

The Evolution of Language Usage Among Generation Z: The Impact of Social Media on Communication Norms

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Introduction

In today's era of globalisation and the explosion of information technology, the linguistic landscape of Malaysian society is undergoing significant changes. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and WhatsApp are not only the main media for communication but also influence the way language is used among users, especially young people. The use of communication through messages, comments, emojis, and short videos is widely used in social media apps. These platforms are used to express themselves, share interests, and build communities based on hobbies or views, especially Gen Z.

Generation Z refers to a demographic cohort born roughly between 1997 and 2012. This generation has a high level of digital literacy since they were introduced to social media and cellphones at a young age and grew up in an atmosphere where these skills were commonplace. Generation Z is very comfortable using technology and social media platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram and Youtube and they are a very open generation and use simpler and simpler communication a lot. The modernization of language use among Gen Z has led to the use of abbreviated languages such as 'jap gi', 'pahal' and 'watpe' which are seen to reduce the use of syllables and are seen as more concise and relaxed (Azlinda & Nurhasyinda, 2017).

Language confusion refers to alterations or uses language that are inaccurate, grammatically incorrect, or deviates from its original meaning. It can occur intentionally or unintentionally and usually impacts the understanding or delivery of messages (Yule, 2020; Fromkin et al., 2017; Crystal, 2003). This slang includes informal words or expressions that are simple, creative, and sometimes mixed between languages, such as Malay, English and other languages. This phenomenon raises important questions about its impact on the Malay language. Language confusion is important to study nowadays because it impacts the clarity of communication, particularly in the digital age. The use of language that deviates from the

original structure and meaning can affect comprehension, especially in educational and professional contexts. This phenomenon is common among the younger generation through social media and simple messages, and if left unchecked, can weaken standard language proficiency.

Major Factors of Language Confusion

Social media is becoming the main medium of communication nowadays, especially among the younger generation (Turner, 2015). Platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram encourage the use of language that is short, concise, and easy to understand. According to Salsabila (2024) this leads to the use of abbreviations, slang, and symbols that can confuse the reader and alter the structure of the original language. Meanwhile Risnadian (2024) states that individuals especially teenagers, are influenced by the way their peers communicate online. The fast-changing online culture and the use of creative and informal language also contribute to language confusion. The pressure to be accepted in digital social groups encourages the use of language that may deviate from standard grammar.

The use of formal language is decreasing in daily communication, especially among the younger generation. Lack of exposure to formal language in education and media causes them to have less mastery of the correct language rules. This makes them more susceptible to the casual and informal style of language that is often found on social media (Erwan K, 2024). According to Busra (2024) in the digital age, there is pressure to communicate quickly and keep up with popular language trends. This leads to the use of abbreviations, loanwords, and slang expressions that deviate from the standard language. While it can facilitate communication, it also creates confusion and reduces the accuracy of language.

Effects of Language Confusion

Language confusion can reduce the clarity of communication due to the inaccurate use of language causing messages to be difficult to understand and easy to misinterpret (Yule, 2020). Additionally, the use of mixed and non-grammatical language can weaken standard language proficiency among students and the younger generation (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2017). This situation also has a negative impact on the quality of education as students face difficulties in understanding learning materials that use the official language (Crystal, 2003).

In the professional world, language confusion can also lead to misunderstandings in formal instruction and communication, thus affecting the effectiveness of work as well as the reputation of the organization (Salsabila et al., 2024). Furthermore, in digital communication, the use of language that is too relaxed and ambiguous on social media can weaken the effectiveness of interactions and create confusion among users (Risnadian & Nuricahyati, 2024).

Suggested Language Confusion

To overcome language confusion, formal language education needs to be strengthened in schools and educational institutions. Teaching that emphasizes correct grammar as well as the use of standard language can help students master accurate and effective communication skills (Yule, 2020). Additionally, social media can also be used as a platform to promote the use of good language through awareness campaigns and educational content (Salsabila et al., 2024).

The role of parents and teachers is also very important in guiding the younger generation so that they are not too influenced by the deviant informal language culture (Risnadian & Nuricahyati, 2024). Finally, the development of interactive language learning apps and technologies can help increase users' interest and understanding of the correct language in today's context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, language confusion is an increasingly noticeable phenomenon in today's digital era, especially among the younger generation. Factors such as social media influence, peers, and lack of exposure to formal language are the main causes of this problem. Language confusion not only affects the clarity of communication but can also weaken the mastery of standard language as well as negatively impact education and the professional world. Therefore, a joint effort from schools, parents, and the community is very important to guide the appropriate and effective use of language. With proper education and the appropriate use of technology, language confusion can be reduced, and communication can be improved for the sake of future communication well-being.

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