

Digital English: An Investigation Of Gen Z's Online Language Practices Through Social Media And Their Implications For English Language Education

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the online language practices of Generation Z on social media and explores their implications for English language education. By analyzing how Gen Z uses digital English including slang, abbreviations, and code-switching. This research reveals patterns in their communication that differ from traditional language use. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining content analysis of social media interactions with surveys among Gen Z users. The findings suggest that digital English reflects both linguistic creativity and the influence of global connectivity, which challenges conventional English teaching methods. The research emphasizes the need for educators to integrate digital literacy and contemporary language practices into English curricula to better engage Gen Z learners and enhance their communicative competence in the digital age.

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini menyelidiki praktik bahasa daring Generasi Z di media sosial dan mengeksplorasi implikasinya terhadap pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Dengan menganalisis bagaimana Gen Z menggunakan bahasa Inggris digital termasuk bahasa gaul, singkatan, dan alih kode. Penelitian ini mengungkap pola dalam komunikasi mereka yang berbeda dari penggunaan bahasa tradisional. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, menggabungkan analisis konten interaksi media sosial dengan survei di antara pengguna Gen Z. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Inggris digital mencerminkan kreativitas linguistik dan pengaruh konektivitas global, yang menantang metode pengajaran bahasa Inggris konvensional. Penelitian ini menekankan perlunya pendidik untuk mengintegrasikan literasi digital dan praktik bahasa kontemporer ke dalam kurikulum bahasa Inggris untuk lebih melibatkan pelajar Gen Z dan meningkatkan kompetensi komunikatif mereka di era digital.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitalized world, social media has become a central mode of communication, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z) those born roughly between 1995 and 2012. For this digitally native generation, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), YouTube, and WhatsApp are not merely tools for connection, but spaces where identity, culture, and language are constantly being negotiated and reshaped. Within these platforms, English is often used in highly dynamic and creative ways, giving rise to what can be described as “Digital English” a form of English that is informal, multimodal, and deeply influenced by online discourse practices.

Language usage is changing quickly, especially among Generation Z, or people born between the middle to late 1990s and the beginning of the 2010s, who have been accustomed to communicating online their whole lives. As a result of platforms like social media, messaging apps, forums, and websites that share videos being the main places where people connect, new forms of English that are informal, creative, multimodal, and strongly impacted by internet culture have emerged. A common term for this phenomenon is “Digital English,” which encompasses the usage of emojis, code-switching, memes, acronyms, and hybrid language styles that represent global digital conversation.

According to Maqbool, et. al (2020) Gen Z are the focus of attention for older generations since they are the ones who are presently pursuing higher education and preparing to enter the workforce. Given the importance of Gen Z for the future, it is the duty of these educational institutions to give them pertinent instruction based on their requirements in order to improve the language proficiency of these students.

The linguistic behaviors of Gen Z in digital spaces not only reflect broader sociolinguistic shifts but also pose

significant questions for the field of English language education. Traditional language instruction often emphasizes standardized forms of English, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing in formal contexts. However, the communicative practices embraced by Gen Z challenge these norms and highlight a growing divide between classroom English and the English used in real-world digital interactions. This raises concerns about how well current pedagogical approaches prepare students for authentic language use in contemporary, digitally-mediated environments.

Lubis and Siregar (2025) states Generation Z, particularly digital natives, have grown up immersed in technology, which has shaped their lifestyle and educational approach. These gadgets influence their learning preferences. Developing new skills, like as English, can lead to a shift in how individuals interact with their surroundings.

Generation Z's language practices on social media are characterized by the use of abbreviations, slang, emojis, memes, code-switching, and non-standard grammar, all of which serve communicative, social, and expressive purposes. These evolving forms of English challenge conventional notions of language correctness and open up new avenues for understanding how language adapts to technological and cultural change. At the same time, they raise important questions about the relevance of traditional English language education, which often prioritizes formal, standardized varieties of the language over the informal, digital forms commonly used by students in everyday life.

The effect of social media on language use has been the subject of numerous research, with an emphasis on Recent research has shed important light on how digital natives use language and how online communication is changing. Digital communication, particularly through social media, encourages linguistic



originality and the creation of new standards, according to a number of studies released in 2024. Zhao et al. (2024) claim that the widespread usage of emojis, acronyms, and new lingo are changing how young people express meaning. According to their research, these new linguistic practices are an integral component of Gen Z's identity and influence their capacity to convey complex feelings and ideas in online settings, despite their seeming informality or unconventionality.

Vardy and Wilson's (2024) influential study also looked at the impact of online interactions on sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. Despite the fact that these digital habits often violate conventional grammar norms, they indicate a shift in communication toward efficiency and immediacy, they discovered. Additionally, the study addressed the paradox of digital English, which is that although informal and condensed language is commonly used online, its application in official educational contexts has sparked worries about students' capacity to switch between informal and formal registers.

Furthermore, as a social media content creator, the writer has observed firsthand how digital platforms have transformed the way people consume information, connect with others, and shape opinions. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have not only given rise to new forms of creative expression but have also become powerful tools for marketing, education, and social influence. Through my personal experiences in creating, publishing, and analyzing content performance, the writer has become increasingly curious about the dynamics behind audience engagement, content virality, and digital identity formation, especially through Gen Z. This direct involvement in content creation sparked my interest in conducting a more systematic and academic investigation into

the impact of social media on specific aspects of Gen Z's behaviour.

Regarding the consequences for language instruction, current research has examined how teachers are adapting to the emergence of digital English. Miller (2024), for example, contends that integrating digital communication into the curriculum may encourage attention from Gen Z students. She highlights how the dynamic, participatory character of social media helps students learn new language skills that are critical for communicating in both academic and professional contexts.

Building on these earlier findings, the current study, "Digital English: An Investigation of Gen Z's Online Language Practices through Social Media and Their Implications for English Language Education," examines Gen Z's digital language practices across a variety of social media platforms. The project looks at language elements like code-switching, emoji usage, abbreviations, and multimodal communication tactics in a variety of online situations, such as social media posts, text messages, and meme culture.

Finding trends in how Gen Z modifies English for various communicative objectives, such as comedy, emotional expressiveness, or peer interaction, is the primary objective of the study. This study will additionally examine the pedagogical implications of these results for teaching English. How does Gen Z move between formal and digital registers? What can educators learn from this?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital English

Language plays a crucial role in human communication, allowing for both verbal and written interactions. Language provides insight into the psyche, revealing inner thoughts. According to Hutabarat et al. (2020) and Yusuf et al. (2022), language is often used to express information, thoughts, ideas, and



sentiments, as well as to gather information from others. Language serves as the primary means of communication in society. Thao and Herman (2020) underline the importance of language as a communication instrument. (Purba and Sinurat, 2021).

As mobile technology has become increasingly popular among students, the notion that digital literacy is vital for improving language acquisition has gained popularity (Waemusa & Jongwattanapaiboon, 2023). It is proposed that effective mobile technology use may result in the development of digital literacy, which can considerably boost language learning prospects.

Social Media as Digital Language Communication

Social media platforms have spawned a distinct type of language reduction, motivated by the need for brevity and immediacy. According to Smith and Jones (2019), Twitter's character constraints encourage users to employ abbreviations, acronyms, and phonetic spellings for communication. While simplification is a common subject on social media, few research has examined how platform-specific limitations affect language adaption differently. Twitter and Snapchat, which formerly had character or time constraints, have a larger proportion of such forms compared to Facebook, which enables lengthier messages (Garcia, 2021).

One of the most remarkable aspects of social media communication is the proliferation of new kinds of nonverbal communication, such as emojis, memes, gifs, and stickers. These visual features supplement and frequently improve textual language by providing levels of meaning and emotion that words alone may not express. The incorporation of these features into daily language reflects a wider trend toward multimodal communication, in which visual and verbal elements collaborate to communicate

messages more efficiently. This change has ramifications for how we comprehend and study modern language use, underlining the significance of including both verbal and visual features in communication studies. (Jiang and Zheng, n.d.)

Social media has transformed language use by promoting innovation and concise communication in digital spaces. The digital age has led to modifications in communication methods, impacting both online and offline interactions.

Ekayati, et. al (2024) The impact of social media goes beyond the introduction of new words and phrases; it also impacts language ability and literacy. While some say that social media encourages bad spelling and grammar, others argue that it fosters innovative language usage and the acquisition of new linguistic structures. The discussion emphasizes the dual nature of social media's influence on language: it may both challenge and improve traditional concepts of literacy. By exploring these conflicting impacts, we may acquire a clearer understanding of the role of social media in shaping current language use.

Online Language Practice and Gen Z

Online language practices refer to the ways people use language in digital communication environments—especially on platforms like social media, messaging apps, forums, and online games. These practices are often shaped by the characteristics of the medium (e.g., speed, informality, space limitations, multimodality) and the social norms of online communities.

According to Hutabarat et al. (2020), slang is a rare language that is employed in casual contexts. The rapid advancement of information and technology is one of the major factors. Additionally, slang typically deviates from accepted grammatical and phonetic conventions. Olaniyan and Oluremi (2024) claim that Generation Z builds their identity through the use of slang for irony



and sarcasm. They employ slang to subvert social vices, convey a nuanced message, and subtly highlight national sociopolitical events. It facilitates the hilarious building of lexical innovations and derivations. Finding positive or negative information is therefore simple.

According to Baron (2018) in Jebaselvi et al. (2023), new acronyms, emoticons, and abbreviations have been developed as a result of users on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter regularly distilling their opinions into shorter, more concise statements. New terms, phrases, and memes are continuously created by users and swiftly proliferate across platforms. In instance, memes have emerged as a popular online communication tool that use visual images or videos with witty captions or text overlays to share ideas, comedy, and social commentary (Thurlow & Poff, 2013).

The demographic group known as Generation Z, or Gen Z, was born in the digital age, between 1995 and 2010. Gen Z is an extremely social media-savvy generation that is skilled at using these channels for sharing and communication. Because of their exposure to digital technologies and their use of social media, this generation has developed distinctive slang and linguistic idioms that represent their viewpoints and experiences as digital natives (Yusuf et al., 2022).

Additionally, telaumbanua et al. (2024) add Having been exposed to technology and the internet from an early age, Gen-Z is considered a digital native. Slang, acronyms, and emojis are some of the common language features used by Generation Z.

The various platforms that people utilize worldwide have shaped the extremely diverse ways that the English language is used in digital settings. Social media, online classes, podcasts, and interactive apps are just a few examples of the various digital environments that offer a variety of communication channels and ways for individuals to connect with the

language. These platforms have a big influence on how teachers educate in schools today in addition to being a source of knowledge. According to Lutfiana and Muljani (2021), Numerous paradigms, including LMSs, video conferences, media devices, and many more, are available to improve of online education. The issue is not whether platform is best, but rather how the teachers use the platform to run the lesson.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mix method approach in which combination of qualitative descriptive and quantitative research design. Those approaches were aiming to explore and analyze the online language practices of Generation Z on social media platforms and its implications on English language education.

Qualitative research, according to Creswell and Clark (2018), is typically the collection of diverse data, including a large number of factors in an uncontrolled environment. Qualitative research also aimed to foster a profound comprehension of a certain phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing the rich, contextual, and nuanced ways in which language is used in digital spaces, as well as for interpreting the potential implications for English language education. Whereas quantitative approach refers to investigate Gen Z's Online Language Practices through social media platforms. Lutfiana and Suwartono (2020) add Descriptive data from qualitative research is generated through written or spoken interviews with participants and the observed subject.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a way which leaves them complementary and cooperative in order to accomplish a shared study objective is a fundamental idea in mixed methods research.



Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 51 Generation Z individuals aged between 19 and 22 years old, who are active users of social media and have experience with English language learning, either formally (in schools or institutions) or informally (through online interaction). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that they are:

- a. Regular users of at least one major social media platform (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, or WhatsApp)
- b. Comfortable using English online

Willing to participate in interviews or allow access to language samples from their online interactions (with informed consent)

Data Collections

Data collected through the following methods:

- a. Digital Language Sample Collection

Participants were asked to provide screenshots or examples of their English language use on social media (e.g., comments, captions, chats, posts). These samples serve as primary data for linguistic analysis.

- b. Questionnaire

Participants were asked some questions related to their experiences in using English language practice during their usage of social media platform. The questions refer to the students' face of gathering English vocabularies, code-switching, terms of English.

- c. Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions, motivations, and attitudes toward their online language practices. Interviews also probe how they perceive the relationship between their digital English use and formal English learning.

- d. Observation of Public Posts

Supplementary data were gathered from publicly available content on social media (e.g., trending hashtags, memes, or viral posts), focusing on how English is used within Gen Z communities.

Data Analysis

The collected data analyzed using thematic content analysis, involving the following steps:

- a. Transcription and Organization of language samples and interviews
- b. Coding based on recurring linguistic features (e.g., abbreviations, slang, emojis, code-switching)
- c. Identification of Themes related to language practices and their educational implications
- d. Interpretation of how these practices align or conflict with current English teaching approaches
- e. To ensure validity, triangulation was used by comparing findings across the three data sources (language samples, interviews, public content).

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and anonymity will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Participants had been informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and all data will be stored securely.

RESULTS

The study's conclusions about Generation Z's online language usage, with an emphasis on how they use English on social media, are presented in this section. Respondents between the ages of 19-22 frequently use digital platforms including Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Youtube.

The findings are divided into three primary categories: (1) the context and frequency of online English language use, (2) the linguistic characteristics used by

Gen Z in digital communication, and (3) respondents' opinions regarding the connection between formal English language instruction and digital English.

1. the context and frequency of online English language use

According to the results, most Gen Z respondents utilize English often in their day-to-day online communications. Just 5% of respondents said they "rarely" or "never" use English online, compared to 95% who said they do so "often" or "very often." This implies that English is widely used in Gen Z's virtual communication environment.

In terms of the situations in which English is utilized, the following platforms were the most frequently used:

- a. Stories and captions on Instagram (80%)
- b. Youtube (55%)
- c. TikTok, comment sections (70%)
- d. Private Message or chatting (60%)

In these settings, English is frequently utilized for a variety of reasons, such as creatively expressing ideas, participating in worldwide discussions, following content produced by global artists, and perhaps projecting a more contemporary or relatable image among their peers.

Picture 1. Gen Z' Comments through Social Media Platform, Instagram



The above picture shows that Gen Z are actively use English language for communicating with their peers and also the lecture belongs to the contents. They often use mixing language for expressing what they feel. Account by Tutik2527 expressed, "So Much fun, dude!. While another account by user26_806 reported, "*kelas paling seru sih* and this is the kind of class *yang bikin nagih bgt bgt bgt, materi dapet, fun-nya juga dapet, combo win sih ini*. Ohiiya plzz belajar grammar aja bisa sangat asik kalau bareng ms. Fyana. It's giving smart and savage."

It is significant that a large number of participants reported combining English and Bahasa Indonesia, particularly in casual conversations. This trend demonstrates how English is a sign of social belonging and digital identity in addition to being a communication instrument.

In general, the findings reveal that Gen Z is not restricting their use of English to formal or academic settings; rather, they utilize it as a flexible, hybrid medium in digital environments that can be tailored to fit certain audiences, platforms, and social goals.

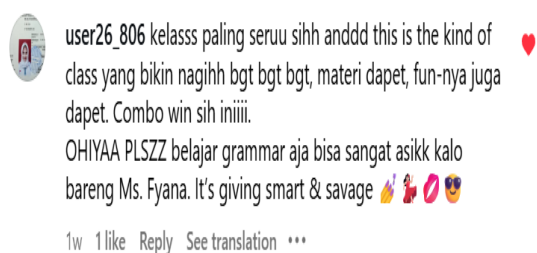
2. the linguistic characteristics used by Gen Z in digital communication

Gen Z uses a variety of unique linguistic traits when speaking English on digital platforms, according to the analysis of respondents' language patterns. These characteristics demonstrate their digital proficiency as well as their propensity for innovative language adaptation in casual online settings.

Slang and online Acronyms: Many respondents said they frequently use slang and online acronyms such "LOL," "CMIW," "BRB," "IDK," "FYP," and "OMG." According to about 80% of participants, they use these idioms "often" or "very often," particularly in captions, comments and private message sections like Direct message. These words are typically borrowed from online social media platforms.

Code-Mixing and Code-Switching: Code-mixing, in which English is combined with the regional tongue (e.g., Bahasa Indonesia), is another notable characteristic. In multilingual communities, Gen Z uses a localized version of digital English, which is reflected in this hybrid language usage.

Picture 2. Gen Z Comments on Instagram: Code-mixing Language Use



According to the above picture, Gen Z used code-mixing through a comment on Instagram post. The code-mixing shows "fun-nya juga dapet" this phrase means a person express his or her feeling on something they had gained. Sometimes gen Z communicate using code-mixing because they feel more confident giving comment on posts. Other section, "Combo win siih

ini" this phrase means something that is successful.

Abbreviations and Non-Standard Grammar: For convenience and stylistic reasons, many respondents acknowledged that they have shortened words and simplified grammar in digital communications. "PLZZ", "IDK", "LOL", "CMIW" are typical examples. In online chats, these unconventional styles are seen as more informal and natural.

Emoji, GIFs, and stickers were frequently utilized in addition to text to enhance or even replace words and expressions. Approximately 70% of participants stated that they frequently use emoji to convey tone, emotion, or sarcasm that may be difficult to describe with English. The linguistic expression of Generation Z is heavily reliant on this multimodal communication style.

The respondents while said:

"I often used some code-switching like, "I said udah ngerjain kan?", "kamu itu smart banget". Or using some abbreviation when I give comment on social media posts such as, "TFT," "LOL," "CMIW," "IDK".

She adds:

"One day I texted my friend using emoji when I feel lazy to type. I think it could be represented what my feeling is."

Based on the respondents, it can be concluded that Gen Z are similar with the use of Code-Mixing or code-switching, abbreviations and emoji of digital English for their daily communications.

3. respondents' opinions regarding the connection between formal English language instruction and digital English.

Diverse viewpoints were shared by the respondents regarding the connection between formal English language instruction in educational settings and digital English, as it is utilized in informal online communication.

Sixty percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that teaching digital English in the classroom could be helpful,



especially when it comes to the usage of slang, acronyms, and informal dialects. Numerous people reported that the language they use online frequently boosts their exposure to real-life vocabulary and idioms and makes them feel more at ease using English in informal contexts.

According to several respondents, being exposed to English online through social media, memes, and video content has improved their ability to read and listen, especially when they are consuming content from native speakers. By igniting curiosity or familiarity with common phrases, some noted that digital English acts as a gateway to learning more formal structures.

Nonetheless, several respondents (20%) voiced concern that writing in formal contexts, like essays or academic papers, could become problematic due to frequent usage of informal English online, which could result in poor spelling, grammar, and punctuation practices. Some participants reported that they had trouble "switching back" to normal English in school tasks because they frequently used colloquial terms like "gonna," "idk," or "u" in place of "you."

Remarkably, 58% of participants concurred that educators ought to recognize or perhaps touch on digital English in the classroom, particularly to contrast and compare it with formal English. Many thought that this would make English classes more interesting, applicable, and representative of how students use the language in the real world. Respondent said:

"I think learning English is more interesting and enjoyable when done through applications and internet resources. I can actively practice speaking and listening more with digital tools than with classroom drills. This confirms broader research that show digital integration boosts motivation, fosters language acquisition, and encourages creativity, according to both instructors and students."

He adds:

"Social media captions and chat apps cannot teach me grammar rules correctly; I still need classroom instruction." The importance of systematic training in understanding grammar, academic writing, and formal registers was emphasized by the respondents. Informal digital use rarely offers this advantage.

In conclusion, the data indicate that although Gen Z acknowledges the informality and constraints of digital English in academic settings, they also see its promise as a learning tool as long as it is appropriately positioned within the curriculum. This suggests that English language instruction needs to adapt more to the digital language settings of its students.

DISCUSSIONS

1. The Context and Frequency of Online English Language Use

The findings indicate that English plays a significant role in the daily digital interactions of Gen Z, particularly on social media platforms. Given that young people are using social media to communicate with the world more and more in this age of globalization, being able to write in English is crucial (Anwas et al., 2020; Suppiah et al., 2022).

English is not only used for functional communication but also as a symbol of modernity, identity, and cultural capital among young users. The platforms where English is most frequently used—such as Instagram, TikTok, and Youtube are inherently global in reach, often exposing users to content created by native or fluent English speakers. This contributes to the normalization of English in everyday interactions, even for non-native speakers.

Furthermore, the context in which English is used online often blurs the line between informal and semi-formal registers. For example, Gen Z users may switch between English and their native language within the same sentence (code-mixing), depending on the topic, audience,



or desired tone. This is in line with the translanguaging hypothesis of García and Wei (2014), which contends that multilingual people use their entire language arsenal to create meaning in a fluid manner.

The data also reflect that English is frequently used in creative ways through captions, comments, and personal chats highlighting the role of digital English as a performative and identity-building tool, rather than just a medium of information exchange.

However, the frequent use of English in informal settings does not necessarily equate to mastery of academic or standard English. This distinction raises pedagogical considerations: while digital exposure can increase vocabulary and comfort in using English, it may also reinforce non-standard grammar and lexical patterns that are not appropriate in formal writing contexts.

Overall, the context and frequency of digital English use among Gen Z suggests a shift in how English is acquired and practiced. Learning no longer happens only in classrooms; instead, social media becomes an informal yet powerful site of language learning, often ahead of formal instruction. This highlights the importance of bridging the gap between students' real-world language practices and formal English education.

2. The Linguistic Characteristics Used by Gen Z in Digital Communication

The results show that Gen Z actively engages in a wide array of non-standard and creative linguistic features when communicating online, highlighting their adaptability and fluency in digital discourse. These features including slang, abbreviations, code-mixing, emojis, and playful spelling reflect not only linguistic preference but also social identity, digital culture, and peer dynamics.

One of the most dominant features is the use of slang and internet acronyms, such as “LOL,” “IDK,” “CMIW,” and

“THX.” This aligns with Mahyuni and Pasa (2021) assert Particularly on social media, teenagers have no restrictions on how they can express their opinions and speak differently. They primarily use informal language among the multitude of languages they speak.

In digital spaces, slang becomes a marker of in-group membership and cultural awareness, allowing users to align themselves with current trends and generational humor.

The frequent use of code-mixing, gen Z comments’ on social media,”*Fun banget sih ini,*” illustrates how Gen Z users fluidly switch between English and their native language (often Bahasa Indonesia), depending on social context. This supports the concept of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014), where multilingual speakers use their entire linguistic repertoire strategically to make meaning, express emotion, or connect with their audience.

Furthermore, emojis, GIFs, and stickers are widely used as semiotic resources that extend or replace verbal language. This multimodal nature of digital English aligns with Kress’s (2010) theory of multimodality, which emphasizes the role of visual and non-verbal elements in meaning-making, especially in digital texts.

These linguistic behaviours demonstrate that Gen Z is not simply abandoning formal language rules, but rather reshaping English into a flexible, dynamic, and socially meaningful tool. Their digital communication practices are responsive to context, platform, and audience often more so than traditional classroom English, which tends to prioritize rigid structures and correctness.

The findings also suggest a potential mismatch between the English taught in formal education and the English used in real-world digital interactions. While formal instruction often focuses on academic grammar and writing, Gen Z’s linguistic practices are more grounded in authentic, real-time communication. This



points to the need for educators to recognize and incorporate aspects of digital literacy and contemporary language use into the curriculum, not to replace formal English, but to bridge the gap between formal and informal language domains.

3. Respondents' Opinions on the Connection Between Formal English Language Instruction and Digital English

The findings indicate that most Gen Z respondents perceive a meaningful connection between the English they use in digital environments and the English taught in formal education settings. While the two forms serve different communicative functions, respondents generally agree that digital English can complement formal instruction, provided it is approached critically and contextually.

A majority of participants expressed that their exposure to English on social media through content, captions, memes, and informal conversations has enhanced their vocabulary, listening comprehension, and overall familiarity with the language. This supports previous study Rianto and Juliarta (2024) the usage of social media has a substantial impact on adolescent language development, both in terms of vocabulary, inventiveness, communication skills, and identity construction. Teenagers' vocabulary is enhanced by exposure to a variety of texts and linguistic styles on social media sites surprising ways, exposing children to language that is more fluid and expressive.

At the same time, many respondents acknowledged the risk of overusing non-standard English forms, such as abbreviations (*PLZZ*) or slang (*CMIIW*, *IDK*) in formal academic contexts. This reinforces concerns raised in prior research Syaputra (2024), in an attempt to convey Gen Z identities, condense communications, and establish intimacy with other Instagram users, Generation Z uses acronyms, slang, contractions, and

phrases borrowed from the English language. Since the slang style is seen as more "current" and "slangy," it is frequently employed to demonstrate one's presence and identification with the generation Z demographic.

Interestingly, over half of the respondents believed that digital English should be addressed—if not integrated—into English language instruction. This reflects a growing awareness among students that understanding the language of the internet is part of modern literacy. From a pedagogical perspective, this aligns with critical digital literacy frameworks, which argue that learners should be equipped to navigate and analyze diverse language forms across media (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Whereas According to Elleström (2018, p. 4), intermediality is "to communicate about things through diverse kinds of media," but transmediality is the notion that "different media types share many basic qualities that can be characterized in terms of "is clearly a central part of intermediality, which is an even broader concept based on the proposition that different media types are interrelated in all kinds of ways," and "of material properties and abilities for activating mental capacities."

Some respondents suggested that comparing digital and formal English in the classroom could make learning more engaging and relevant, while also helping them distinguish when each register is appropriate. This mirrors findings by Darvin (2016), who emphasized the role of contextual language awareness in fostering linguistic competence in both academic and social domains.

In conclusion, Gen Z recognizes digital English as a functional and influential part of their language repertoire, though not a replacement for formal English. Their views suggest a need for more responsive, flexible, and context-aware language education, where students are not only taught grammatical rules but also trained to critically assess and switch between



registers depending on purpose, audience, and platform.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined Generation Z's online English language practices on social media, paying special attention to (1) the context and frequency of use, (2) the linguistic features of their digital communication, and (3) their opinions about the relationship between formal English language instruction and digital English.

According to the results, Gen Z uses English extensively and often in a variety of online scenarios, particularly on messaging applications, Instagram, and TikTok accounts. In addition to being a useful instrument for communication, English may be used to express creativity, individuality, and a sense of global belonging. According to Gen Z participants, they frequently use English in captions, comments, and online chats, frequently combining it with their mother tongue in a practice known as "code-mixing."

Regarding linguistic characteristics, the study discovered that Gen Z uses English online in a very flexible and dynamic manner. Their usage of emojis and visuals, code-switching, simplified syntax, creative spelling, slang, online acronyms, and code-switching are characteristics of their digital communication. In online discourse, these characteristics demonstrate both cultural fluency and a flexible, multimodal approach to language that deviates from conventional conventions.

Additionally, respondents to the study acknowledged that formal English instruction and digital English have a complicated relationship. Many respondents think that digital English can help students learn the language by expanding their exposure, vocabulary, and comfort level with real-life usage, even though it is typically perceived as casual and socially motivated. However, they also

recognize the possible harm that informal patterns may do to academic writing and grammar. In order to make learning more relevant and contextualized, the majority of participants agree that English teachers should recognize and use digital English in the classroom, at least as a comparing tool. In summary, Gen Z's digital language usage reflects a changing, multimodal, informal, and socially placed version of English. These methods have an impact on English language instruction, which should aim to close the gap between conventional teaching methods and students' digital reality. Teachers can foster critical awareness, language flexibility, and deeper learning engagement by acknowledging digital English as a component of students' linguistic environment.

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