

# SEMANTIC CHANGE ON IMITATIVE SLANG USED BY INDONESIAN NETIZEN

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## Abstract

In this digital era, the development of a language can be observed from its use on social media or audio-visual digital platforms such as Youtube, Spotify, or Tik-Tok. This can happen because social media or any digital platform has become a media to deliver any expression freely. Young generation as the largest users of it, used often non-standard language in expressing their thought and it can be led to language change. One of these changes is a change in meaning. This paper aimed to analyse the meaning changes of the words especially those that classified as imitative slang and their function. The data was taken from any written language used by netizens on the TikTok platform and YouTube. This study uses qualitative methods in data analysis. The result showed that there are a widening or expansion of meaning, metaphor, hyperbole, and degeneration or pejoration of meaning through these slang words.

*Keywords:* semantic change, slang, social media, meaning

## I INTRODUCTION

One of the language variations is the use of slang in public communication, both oral and written, especially for informal communication among certain circles. Yule (2006) describes slang as words or phrases that are used more frequently than everyday words by young people or certain groups. Nowadays, the use of slang has become wider and spreads quickly thanks to social media or others entertainment platforms that are used as a means of communication from various communities, especially among teenagers. Millennial generations are known as iGeneration or internet generation, who are multitasking and full of creativity, therefore they often make a new change like produce a new slang word that they use in everyday communication.

The existence of a language cannot be separated from the people who use it. In line with society's life which is always dynamic, language also experiences the same thing. A language is always developing, some are progressing with the addition of various aspects, some are even almost extinct because there is no user or no longer used. The development of a language is usually based on needs, the current situation, and of course the wishes of the speaker (Chaika, 1998:8). In this digital era, it is undeniable that social media plays a very important role in spreading various information, including the language used by its users. As its function, the language used can be adjusted to their needs. Therefore, the phenomenon of using slang on social media can be used as a reflection of language development, both mother tongue and foreign language in Indonesia.

The dynamic nature of language will bring changes in several aspects of language. One of the most interesting aspects to be observed is the semantic change or shift in meaning of words. In particular, those that can be classified as imitative slang. According to Allan & Burridge (2006), imitative slang is a slang word that imitates or takes words from standard languages which then gain additional meanings. It is very clear that in imitative slang, there is a change/shift in meaning which is very interesting to analyse other meanings that arise especially when it is used on digital platforms.

Many studies have been conducted on slang, but most only investigate slang based on its type and meaning. However, this research focuses on changes in meaning that occur in words that are classified as imitative slang used by netizens in the Tik-Tok and Youtube applications.

## II METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive method in analysing the data. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative descriptive research was conducted to obtain a detailed description or explanation of the research object. This method also makes researcher the main key in obtaining data which is classified as an imitative slang word. The data was obtained through observing the text on the audio-visual platforms TikTok and Youtube of the researcher account, especially in the caption and comments column because from these sections we can observe various kinds of spontaneous use of non-standard language or slang by Indonesian netizens who commented on for your page videos, mostly comedy or viral videos which have a lot of comment, taken on June up to August 2022. Through a random

sampling technique, words belonging to this imitative slang word were noted by doing screen captured, then looked up for their literal meaning in the online Indonesian dictionary <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/> and then determined the contextual meaning, and other meanings that the word may have and then classify them into the type of semantic change that occurs. The final step was to determine the function of these words.

Changes in meaning can be in the form of shifts, developments or deviations from the original meaning. Many things can cause this change in meaning, including technological developments, socio-cultural developments, differences in areas of usage, associations, exchange of sensory responses and differences in responses (Chaer, 2009). Many linguists have arranged their own typology of changes in meaning or semantic change, such as Bloomfield (1933), Ullman (1957), Aminuddin (1988), Blank (1999), etc. The analysis of Semantic change in this article used the 9 types of Semantic change proposed by Bloomfield (1933, 426-427) as following: the widening and narrowing of meaning, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, litotes, degeneration, elevation. While in the discussion of meaning, this article describes the literal or lexical meaning and contextual meaning. As for the function of slang, it follows the description from Allan & Burridge (2006), namely to initiate relaxed conversations, to form intimate atmospheres, to express impressions, to address, to express anger, and to show intimacy, to humiliate

### III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the data obtained, there has been a change in the meaning of words that are classified as imitative slang, and these words are very often used by Indonesian netizens when communicating on the Tiktok and Youtube platforms. From the data source, there are fifteen words of imitative slang found, but only 8 examples that will be explain in detail to show the semantic change of those words.

#### 3.1 EXPANSION OR WIDENING OF MEANING

Widening refers to meanings that becomes less specific or more general from its previous meanings. According to Aminuddin (1988) a word is said to be expanded if there is an addition of meaning to a lexical and then it can be used in general. Based on observations on various comments of netizens, various term of adress which in formal language are intended for certain individual, but on social media these words expanding the meaning and used in more context, including the words *bunda*, *kaka(k)*, *bang*, *suhu*, *bos*, *gan* (clipping of *juragan* 'master'). For example, the words *bunda* 'mother/mom' and *kaka(k)* already exist in standard language and are used in everyday conversation, but recently they have become very frequently used on social media. The word *bunda* is a term of address for our female parent, while *kaka(k)* is a word of greeting for older siblings or people around who are older than the speaker. Meanwhile, on the platforms, the word *bunda* becomes widespread and non-specific because all women can be called *bunda*, even if they are not your biological mother, are greeted with the word *bunda*, as well as the word *kaka(k)* is used to politely greet fellow netizens. Moreover, in communication on social media, we cannot know whether the person is older and deserves to be called *bunda* or *kaka(k)*. That means the words *bunda* and *kaka(k)* have experienced a widening of meaning because their meaning has shifted from its original meaning. Here are some other examples of lexical items that have experienced an expansion of meaning which are often used in the comment column of netizens.

(3-1) *ternyata suhu... mana lucu lagi*

According to online Indonesian dictionary ([kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id](https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/)), the word *suhu* has 2 lexical meanings, first means temperature, and second means a teacher in the world of martial arts. But on social media, the word *suhu* is used to refers to someone who is considered as an expert in anything, it can be in games, photography, painting, making jokes, or a term of address for people who do cool or even absurd things or out of ordinary. Thus, the word *suhu* has experienced an expansion in meaning because it originally had a specific meaning, then now the use of the word has become wider. The word *suhu* that is often used on social media does not only refers to a martial arts teacher, but someone who is an expert in any field. While its function is to express one's impression of someone who is considered to have shown something great or extraordinary according to netizens.

(3-2) *iri bilang bos; setuju banget bosku*

The word *bos* 'boss' is now often used in social media as a term of address for anyone you want to be called like that. The lexical meaning of the word *bos* actually refers to someone as a leader or

superior (in a company) who has power and commands his employees. However, in the context of netizen conversations, this word is a term for anyone (fellow netizens). Therefore, the word *bos* has undergone a widening or expansion of meaning because this word no longer specifically refers to the leadership of the company, but anyone can be called the boss even though they do not have a vertical social relationship such as between superiors and subordinates in work place. The function of using this word is to greet or call other netizens without the intention of elevating one's position, and it also functions to create an atmosphere of familiarity between netizens.

### 3.2 PEJORATION OR DEGENERATION OF MEANING

Pejoration or Degeneration of meaning is a shift in meaning towards a negative one from the pre-existing meaning. Henry (1989:90) states that a word experiences a pejoration if its meaning becomes worse or lower 'status' than the previous meaning. Some of the words that have this change such as the words *keciduk*, *comot*, *emak*

(3-3) *Abis dari sini keciduk apa ya kira2*

From the sentence above, the word *keciduk* has a different nuance from its pre-existing meaning. *Keciduk / terciduk* means that it has been taken with a scoop (dipper, spoon and so on), while its connotative meaning is taken to be detained by the authorities. However, in today's social media, this word has a more negative nuance, because it is usually addressed to someone who is caught or exposed (by anyone, not just the police) doing things that are unpleasant or negative because they violate norms or ethics, such as an affair or cheating their partner, or do other indecent things. The word *terciduk/keciduk* itself is the equivalence of the phrase *tertangkap basah* 'caught red-handed' but *terciduk/keciduk* becomes worse or lower than its equivalence, so that it can be classified into a pejoration or degeneration meaning change. While the function of using this word is to embarrass someone because it tends to contain negative meanings.

(3-4) *hahaha.. emak2 jaman now punya aturan sendiri*

The word *emak* itself is one of the terms of address for female parent and has no negative impression. But now the word *emak* used on social media tends to have an additional negative meaning because netizens will use this word to refer to middle-aged women who do 'odd' or a little strange action and tend to act a little funny and stupid. As in the example above, it can be seen that the word *emak* in this context is used to refer to a middle-aged woman who turns on the motor sign to the left but instead turns to the right. It is very clear that the meaning of the word *emak* carried a little more negative or lower sense than before. The function of using this word is to address and to express impression but there is little purpose to humiliate or to mock someone (a woman) whose behaviour is funny/silly.

### 3.3 METAPHOR

Based on Bloomfield's typology in semantic change, metaphor is a change in meaning that occurs due to a similarity in nature so that the word can be used in another meaning, as shown by the words *sultan* and *receh*

(3-5) *Raffi Ahmad foto bareng the real Sultan Andara*

We often encounter the use of the word *Sultan* on social media as a term for very rich people. The word *sultan* itself is a title of nobility / highest position (king) in several regions in Indonesia, such as *Sultan Hamengku Buwono* who holds the highest position in the Yogyakarta Sultanate. However, there are two uses of this word in social media, the first is used as a term of address (noun category). There is still a relationship between the meaning of the word *sultan* before and the word *sultan* used on social media today. A *sultan* is a king or nobleman of an area and usually associated with a person that has abundant wealth, and this trait is then taken as a term for a person who is wealthy even though he does not have royal blood/ancestry. In this case, the word *sultan* can be said to have experienced a semantic change, namely widening of meaning, because it is not referring to very specific person anymore, but it can be any very rich person. The second is used as description (adjective category), usually used to describe something luxurious, for example *sekolah sultan* or *penjor sultan*. *Sekolah sultan* does not mean the school of sultans/kings, but the school with very luxurious facilities and very expensive fees. Likewise, *penjor sultan* it does not mean the *penjor* is owned by the *sultan*, but the *penjor* costs quite a lot so that it looks very luxurious. Therefore, the word *sultan* as an adjective means luxurious or high level. In this case, the word *sultan* can be said to have experienced a change in the meaning namely metaphor, a semantic change due to the similarity in nature or sense. The function is to call or address

someone, especially those who have abundant wealth, and also to express impression of something luxurious.

(3-6) *Receh banget ya selera gue*

The lexical meaning of the word *receh* itself refers to money or coins which have a small nominal value. But now, this word has a metaphor meaning that is to describe simple things (as an adjective) because coins associated with something inexpensive, for example in the phrase *makan receh* 'eat cheap food' or *liburan receh* 'inexpensive vacation'. In addition, based on the sentence above, this word is also often used by someone who easily laughs at small jokes. The nature of the word *receh* itself is taken to describe things that are simple and usually does not cost much but still make the speakers happy. It can be said that the word *receh* used in social media considered as imitative slang and experiences change in meaning that occurs due to similarity in nature so that the word can be used in other meanings. The function of using this word is to make the conversation more relaxed, and apart from that it also has an informative function.

### 3.4 HYPERBOLE

A word is said to have a hyperbole when its meaning is exaggerated to give stronger meaning to the word even though the meaning relationship still exists with the initial meaning. Imitative Slang words that are often used on social media and can be said have a total change in meaning such as *bengek*, *pecah*, *obat* in phrase *ga ada obat*,

(3-7) *Bengek bang, ampun dah*

We often found this word *bengek* 'whiny' in netizens' comments on a funny video on Youtube or Tiktok platforms. Literally, this word means a condition with shortness of breath (illness). However, in the context of the sentence above, the word *bengek* is used to express the condition of the speaker who, because of something very funny, laugh so hard that he is (like) short of breath. In fact, they often only write *bengek* as a comment on funny content and are usually accompanied by emoticons that express face(s) laughing until tears come out. So, it can be said that the word *bengek* used by netizens has hyperbole in meaning because it has only a little relationship with illness, it only takes the condition which is shortness of breath, and this word *bengek* replaces the expression of laughing out loud. The function of using this word is to make the conversation more relaxed, and also to inform that the video can make the viewer laugh out loud in watching it.

(3-8) *Bali emang ga ada obat toleransinya*

Literally, the word *obat* 'medicine' is usually related to health problems, both physical and mental health. However, in the context above, the word *obat* does not refer to ingredients or health products that function to cure disease. The word *obat* in the expression *ga ada obat* 'no medicine' has become exaggerated in meaning. This phrase is often used to express/state that something or someone is very special, extraordinarily good, so that nothing can compete with it. It can be said that the word *obat* in that phrase has a total change in meaning because there is nothing to be cure here, but if it is used in the phrase *ga ada obat*, netizen want to convey that nothing can 'cure' the goodness and it means that thing is extremely good. It has an expressive meaning and functions to express an impression about something, in this case the impression of netizens on the harmony and tolerance of religious communities in Bali.

## IV CONCLUSION

The language on social media is non-standard language or also known as written slang used by netizens to interact. The use of imitative slang in netizen communication is quite common with other types of slang. Based on the results of the analysis, several lexical items that did exist before have become very popular and have a shift or change in meaning. From the data analysed, the semantic changes that occur in these imitative slang words include widening or expansion of meaning, degeneration or pejoration, metaphor and hyperbole. It does not rule out the possibility of other semantic changes considering the variety of slang used by netizens on social media. The use of these words serves to initiate relaxed conversations, to form intimate atmospheres, to express impressions, to address, to express anger, to show intimacy, and to humiliate. his research also proves that social media can play a role in bringing change or showing the development of a language.

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