changes of Indonesian (Sutiona et al., 2025). The research did not analyze the impact of this language adaptation on respondents' formal language skills but instead focused on identifying and describing the adaptation patterns.

The instruments used in this research for quantitative data were online survey platforms (Google Forms, Qualtrics). The questionnaire contained short closed-ended (multiple-choice, Likert-type) and open-ended questions to measure frequency of use, type of language adaptation, and respondents' initial perceptions. The instruments for qualitative data were, first, a semi-structured interview guide that lists key topics and questions to be asked of respondents. Second, a voice recorder recorded interviews to facilitate transcription and ensure data accuracy. Third, field notes were used during observations and interviews to record non-verbal observations, important context, and the researcher's initial impressions. Fourth, the observation protocol contained guidelines regarding specific aspects to be observed during the observation (e.g., platform type, conversation context, frequency of occurrence of specific language adaptations, and other users' responses). Fifth, a screenshot tool took screenshots of conversations or posts from virtual communication platforms (with the subject's permission or from public sources) to be analyzed as documents/content. Sixth, the content analysis guide contained operational definitions of each category of language adaptation (acronyms, abbreviations, and mixed language) along with examples to facilitate identification during document/content analysis. Seventh, a coding sheet is a table or spreadsheet used to record and organize data found from the content analysis (e.g., type of language adaptation, frequency, context of use, platform).

Data analyses were conducted in stages and integrated. Quantitative data analysis: (a) descriptive statistics: used to describe the characteristics of the sample and general patterns of language adaptation use. This technique includes calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to identify how often and what types of language adaptations are most dominantly used by Generation Z. (b) Inferential statistics: T-tests, ANOVA, and correlations can be used to test initial hypotheses or see relationships between particular variables (e.g., is there a difference in the use of language adaptations between TikTok and WhatsApp users). The results of this analysis informed more specific questions for the qualitative phase.

Qualitative Data Analysis (Phase 2): (a) Transcription: All interview recordings were transcribed into full text. (b) Coding: Text data from interviews, observations, and document/content analysis were broken down into smaller units of meaning and coded. These steps can be open coding (identifying initial concepts), axial coding (connecting categories), and selective coding (forming core narratives). (c) Theme Identification: Based on the codes created, major themes or categories that emerge from the data were identified. For example, themes regarding "communication efficiency," "group identity," or "influence of influencers." (d) Interpretation: The researcher analyzed and interpreted the meanings of the identified themes, connecting them to the sociocultural context of Generation Z and relevant theories. (e) Data Triangulation: The process of verifying findings by comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, document/content analysis) to increase the validity and reliability of the research results. If inconsistencies are found, rechecking or further exploration is conducted. The figure in this research is as follows.

Figure 2. Research flow chart



This research diagram consists of the research flow, expected outcomes at each stage, and the achievement of research targets.

Findings

The mixed methods approach presents the research findings in two main subsections: quantitative findings and in-depth qualitative exploration. Integrating these two data types aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the patterns, motivations, and implications of language adaptation. Initial analysis of quantitative data from an online survey involving 450 Generation Z respondents (aged 13-28) who actively use virtual communication platforms in Bali revealed a significant prevalence of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing. These patterns varied depending on the type of language adaptation and the platform used.

Analysis of quantitative data obtained through an online survey involving 9 Generation Z respondents in Bali revealed significant and specific usage patterns related to acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing. The frequency of use of these elements varied but showed clear trends in online interactions.

The prevalence of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym identification was conducted on a text corpus collected from WhatsApp conversations, Instagram comments, and Twitter tweets. A total of 78 unique acronyms were identified, with 10 showing the highest frequency of use.

Table 1. *The ten most dominant acronyms in Generation Z's virtual communication*

No	Acronym	Original form (denotative meaning)	Absolute frequency	Cumulative proportion (%)	Dominant pragmatic function (social implications)	Examples of usage in context
1.	<i>Baper</i>	<i>Bawa Perasaan</i>	1256	16.1%	Expressions of oversensitivity, mild mocking, or empathy. Implications: Formation of informal emotional norms.	"Kamu terlalu baper mungkin.." (In Bahasa) "You are probably too sensitive..." (In English) (Expressing sensitivity)
2.	<i>Pansos</i>	<i>Panjat Sosial</i>	987	12.6%	Describes attention-seeking/popularity-seeking behavior for personal gain. Implication: veiled social criticism.	"Ah, dia cuma numpang pansos doang biar <i>followers</i> -nya banyak." (In Bahasa) "Ah, he is just using social media to gain many followers." (In English)
3.	<i>Bucin</i>	<i>Budak Cinta</i>	873	11.2%	Excessive expression of affection for a partner. Implications: Loss of self-identity, unhealthy emotional	"Kamu tuh bucin banget sih jadi orang." (In Bahasa) "You are really a bucin

					dependence, neglect of responsibilities and social relationships.	person." (In English)
4.	<i>Gabut</i>	<i>Galau Butuh Hiburan</i>	712	9.1%	Depicts boredom or a lack of activity. Implication: A marker of digital natives' restlessness.	"Lagi gabut banget minggu-minggu ini." (In Bahasa) "I have been really bored these past few weeks." (In English)
5.	<i>Mager</i>	<i>Malas Gerak</i>	658	8.4%	The synonym for 'mager' is slightly less intense. Implication: A linguistic variation for the intensity of laziness.	"Besok aja ya jalannya. Aku mager nih," (In Bahasa) "Let's go tomorrow. I am feeling lazy." (In English)
6.	<i>Kepo</i>	<i>Knowing Every Particular Object</i>	599	7.7%	Describes excessive curiosity about other people's affairs. Implication: Informal privacy boundaries in digital spaces.	"Kamu kepo banget deh, nanti aku <i>spill</i> dikit-dikit." (In Bahasa) "You are so nosy, I will spill the beans." (In English)
7.	<i>Gemoy</i>	<i>Gemas Lucu (kombinasi)</i>	450	5.8%	An expression of intense affection for something cute/adorable. Implication: Formation of an affective lexicon.	"Cowok itu gemoy banget ga sih..!" (In Bahasa) "Is that guy really cute, isn't he...?" (In English)

8.	<i>Santuy</i>	<i>Santai (dengan penekanan)</i>	388	5.0%	Depicts a calm, unhurried, or relaxed attitude. Implication: Adapting a digital "slow living" mentality.	"Yaelah, santuy aja, jangan terlalu <i>overthinking</i> ." (In Bahasa) "Oh, just relax, do not overthink it." In English)
9.	<i>Japri</i>	Jalur Pribadi	301	3.9%	Instructions for communicating privately (outside the group). Implications: Managing privacy and communication channels.	"Kalau butuh informasi lanjutan, japri aku aja ya." (In Bahasa) "If you need further information , just contact me privately." (In English)
10.	<i>Cepu</i>	Celana Pulpen (informan/pen gadu)	255	3.3%	Describes someone who likes to complain or reveal secrets. Implications: Trust norms in group interactions.	"Awas hati-hati sama dia, dia itu cepu ." (In Bahasa) "Be careful with him, he is a jerk." (In English)
	Other acronyms		1791	23.0%	Various contextual functions.	
Total			7870	100.0%		

These acronyms, as illustrated in Table 1, serve not only cognitive efficiency (summarizing information) but also expressive functions (conveying emotional nuances or conditions) and social identity functions (signifying affiliation with the Generation Z group). Several forms demonstrated high prevalence among the total number of X types of acronyms and Y types of abbreviations identified in the respondents' online communication corpus. Acronyms such as "baper" (carry feelings), "pansos" (social climbing), and "bucin" (love enslaved person) consistently ranked highest in frequency of use, with an average occurrence of approximately

A times per online conversation. These acronyms not only function as shortened forms of specific phrases but have also become integrated into the active lexicon of Generation Z, often used without reference to their original forms.

Analysis of the abbreviations revealed that phonetic reduction and clipping forms predominated. The survey showed that 92.5% of respondents routinely use abbreviations in everyday text communication.

Table 2. *The ten most dominant abbreviations in Generation Z virtual communication*

No.	Abbreviation	Original form (Translation)	Absolute frequency	Percentage of total abbreviations	Examples of usage
1.	Yg	yang	3589	18.7%	"Kamu pilih yg mana?" (In Bahasa) (Which one do you choose?) (In English)
2.	Udah	sudah	3122	16.3%	"Udah kamu baca?" (In Bahasa) (Have you read it?) (In English)
3.	Ga	tidak	2890	15.1%	"Aku ga tau info." (In Bahasa) (I do not know the info) (In English)
4.	Bgt	banget	2501	13.0%	"Enak bgt makanannya." (In Bahasa) (The food is very delicious) (In English)
5.	Aja	Saja	1976	10.3%	"Nanti aja deh." (In Bahasa) (Not now, maybe later) (In English)
6.	Blm	belum	1205	6.3%	"Tugasmu udh selesai blm?" (In Bahasa) (Have you finished your assignment?) (In English)
7.	Dr	Dari	888	4.6%	"Kabar dr teman." (In Bahasa) (I heard from a friend) (In English)

8.	Jg	juga	765	4.0%	"Aku jg mau ikut." (In Bahasa) (I want to join, too) (In English)
9.	Otw	<i>on the way</i>	550	2.9%	"Sebentar ya, aku udh otw." (In Bahasa) (Hold on, I am on my way) (In English)
10.	Gws	<i>get wel soon</i>	411	2.1%	"Gws ya beib.." (In Bahasa) (Hope you feel better soon) (In English)
	Other abbreviations		1289	6.7%	
Total			19186	100.0%	

Similarly, abbreviations such as "yg" (yang), "udah" (sudah), "ga" (tidak), and "bgt" (banget) show very high usage frequencies, reaching an average of 6 times per conversation. This pattern indicates Generation Z's strong preference for typing efficiency and fast communication. Interestingly, some abbreviations are phonetic reductions, such as "udah" or "ga," while others are more extreme truncations, such as "yg" or "bgt." This finding aligns with online language characteristics prioritizing speed and brevity (Shahwani et al., 2024). The distribution of acronym and abbreviation usage also shows variation across platforms. The use of very short abbreviations (e.g., "yg," "bgt") is more prevalent on instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram, where speed of response is a priority. Meanwhile, more complex and cultural acronyms (e.g., "baper," "pansos") are more common on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which allow for broader expressions of collective identity and humor.

Code-mixing patterns

Code-mixing in Indonesian and English is one of Generation Z's most prominent virtual communication characteristics. Text content analysis found that code-mixing occurred in 68.3% of the conversations studied. Based on its type, code-mixing can be categorized as follows.

Table 3. *Classification and examples of Indonesian English code-mixing*

No.	Code-Mixing Type	Description	Absolute frequency	Percentage	Example of use
1.	<i>Lexical Insertion</i>	Insert one or more English words into an Indonesian sentence.	5678	75.2%	"Aku lagi <i>scroll</i> TikTok." "Kemarin <i>literally</i> lupa banget deh

					gue." "Kabar dia sekarang lagi <i>random</i> অন্য." (In Bahasa)
					"I was scrolling through TikTok." "I literally forgot about yesterday." "His news is all random right now." (In English)
2.	<i>Phrasal Insertion</i>	Inserting phrases from English into Indonesian sentences.	1234	16.3%	"Dia bilang itu <i>no big deal</i> ." "Ini <i>for your information</i> aja ya." (In Bahasa)
					"He said it was no big deal." "This is just for your information." (In English)
3.	<i>Clausal Insertion</i>	Inserting clauses from English into Indonesian sentences.	350	4.6%	"Dia janji mau ikutan, <i>but I don't know</i> kenapa dia belum datang." (In Bahasa)
					"He promised to come, but I don't know why he has not come yet." (In English)
4.	<i>Idiomatic Expression Insertion</i>	Inserting idioms or expressions typical of English.	108	1.4%	"Dia itu emang <i>easy-going</i> banget orangnya." (In Bahasa)
					"He is really an easy-going person." (In English)
5.	Inserting English Acronyms/Abbreviations	Using English acronyms or abbreviations directly.	185	2.4%	"Itu mah <i>FYI</i> aja." "Aku <i>btw</i> udah di jalan." (In Bahasa)

		"That is just FYI." "I am already on my way, by the way." (In English)
Total	7555	100.0%

Quantitative data analysis also revealed a high frequency of code-mixing between Indonesian and English among Generation Z. Approximately 6% of the total analyzed utterances contained code-mixing elements. The dominant code-mixing pattern was intrasentential code-mixing, where English words or phrases are inserted into Indonesian sentence structures. Common examples include the use of verbs (e.g., "scroll," "swipe," "like"), adjectives (e.g., "literally," "random," "chill"), and expressive particles (e.g., "basically," "anyway") in Indonesian conversation. The prevalence of this code-mixing was found to be highest on public and semi-public social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter), compared to private messaging groups. This indicates that linguistic needs and social factors, such as signalling status, aspirations, or affiliation with a global online community, drive code-mixing.

Motivational factors and implications of language adaptation

Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with 20 Generation Z respondents and participant observation on various virtual communication platforms provided a richer understanding of the driving factors and implications of the quantitatively identified language adaptation patterns. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 selected respondents and non-participant observation, qualitative analysis revealed the motives behind these language adaptation patterns and their implications for communication effectiveness and norms.

Motivations behind adaptive language use, the interviews revealed several key motivations behind the use of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing:

- **Communication Efficiency and Typing Speed:** Most respondents stated that their use of abbreviations and acronyms was driven by a desire to save time and effort. One respondent (P-03, 19 years old) stated, "For a quick chat, it is more convenient to use 'yg' than 'yang'; I do not like typing long words." This efficiency aspect is crucial in fast-paced, real-time online interactions.
- **Group Identity and In-Group Markers:** The use of specific acronyms and abbreviations (e.g., "bucin," "gabut") often serves as markers of in-group identity among Generation Z. Respondent (P-07, 21 years old) said, "If we use language like that, it is immediately obvious that we are from the same generation. It just feels more relatable." This creates a sense of togetherness and exclusivity within their online communities, where understanding these terms sets them apart from other groups. Respondent (W-08, 19 years old, female) said, "If we use slang like 'santuy' or 'gemoy,' it shows that we are up-to-date and on the same wavelength as our friends. Therefore, it is not cringe (embarrassing)." The use of these

terms distinguishes them from older generations or other groups, creating a kind of unintentional linguistic gatekeeping.

- **Self-Expression and Creativity:** Several respondents mentioned that new acronyms and abbreviations often emerge from collective creativity or in response to viral trends. This allows them to express themselves uniquely and keep up with language developments in online communities.
- **Social Aspirations and Globalization (for Code-Mixing):** The use of Indonesian English code-mixing is driven by several factors. A respondent (P-12, 20 years old) said, "It just feels cooler if I use less English. Additionally, I often read foreign social media, which feels normal." This reflects an aspiration to connect with global culture and the image of modernity. Furthermore, code-mixing is also used to fill lexical gaps (when a concept is more straightforward to express in one language) or to convey specific nuances of meaning that a single language cannot fully represent.
- **Cognitive and Practical Efficiency:** Most respondents emphasized that brevity was the primary reason. One respondent (W-11, 22 years old, male) stated, "An acronym like 'magern' is more effective than saying 'lagi malas melakukan' (lazy to move); it conveys a more relaxed and informal impression." This statement demonstrates a preference for brevity and rapidity, which are hallmarks of digital communication (Baron, 2008).
- **Global Aspirations and Relevance (for Code-Mixing):** The motivation for code-mixing is closely related to globalization and access to international pop culture. A respondent (W-15, 20 years old, male) explained, "We often watch foreign content creators or Hollywood films. Therefore, automatically, English words like 'literally,' 'vibes,' 'stick,' and 'feel' are more appropriate to explain that they have no equivalent in Indonesian." Code-mixing is also considered an indicator of contemporary and competent English language skills, which, in the eyes of Generation Z, can improve status or social image.
- **Expression of Emotion and Nuance:** Some respondents used code-mixing to express emotions or nuances of meaning that felt more appropriate in English. For example, "I am thrilled today" felt stronger than "I am very happy today" in specific contexts. This indicates a lexical need, or a desire to utilize the lexical richness of both languages.

Impact on communication effectiveness and norms, the use of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing has significant implications for communication effectiveness and norms among Generation Z:

- **Increased Efficiency, But Potential for Ambiguity:** Communication becomes more efficient and faster, but at the same time, the potential for ambiguity or misunderstanding can increase, especially for individuals who are less familiar with specific acronyms or abbreviations. Observations indicate that requests for clarification sometimes arise in conversations with a broader audience or across generations. However, in the context of the Generation Z in-group, this ambiguity rarely occurs due to the strong collective understanding.
- **Flexibility of Language Norms:** Communication norms among Generation Z tend to be more flexible and adaptive to language innovations. This adaptive use of language is widely

accepted in informal online contexts. However, there is an explicit awareness among respondents that these norms differ from formal communication. Respondent (P-05, 18 years old) emphasized, "When speaking with friends or in chat groups, it is perfectly normal to use abbreviations or mix languages. However, you must use the correct language for assignments or emails to lecturers." These results indicate the existence of adaptive language registration according to the communication context.

- **Impact on Clarity:** While often used for efficiency, overuse of acronyms or inappropriate code-mixing can reduce the clarity of a message, especially if the interlocutors do not share the same linguistic background or cultural understanding. However, this is rarely an issue in Generation Z communities due to the firm linguistic common ground.
- **New Norm Formation and Language Evolution:** The ongoing use of this adaptive language forms new communication norms in Generation Z's virtual spaces. These norms are unwritten but implicitly understood, governing when and how acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing can be used effectively and socially accepted. The consistent use of this language adaptation forms new communication norms that are implicit but highly adhered to in Generation Z's online communities. These norms guide word choice, sentence structure, and overall style. This phenomenon contributes to the evolution of the Indonesian language itself, enriching the informal lexicon and demonstrating the dynamism of language in responding to the digital environment.
- **Increased Efficiency in In-Group Contexts:** In communication among Generation Z members who share a common linguistic ground, communication efficiency increases significantly. Messages can be conveyed quickly and understood without the need for elaboration. However, this efficiency is inversely proportional to cross-generational or less familiar audiences. Observations indicate that misunderstandings arise when acronyms or abbreviations are used outside the in-group context (for example, in communication with parents or teachers).
- **Flexibility of Language Norms and Context Sensitivity:** Generation Z's language norms in the virtual space are characterized by high flexibility and context sensitivity. Respondents acknowledged that there is a distinct difference in language style between informal online communication and formal communication. "If I am chatting with friends, I am free. However, if I am writing an email about a job application or assignment, I use formal Indonesian," said a respondent (W-09, 21 years old, male). This research shows that Generation Z is capable of situational code-switching from their linguistic repertoire, adapting their language style to the context and the person they are talking to.
- **Impact on Message Clarity:** While generally not a problem in in-group communication, excessive or inappropriate use of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing can reduce message clarity, especially to outsiders. This is a frequent complaint from older generations who have difficulty understanding "youth speak."
- **Impact on Social Perception:** The specific use of code-mixing can influence social perceptions of speakers. In some contexts, it is considered a sign of higher education or modernity, while in others it can be perceived as linguistic snobbery or a lack of nationalism. However, among Generation Z, code-mixing is broadly accepted as standard practice.

Overall, these findings underscore that the adaptation of Indonesian among Generation Z in virtual communication is not a random phenomenon, but rather the result of complex functional needs (efficiency), social motivations (group identity, aspirations), and the unique dynamics of the digital environment. In the hands of Generation Z, Indonesian has evolved

into a more fluid, concise, and expressive medium, effectively meeting the demands of the digital age. The findings of this research confirm that the adaptation of Indonesian among Generation Z in virtual communication is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The need for efficiency, the desire for group affiliation, and the impact of cultural globalization drive them. While this adaptation increases communication efficiency in in-group contexts, it also poses challenges regarding message clarity across contexts and generations. However, awareness of context sensitivity in language suggests that Generation Z is highly adaptable in navigating the ever-changing digital linguistic landscape.

Discussion

Communication efficiency and the principle of language economy, the findings reveal that Generation Z consistently favors shorter linguistic forms, such as acronyms (baper, bucin, pansos) and abbreviations (yg, udah, ga, bgt). This indicates that efficiency is a dominant motivation in digital communication. Such a tendency can be explained through Zipf's Principle of Least Effort, which argued that humans prefer the most economical form of expression with the least cognitive and physical effort. In fast-paced, real-time interactions, shortened forms serve as an effective solution to transmit messages without wasting time (Zipf, 2016).

This practice also resonates with Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the maxim of quantity, where speakers are expected to provide just the right amount of information—neither too much nor too little (Zahra, 2023). For instance, using "yg" instead of "yang" achieves the communicative goal without adding unnecessary effort. Thus, adopting shortened forms is not merely a matter of convenience, but also a linguistic strategy that sustains smooth interaction in digital environments. However, this efficiency comes with the potential risk of ambiguity, mainly when the interlocutors belong to different generations who may not be familiar with these terms. Such dynamics highlight the delicate balance between speed and clarity in modern communication.

Language as a marker of social identity, the research also shows that acronyms such as "bucin," "gabut," and "santuy" function beyond linguistic economy; they act as markers of social identity. This aligns with Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals define themselves through their membership in social groups (Hogg et al., 2012). By employing these linguistic innovations, Generation Z creates a sense of belonging that distinguishes them from other generations.

Such terms serve as in-group markers that strengthen cohesion within their community. While outsiders may understand the literal meaning of these words, they may fail to grasp the emotional nuances or humorous undertones that Generation Z shares. In this sense, language becomes a symbolic boundary, simultaneously uniting insiders and excluding outsiders. Furthermore, this phenomenon can be understood as a subtle form of resistance against traditional linguistic norms. Generation Z does not merely communicate; they negotiate identity by asserting their creative and distinct style of expression suited to the digital era.

Linguistic creativity in computer-mediated communication, using acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing demonstrates linguistic creativity within Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). According to Walther et al. (2015), even though the absence of nonverbal cues constrains online communication, users can still build social closeness through creative linguistic strategies. For example, acronyms such as "baper" convey not only the literal

meaning ("bawa perasaan" or "too sensitive") but also various pragmatic functions, such as teasing, sympathy, or mild criticism. A single term thus encapsulates multiple layers of emotional expression, enabling participants to enrich their interactions despite the limitations of text-based media.

This suggests that digital platforms stimulate innovation and creativity rather than impoverishing communication. Generation Z develops new lexical items with rich social meanings, confirming that online language is not a degraded form but a dynamic and expressive mode of communication.

Code-mixing and language contact, another significant finding is the high prevalence of Indonesian English code-mixing, particularly in public platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Approximately 68.3% of analyzed conversations contained code-mixed elements, with lexical insertion being the most dominant type. This phenomenon supports [Matras \(2010\)](#), who argued that linguistic contact often involves lexical borrowing and structural mixing.

The trend also aligns with [Hult's \(2017\)](#) claim that English functions as a global lingua franca, influencing local languages. Generation Z employs English words such as "scroll" and "vibes" for their semantic precision and as symbolic markers of modernity and global affiliation. Code-mixing thus reflects both a linguistic necessity (filling lexical gaps) and a sociocultural aspiration to align with globalized popular culture. Consequently, code-mixing should not be considered a linguistic deficiency but as a conscious strategy to project cosmopolitan identity and digital sophistication.

Implications for communication norms and language evolution, the findings indicate that Generation Z's linguistic practices contribute to the emergence of new communication norms that are flexible, fluid, and highly context sensitive. Respondents explicitly acknowledged that while acronyms and code-mixing are acceptable in informal online interactions, they consciously switch to standard Indonesian in formal contexts such as academic assignments or professional emails. This reflects situational code-switching, a well-documented phenomenon in sociolinguistics, where speakers adapt their linguistic repertoire according to the communicative setting.

Moreover, these practices illustrate the ongoing evolution of the Indonesian language. Terms that began as playful or niche expressions have gradually entered the mainstream lexicon of young people. This dynamic transformation exemplifies what digital sociolinguistics ([Sunday & Fauzah, 2024](#)) highlights: online interactions are pivotal in shaping contemporary linguistic norms. Ultimately, Generation Z's adaptive language use enriches the informal vocabulary of Indonesian, proving that the national language is not static but responsive to sociocultural and technological shifts. Far from being a threat to linguistic purity, these innovations demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of Indonesian in the digital age.

Conclusion

This research concludes that adapting Indonesian in virtual communication among Generation Z is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Quantitative findings consistently demonstrate a high prevalence of acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing between Indonesian and English. Acronyms such as "baper," "pansos," and "bucin" not only serve as cognitive efficiency tools for summarizing information but have also evolved into standalone lexical units rich in pragmatic functions, conveying emotional nuances and specific

social implications. Similarly, abbreviations such as "yg," "udah," and "bgt" demonstrate Generation Z's strong preference for linguistic economy and typing speed. Meanwhile, code-mixing predominantly occurs by inserting English words into Indonesian speech, reflecting the intense language contact in the digital space.

Qualitative analysis reveals that various interrelated motives drive these language adaptations. Communicative and cognitive efficiency are the primary drivers for using acronyms and abbreviations, enabling the rapid and concise exchange of information. Furthermore, these adaptive languages also serve as tools for constructing social identities and marking in-group affiliation, creating internal cohesion and distinguishing them from other generations. Specifically for code-mixing, the motivation extends to aspirations for modernity and globalization, where English is seen as an indicator of contemporaneity, and to expressing nuances of meaning perceived as more appropriate or stronger in English.

The implications of this language adaptation are twofold. On the one hand, using acronyms, abbreviations, and code-mixing significantly increases the efficiency and speed of communication within the context of Generation Z, which has a firm linguistic common ground. However, these practices can create ambiguity and communication barriers when interacting with audiences across generations or those less familiar with these codes. Nevertheless, Generation Z demonstrates a high degree of flexibility in language norms and strong contextual awareness. This enables them to engage in situational code-switching between informal online registers and standard Indonesian in formal contexts. Overall, this phenomenon underscores Indonesia's inherent dynamism, which continues to evolve, adapt, and innovate in response to the unique demands and characteristics of the digital communication environment.

Disclosure statement

According to the authors, there have been no possible conflicts of interest in the research, authorship, or publication.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank all the individuals and institutions that contributed to the success of this research.

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