LANGUAGE MARKERS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AMONG GENERATION Z IN INDONESIA

Herlandri Eka Jayaputri
STKIP PGRI Ponorogo, Indonesia

Muhammad Fahruddin Aziz
STKIP PGRI Ponorogo, Indonesia

YNIMGM
YAYASAN NURUL IMAN | MUARA GADING MAS

Abstract || This study examines the use of Language markers in digital communication among Generation Z in Indonesia, focusing on their functions and socio-cultural implications. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzed data from document observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Data analysis involved four stages: data reduction, contextual analysis, triangulation, and interpretation. The findings show that markers like "so," "then," "maybe," and "I guess" serve functions such as enhancing politeness, clarifying messages, and fostering familiarity. These markers also reflect globalization's influence, cultural values of politeness and inclusiveness, and Generation Z's digital norms. The study illustrates how linguistic choices shape social identity, highlighting Language markers' role in effective communication. The results offer valuable insights into Generation Z's communication practices and implications for cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogue in digital spaces.

Keywords || Language markers, Social identity, Digital, Communication, Generation Z

Abstrak || Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan penanda bahasa dalam komunikasi digital di kalangan Generasi Z di Indonesia, dengan fokus pada fungsi dan implikasi sosial-budaya penanda tersebut. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis data dari observasi dokumen, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus. Analisis data dilakukan dalam empat tahap: reduksi data, analisis kontekstual, triangulasi, dan interpretasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penanda seperti "so," "then," "maybe," dan "I guess" berfungsi untuk meningkatkan kesopanan, memperjelas pesan, dan membangun kedekatan. Penanda-penanda ini juga mencerminkan pengaruh globalisasi, nilai-nilai budaya tentang kesopanan dan inklusivitas, serta norma digital Generasi Z. Penelitian ini menggambarkan bagaimana pilihan linguistik membentuk identitas sosial, dengan menyoroti peran penanda bahasa dalam komunikasi yang efektif. Hasil penelitian ini memberikan menunjukkan bagaimana praktik komunikasi Generasi Z serta implikasinya untuk dialog lintas budaya dan antar-generasi dalam ruang digital.

Katakunci || Penanda Bahasa, Identitas sosial, Digital, Komunikasi, Generasi Z

Introduction

The development of digital technology has led to significant changes in the way humans communicate, particularly with the rise of social media as the primary platform for interaction among Generation Z (Gen Z). As a generation that grew up in a digital environment, Gen Z uses social media not only to share information but also to express identity and build social connections. The language they use on social media has distinct characteristics, including the use of abbreviations, emoticons, memes, and Language markers. These elements contribute to new communication dynamics, enhancing the complexity of digital language.

Language markers, such as "you know," "like," or "OMG," which are often found in social media posts and comments, are not only used for literal meaning but also have certain Language functions. For example, the phrase "like" is often used to signal hesitation, give the speaker time to think, or create a relaxed conversational tone. Another example is "literally," which is often used hyperbolically to emphasize emotional expressions. These characteristics reflect how Gen Z constructs contextual meaning in a way that is not only efficient but also creative in a communication environment that is minimal in non-verbal cues.

The context of digital communication, with minimal non-verbal cues, makes the study of Languages even more important. In digital spaces, where expressions like intonation or physical gestures cannot be used, Language markers play a crucial role in conveying the speaker's intentions, building interpersonal relationships, and creating contextual meaning. For instance, the use of markers such as "Lol" or the emoticon (😂) can signal the speaker's intention to create humor or express emotion without the need for further explanation. This demonstrates that Language markers are not only linguistic elements but also essential communication tools in the digital environment.

Language markers are important elements in verbal communication that function to organize, strengthen, or modify meaning in social interactions. These markers often do not have explicit lexical meaning, but play an important role in conveying nuances, emotions, or social relationships between speakers and listeners. Language markers refer to linguistic elements that function to organize conversational structures, mark relationships between parts of discourse, and create contextual meaning in communication. Fraser

(1999) divides Language markers into several categories, such as basic markers that indicate logical relationships, comment markers that convey the speaker's attitude, and discourse markers that help structure conversations. Schiffrin (2008) emphasizes the role of discourse markers in maintaining discourse continuity and organizing social interactions, for example through the use of words such as "well" or "so." Other examples of Language markers include words or phrases such as "kan", "dong", "loh", "yah", and "kok" in Indonesian, which function to emphasize, refine, or indicate certain expressions in the context of communication.

The use of Language markers often varies depending on social factors, such as age, social status, or relationships between individuals. These markers can also reflect certain cultural norms, such as the tendency to maintain social harmony, show solidarity, or defuse potential conflicts in interactions. Therefore, the study of Language markers not only provides insight into the dynamics of verbal communication but also helps understand the underlying cultural values. In the context of Generation Z in Indonesia, the use of Language markers is interesting to study because it can reflect local cultural identity as well as adaptation to global linguistic developments.

Relevance Theory: Understanding Human Communication and Contextual Meaning

Relevance Theory that was developed by Wilson & Sperber (2004), focuses on how human communication works and how information is processed to achieve understanding. The central idea of this theory is the concept of relevance, which is defined as the relationship between the cognitive effort expended by the listener and the contextual effects that result from interpreting an utterance. The theory assumes that communication is an inferential process in which both the speaker and listener work together to find the most relevant meaning in a given context. There are two main principles in this theory: the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance. The cognitive principle suggests that the human mind naturally seeks information that is most relevant with the least cognitive effort. The communicative principle, on the other hand, states that every utterance makes a claim about its relevance, intended to capture the listener's attention.

Relevance Theory explores how listeners utilize the available context—such as physical surroundings, social settings, and prior

experiences—to interpret a speaker's intentions. This suggests that meaning is shaped not only by linguistic form but also by the listener's inferential ability to identify information deemed relevant. In practice, this theory helps explain the use of Language markers, as these markers often serve to guide listeners toward relevant interpretations. For instance, words like "loh", "kan", or "ya" in conversation function not only as linguistic indicators but also as tools to direct the listener's attention and implicitly convey specific intentions. By applying Relevance Theory, Language analyses can delve deeper into the interplay between language, context, and culture in human communication.

Politeness Theory: Navigating Social Relationships Through Language and Cultural Contexts

Politeness theory is a Language approach that examines how individuals use language to maintain social relationships and avoid interpersonal conflict. One of the most prominent politeness theories was developed by Brown & Levinson (1987). It is based on the concept of "face," which refers to the self-image each individual seeks to uphold in social interactions. Brown & Levinson (1987) distinguish between two types of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face represents a person's desire to be appreciated, accepted, and recognized by others, while negative face represents a person's need for autonomy and freedom from imposition. According to this theory, communication often involves actions that may threaten an individual's face, referred to as face-threatening acts (FTAs). To mitigate these threats, speakers employ politeness strategies, which are categorized into four main types: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record (direct strategies without politeness), and off record (indirect strategies).

Positive politeness aims to strengthen social bonds by demonstrating attention, approval, or solidarity toward the listener. Examples include compliments or friendly expressions. In contrast, negative politeness seeks to respect the listener's autonomy and freedom, often by using apologies or indirect language. Bald on record strategies are direct and straightforward, typically used in situations where maintaining face is less critical, such as emergencies. Meanwhile, off record strategies allow speakers to convey messages implicitly, reducing the likelihood of directly threatening the listener's face.

Furthermore, Politeness Theory offers insights into how culture shapes individual communication styles. In cultures like Indonesia,

which prioritize social harmony and respect for hierarchy, negative politeness strategies—such as employing formal forms of address and self-effacing language—are frequently used to sustain interpersonal relationships. Conversely, positive politeness strategies, including humor and compliments, are more prevalent within close-knit groups. By applying this theory, language analysis can reveal how individuals manage social relationships through linguistically polite and culturally appropriate choices.

The role of Languages, particularly the analysis of Language markers, is crucial in communication. Language markers such as "haha," "ya kan," "btw," and the use of emojis enable speakers to convey their intentions implicitly while helping recipients interpret the context of the utterance. These markers not only function to establish contextual meaning but also play a role in building interpersonal relationships, expressing social attitudes, and preventing potential misunderstandings. For instance, emojis can substitute for facial expressions to convey emotions, while phrases like "haha" are often used to ease the tone of a conversation or demonstrate familiarity.

Previous Studies on the Usage of Language Markers by Generation Z

Over the past decade, numerous studies have explored the use of Language markers by Generation Z (Gen Z) in digital communication. These studies indicate that Language markers play a significant role in expressing social identity, fostering interpersonal relationships, and promoting inclusivity in online interactions. Telaumbanua et al. (2024) found that Gen Z uses Language markers to tailor the tone of their communication to the specific platform, whether formal or informal. Similarly, Lifintsev & Wellbrock (2019) emphasized Gen Z's adoption of global linguistic practices, particularly the use of English Language markers to enhance cross-cultural connections.

In addition, Danielewicz-Betz (2013) observed that markers such as "please," "thank you," and "lol" are frequently employed to maintain politeness, even within informal digital spaces. In the Indonesian context, Fitriani et al. (2021) identified that the use of Language markers reflects both the influence of local culture and the pervasive impact of globalization, particularly through platforms like Instagram and Twitter. These findings align with Seyfi's et al. (2024) research, which highlights the linguistic flexibility of Gen Z and their ability to adapt rapidly to advancements in communication technology. Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights into global and local trends, shedding light on

the evolving dynamics of Generation Z's digital communication over the past ten years.

Previous studies have examined Generation Z (Gen Z) communication, particularly in terms of politeness, digital literacy, and language patterns on social media. However, this study narrows its focus to exploring the use of Language markers in digital communication by Gen Z in Indonesia, an area that has not been extensively examined in detail. It also emphasizes the relationship between the use of Language markers, local cultural values, and Gen Z identity, offering a fresh perspective compared to prior research. While most previous studies address Gen Z communication broadly, they often overlook how the use of Language markers reflects Indonesian cultural values, such as politeness, inclusiveness, and familiarity, which are characteristic of the local community. Methodologically, although Language approaches have been employed to analyze Gen Z communication, prior research has predominantly concentrated on aspects like implicature, politeness, or speech acts. Studies specifically addressing the functions and variations of Language markers remain relatively scarce.

This study addresses several key questions that serve as the foundation for an in-depth exploration of how Generation Z in Indonesia employs Language markers in digital communication. The first question examines how Generation Z in Indonesia utilizes Language markers in their digital interactions. The second question explores the primary functions of these markers, particularly in fostering politeness, familiarity, and inclusivity. Additionally, this study analyzes the patterns of Language marker use by Generation Z as a reflection of Indonesian cultural values. Moreover, it compares these patterns with data from other cultures to identify similarities and differences. Lastly, the study investigates the implications of Language marker use for cultural identity and interpersonal relationships within the digital communication context.

Besides this research offers several important implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the field of Languages by providing fresh insights into the use of Language markers in digital contexts, highlighting their connection to specific cultural values and bridging classical Language theories with the evolving dynamics of digital communication. Practically, the findings can inform the development of more effective digital communication guidelines or training, particularly for educators, content creators, and social media

professionals seeking to understand the communication strategies employed by Generation Z.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyze how Generation Z in Indonesia uses Language markers in digital communication. By focusing on patterns and functions, the study highlights their role in constructing meaning, fostering clarity, and maintaining interpersonal relationships in written communication. A Language discourse analysis method is used to examine discourse markers, hedge expressions, and politeness strategies in Generation Z's digital interactions.

This study centers on how Language markers reflect social norms, cultural values, and the features of specific digital platforms. This study involved 30 Generation Z participants (ages 18–25), 80% with college education backgrounds. English was their second language, used comfortably by 40% in daily communication. Language marker use varied by platform: Instagram and Twitter favored casual tones, while WhatsApp emphasized uncertainty and confidence in private conversations.

Data were collected from virtual platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, ensuring relevance to modern communication trends. Techniques included:

1) Document Observation: Analyzing 150 English-written digital messages, comments, and posts containing Language markers.
2) Semi-Structured Interviews: Engaging 20 participants via Zoom and WhatsApp for 5–10 minutes, exploring their motivations for using Language markers.
3) Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Hosting a one-hour online session with 15 participants to discuss patterns and meanings behind Language marker usage.

Data were analyzed through reduction, contextual analysis, triangulation, and interpretation. Researchers categorized markers (e.g., "so," "maybe") based on function and examined their use across contexts and platforms. Findings were validated through triangulation and cross-verified by independent researchers to ensure consistency.

Results

Language Markers Based on Function

1) Transition Markers

Transition markers are linguistic elements used to connect ideas, introduce new topics, provide emphasis, or guide the flow of conversation. In digital communication, particularly among Generation Z, these markers play a strategic role in ensuring smooth discussions across various platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. Based on data analysis, the most frequently used transition markers are categorized as follows:

a) Chronological Connectors
    These markers connect events or steps in a chronological order. The words are "then," "after that," "next," "finally".
b) Argument Connectors
    These markers express cause and effect or help conclude an argument. The words are "so," "therefore," "because of that".
c) Topic Change Markers
    These markers introduce new ideas or redirect the conversation. The words are "anyway," "well," "actually".
d) Affirmation or Clarification Markers
    These markers emphasize or provide additional explanation. The data are "in fact," "you know," "basically".

The detailed data is presented in table 1. Frequency of Use of Transition Markers. The table illustrates the frequency of transition marker usage based on the analysis of 150 digital conversations across three platforms: WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter.

Table 1. Frequency of Use of Transition Markers

Transition Markers	WhatsApp	Instagram	Twitter	Total (%)
1. Chronological Connectors				
"then"	12	10	8	30%
"after that"	8	6	4	18%
"next"	6	7	5	18%
"finally"	5	3	2	10%
Sub-total Chronological	31	26	19	58%
2. Argumentative Connectors				
"so"	7	5	3	15%
"therefore"	3	2	1	6%
"because of that"	2	1	1	4%

Transition Markers	WhatsApp	Instagram	Twitter	Total (%)
Sub-total Argumentative	12	8	5	10%
3. Topic Change Markers				
"anyway"	4	6	3	9%
"well"	2	4	5	7%
"actually"	3	4	4	8%
Sub-total Topic Changes	9	14	12	24%
4. Affirmation/Clarification				
"in fact"	3	2	1	5%
"you know"	2	4	3	6%
"basically"	1	2	2	5%
Sub-total Affirmation/Clarification	6	8	6	16%
Grand Total	58	56	42	100%

Chronological connectors dominate digital conversations, making up 58% of total usage. "Then" is the most common, especially on WhatsApp (31 instances), reflecting a narrative, sequential style. Argumentative markers, like "so" (15%), are also frequent on WhatsApp, used for reasoning. Topic change markers rank second (24%), with Instagram leading (14 instances). "Anyway" (9%) is the primary topic change marker, aligning with Instagram's dynamic interactions. Clarification markers account for 16%, with "you know" (6%) highlighting informal styles across WhatsApp and Instagram. Platform-specific trends emerge: WhatsApp emphasizes structure, Instagram focuses on interaction, and Twitter's limited characters result in fewer markers. Transition patterns appear in dialogues.

Dialogue 1. WhatsApp Conversation (Friend Group)
Person A: "Guys, *udah ada yang nonton episode terbaru*? So crazy!"
Person B: "Not yet. Actually, *aku baru sempat baca* review-*nya.*"
Person C: "Same. So*, menurut kalian* worth watching *nggak*?"
Person D: "Definitely! After that*, langsung kepikiran teori baru lagi, deh*."

Dialogue 2. Instagram Conversation (Comment Section)
Comment 1: "*Ini tempatnya cakep banget. Jadi pengen ke sana*!"
Comment 2: "Well, *aku udah pernah ke sana, tapi rame banget.*"
Comment 3: "Next, *coba deh datang pagi-pagi, lebih sepi.*"

Dialogue 3. Twitter Conversation (Discussion Thread)
Tweet 1: "*Aku baru selesai baca buku ini.* So, *menurutku* worth *banget buat dibaca.*"
Tweet 2: "Then, *kamu bakal ngerti kenapa* ending-nya *kayak gitu.*"
Tweet 3: "Anyway, *ada rekomendasi buku lain nggak*?"

In the WhatsApp conversation, transition markers guide the flow of discussion and provide clarification. Person C uses "so" to focus on a specific question, while Person B uses "actually" for clarification. Person D's "after that" signals chronological progression, linking

events. In Instagram, "well" introduces an opinion, and "next" offers advice based on prior experience. On Twitter, "so" concludes an opinion, "then" explains the next sequence of events, and "anyway" shifts the topic to recommend other books. In all examples, transition markers maintain a clear and structured conversation flow, reflecting platform-specific communication dynamics.

2) Confidence or Uncertainty Markers

The confidence or uncertainty markers were identified as an important part of digital conversations among Gen Z. These markers help show how certain or uncertain someone is about what they are saying. They are especially useful in online communication, as they can influence how the recipient understands the message. Common confidence or uncertainty markers found in the data include words like "maybe," "I guess," "I'm not sure," and "probably." Based on an analysis of 150 digital conversations on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, these markers were used with varying frequency across the platforms. The frequency of their use is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of Use of Confidence/Uncertainty Markers

Marker	WhatsApp (number)	Instagram (number)	Twitter (number)	Total Usage	Percent
"maybe"	15	9	7	31	20.67%
"I guess"	10	8	12	30	20%
"I'm not sure"	8	6	5	19	12.67%
"probably"	5	3	2	10	6.67%
Total	**38**	**26**	**26**	**90**	**100%**

Confidence and uncertainty markers are key in Gen Z's digital communication, with WhatsApp showing the highest frequency (38 uses). "Maybe" was the most common marker (20.67%), reflecting uncertainty in everyday conversations, followed by "I guess" (20%) and "I'm not sure" (12.67%). On WhatsApp, "maybe" dominated, while Instagram and Twitter also featured markers like "I guess" and "I'm not sure," showing varying levels of uncertainty. These markers help convey doubt or uncertainty, particularly in casual, informal exchanges across platforms.

> **Dialogue 4. WhatsApp Conversation (Friend Group)**
> **Person A:** "Jadi, kamu jadi nonton bareng besok?"
> **Person B:** "Mmm... maybe, kalau nggak ada kerjaan, aku coba deh."
>
> **Dialogue 5. Instagram Conversation (Comment Section)**

Person A: "Aku suka banget sama lagu baru ini, kamu suka juga nggak?"
Person B: "I guess it's okay, tapi aku lebih suka lagu sebelumnya sih."

Dialogue 6. Twitter Conversation (Discussion Thread)
Person A: "Aduh, kayaknya nggak bakal selesai deh tugas ini malam."
Person B: "I'm not sure, tapi coba aja dulu deh."

The conversation examples above highlight the use of uncertainty and confidence markers across digital platforms. On WhatsApp (dialogue 4), "maybe" shows Person B's uncertainty about joining the movie, implying they're not entirely sure. On Instagram (dialogue 5), "I guess" signals a tentative opinion, expressing hesitation while remaining positive. On Twitter (dialogue 6), "I'm not sure, tapi coba aja dulu deh" conveys uncertainty about completing a task, yet still shows intent to try. These markers reflect informal, flexible communication, where doubt is expressed without pressure, aligning with the casual nature of digital conversations.

3)   Politeness Markers

The use of politeness markers on social media demonstrates notable variations across platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. These markers—though often subtle—play a significant role in shaping communication styles and reflecting the contextual nuances unique to each platform. Four key politeness markers were identified: *please*, *sorry*, *thank you*, and *excuse me*.

Table 3. Politeness Markers in Digital Communication Across Platforms

Politeness Marker	WhatsApp (Count)	Instagram (Count)	Twitter (Count)	Total Usage	Percentage
"please"	12	10	6	28	35%
"sorry"	10	9	7	26	32.5%
"thank you"	8	6	4	18	22.5%
"excuse me"	3	2	2	7	8.75%
Total	**33**	**27**	**19**	**79**	**100%**

According to Table 3, "please" is the most common politeness marker, appearing 28 times (35%), especially on WhatsApp with 12 occurrences. This suggests WhatsApp is often used for direct requests, with politeness markers enhancing interpersonal relationships. "Sorry" ranks second, used 26 times (32.5%), primarily on WhatsApp (10). "Thank you" follows, appearing 18 times (22.5%), more frequently on WhatsApp (8). "Excuse me" is the least used, with 7 instances (8.75%), mostly on WhatsApp (3). Overall, WhatsApp recorded the highest

number of politeness markers (33), highlighting its role in more structured, polite exchanges.

Dialogue 7. WhatsApp Conversation (Friend Group)
Person A: "Hey, bisa bantu beli kopi? Aku lagi sibuk nih, please."
Person B: "Tentu aja! Mau yang mana?"
Person A: "Aku pesan latte, please. Sorry ganggu ya!"
Person B: "Haha, gak masalah! Langsung aku beli. Thank you!"

Dialogue 8. Instagram Conversation (Comment Section)
Person A: "Excuse me, aku lihat story kamu, itu tempat yang kamu kunjungi kelihatan keren banget. Where is it?"
Person B: "Oh, itu di Bali! Thank you for asking!"
Person A: "Wow, Bali! Aku pengen ke sana suatu hari. Sorry kalau ganggu."
Person B: "Haha, gak ganggu kok! Let me know kalau kamu ke sana!"

Dialogue 9. Twitter Conversation (Discussion Thread)
Person A: "Sorry banget, gue baru sempat jawab DM kamu!"
Person B: "No problem! Thanks for replying!"
Person A: "Please, jangan ragu kalau mau nanya-nanya ya!"
Person B: "I will! Thanks again!"

The conversation examples in Dialogues 7-9 highlight the use of politeness markers across WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. In the WhatsApp conversation (Dialogue 7), A uses "please" and "sorry" to request help buying coffee, showing respect for B's time. B responds casually with "Of course!" and "Haha, no problem!" On Instagram (Dialogue 8), A opens with "Excuse me" to politely begin the conversation and uses "sorry" to avoid being intrusive. B replies with "thank you for asking," maintaining a friendly tone. On Twitter (Dialogue 9), A apologizes with "sorry banget" and encourages future questions with "please," to which B expresses gratitude.

4)   Familiarity Markers

This section discusses the use of familiarity markers in digital conversations across various platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. Familiarity markers are used to strengthen relationships between users and create a more relaxed and intimate atmosphere in conversations. There are five familiarity markers in this category: *lol*, *haha*, *wkwk*, *bro/sis*, and *gue*.

Table 4. Frequency of Familiarity Markers Usage

Familiarity Markers	WhatsApp (number)	Instagram (number)	Twitter (number)	Total Usage	Percent
"lol"	13	9	6	28	35%
"haha"	10	7	5	22	27.5%

"wkwk"	8	4	2	14	17.5%
"bro/sis"	6	3	3	12	15%
"gue"	4	2	2	8	5%
Total	41	25	18	84	100%

The table above highlights the use of familiarity markers in digital communication. The marker "lol" is the most frequently used, appearing 28 times (35%), followed by "haha" with 22 occurrences (27.5%) and "wkwk" with 14 uses (17.5%). These markers express humor, common in informal interactions. Additionally, "bro/sis" appears 12 times (15%), and "gue" is the least used, with only 8 occurrences (5%). WhatsApp has the highest frequency of familiarity markers (41 uses), followed by Instagram (25) and Twitter (18). These patterns reflect platform-specific conversational styles, as shown in Dialogues 10-12.

Dialogue 10. WhatsApp Conversation (Friend Group)
Person A: "Bro, kamu nonton gak kemarin?"
Person B: "Iya, wkwk. Gila sih, endingnya ngakak!"
Person A: "Haha, iya bener. Gua gak nyangka banget."
Person B: "Iya, next time nonton bareng aja, bro."
Person A: "Pasti! Gue gak sabar!"

Dialogue 11. Instagram Conversation (Comment Section)
Person A: "Sis, lagi ngapain nih?"
Person B: "Cuma santai, lagi liat-liat foto liburan. Haha."
Person A: "Seru banget ya! Gue pengen ikutan!"
Person B: "Iya dong, next time bareng ya!"
Person A: "Pasti deh, bro."

Dialogue 12. Twitter Conversation (Discussion Thread)
Person A: "Wkwk, ini lucu banget deh. Gak bisa berhenti ketawa!"
Person B: "Haha, bener banget, bro."
Person A: "Gue jadi inget kejadian itu deh."
Person B: "Hahaha, next time gue ikut juga!"

Dialogues 10-12 illustrate casual communication across digital platforms, using informal language that reflects closeness between friends. In WhatsApp (Dialogue 10), "wkwk" and "ngakak" convey amusement, with plans to watch a movie together. On Instagram (Dialogue 11), "Haha" and "Next time bareng ya!" indicate a relaxed tone and future plans. On Twitter (Dialogue 12), "wkwk" and "Haha" continue the cheerful tone, emphasizing humor. These conversations reflect the friendly, relaxed, and spontaneous nature of digital interactions.

Analysis of Language Marker Functions

Language markers play an important role in digital communication, helping users achieve various goals, such as adjusting the level of formality, conveying emotions, and creating interpersonal closeness. These functions can be systematically described as follows:

1)   Increasing Politeness in Conversation

Language markers are often used to show respect, maintain good relationships, or avoid potential conflicts in conversations. Using words like "please" or "mohon" makes requests sound more polite, while expressions like "thank you" or "terima kasih banyak" strengthen appreciation for the other person's actions. These markers appear in dialogues 13 and 14.

> **Dialogue 13. WhatsApp:**
> **Person A:** "Bisa tolong kirim file tugasnya? Thank you ya!"
> **Person B:** "Oh, tentu. Saya kirim sekarang ya, mohon ditunggu sebentar."
> **Dialogue 14. Instagram DM:**
> **Person A:** "Boleh izin repost konten ini? Saya akan mention akun Anda."
> **Person B:** "Tentu, silakan. Terima kasih sudah izin duluan."

Dialogues 13 and 14 demonstrate polite and respectful communication on digital platforms, using politeness markers to maintain a respectful tone. In Dialogue 13 (WhatsApp), Person A requests, "Can you please send the assignment file?" and ends with "Thank you!" showing appreciation. Person B responds, "Oh, sure" and provides clear instructions, maintaining politeness. In Dialogue 14 (Instagram DM), Person A asks, "May I repost this content?" and promises to mention the account, showing respect for ownership. Person B agrees, saying, "Sure, go ahead," and thanks Person A for asking first. Both conversations emphasize respectful interaction through politeness strategies.

2)   Expressing Uncertainty or Confidence

Language markers are essential in expressing uncertainty or confidence in conversation. Markers like "maybe," "I think," or "sepertinya" indicate uncertainty, allowing the speaker to offer opinions cautiously and diplomatically. In contrast, markers like "of course" or "pasti" show confidence, expressing certainty and reinforcing the speaker's argument. Both types play a key role in shaping communication,

ensuring clarity and tact. These markers can be observed in dialogues 15 and 16, highlighting their impact on conversation tone and attitude.

> **Dialogue 15. Twitter:**
> **Person A:** "Kamu yakin jadwalnya besok?"
> **Person B:** "Maybe, tapi aku cek lagi ya."
> **Dialogue 16. WhatsApp:**
> **Person A:** "Bisa selesai hari ini, kan?"
> **Person B:** "Of course, saya pastikan selesai sore ini."

In dialog 15 and 16, Language markers convey both uncertainty and confidence. On Twitter, the use of "maybe" indicates uncertainty, allowing the speaker to leave room for verifying information. In contrast, on WhatsApp, the use of "of course" reflects confidence, providing reassurance that the task will be completed as promised. These markers shape the tone of the message, evoking either caution or confidence based on the context of the communication.

3)   Creating a Friendly or Informal Atmosphere

Markers like "haha," "wkwk," "bro," "sis," or even local expressions like "cuy" contribute to a friendly and informal tone in digital communication. Their use reflects emotional closeness between users, effectively reducing the level of formality in conversations. These markers make interactions more relaxed and enjoyable, fostering stronger social connections. Additionally, these markers of familiarity are often employed to convey humor, camaraderie, or solidarity, helping to create more personal and warm exchanges within digital communication spaces.

> **Dialogue 17. WhatsApp:**
> **Person A:** "Bro, lagi di mana nih?"
> **Person B:** "Haha, masih di rumah, santai cuy."
>
> **Dialogue 18. Instagram DM:**
> **Person A:** "Sis, lucu banget outfit kamu di foto terakhir!"
> **Person B:** "Haha, makasih! Gue nyoba style baru nih."

Dialogues 17 and 18 showcase relaxed, informal language in digital communication, highlighting emotional closeness. In the WhatsApp dialogue (17), the greeting "Bro" and casual response "Haha, still at home, just chilling cuy" create a friendly, laid-back tone. Similarly, in the Instagram DM (18), "Sis" and compliments on the outfit foster a warm atmosphere, with the response "Haha, thanks! I'm trying a new

style" adding humor. These expressions reflect how informal language strengthens connection and ease in digital conversations.

Contextual Analysis

1)   The Influence of Communication Context on the Choice of Language Markers

The use of Language markers is influenced by the communication context, whether formal or informal. In formal settings, such as professional emails or interactions with superiors, politeness markers like "please," "thank you," and "I believe" are used to maintain respect and professionalism. For example, an email may read: "Dear Sir/Madam, mohon kiranya dapat mengirimkan dokumen pendukung. Terima kasih." In contrast, informal communication on platforms like WhatsApp often employs familiarity markers such as "bro," "wkwk," and "haha" to create a relaxed, friendly tone, as seen in the conversation: "Bro, nanti malam nongkrong yuk?".

> **Dialogue 19 Digital communication in WhatsApp.**
> **A:** "Bro, nanti malam nongkrong yuk?"
> **B:** "Haha, boleh. Gue jemput lo ya."

2)   The Relationship Between the Use of Language Markers and the Cultural Values/Social Identity of Gen Z in Indonesia

The use of Language markers by Generation Z in Indonesia is deeply linked to cultural values and social identity. Growing up in a collectivist culture that values social relationships and harmony, Gen Z often uses politeness markers like "please" and "thank you" to show respect and care for others, especially in workplace conversations. Meanwhile, their active digital culture influences their use of informal markers like "wkwk," "bro," and "sis," which reflect emotional closeness and intimacy. Comments on platforms like Instagram, such as "wkwk, your outfit is cool, bro," showcase their pride in both their social identity and local culture.

Findings from Interviews and FGDs

Interviews were conducted with 20 Generation Z participants, aged 18–24 years, from diverse educational and professional backgrounds. The main findings reveal several key aspects related to the use of Language markers in their digital communication.

1)   Reasons for Using Language Markers

The use of Language markers in digital communication among Generation Z is shaped by several key factors. Markers like "I mean" or "anyway" help clarify intentions, making communication more efficient and minimizing misunderstandings. They also reflect the user's personality, with informal markers like "bro," "haha," or "wkwk" creating a relaxed, intimate tone and allowing for self-expression. In formal contexts, politeness markers such as "please," "thank you," or "sorry" are used to maintain respect, particularly in interactions with older individuals or in professional settings. These markers highlight both communication efficiency and adherence to social norms.

2)   Understanding the Function of Language Markers

Participants recognized the important roles Language markers play in communication. Markers like "I think" express uncertainty or personal opinions, inviting open discussion and fostering an inclusive atmosphere. Conversely, markers like "of course" convey confidence, affirming the speaker's belief in their statement. In digital conversations, markers like "lol," "wkwk," or "I'm sorry" compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues, providing emotional depth, reducing ambiguity, and helping maintain social bonds, even in text-based communication.

> **Dialogue 20. Interview transcription**
> a)   Kalau di grup kerja, aku pakai 'mohon' atau 'terima kasih' biar kesannya lebih sopan. Tapi kalau chat sama teman, biasanya lebih santai, pakai 'wkwk' atau 'bro'.
> b)   Penanda seperti 'I think' itu kayak buffer aja, biar pendapat kita nggak terlalu kelihatan maksa.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Results

The focus group discussion involved 15 Generation Z participants, divided into three groups based on the primary platforms they frequently used: WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. The key findings of this discussion focused on two main aspects: the selection of Language markers based on the platform and the overarching patterns or themes that emerged.

1) Selection of Language Markers Based on Platform

The choice of Language markers varies significantly across platforms, each with unique communication styles. On WhatsApp, formal markers like "thank you," "please," and "it seems" are common in family or work groups, maintaining respect and social harmony. In peer chats, informal markers like "haha" and "wkwk" signal closeness and casualness. Instagram fosters a friendly tone, with markers like "bro," "sis," and "haha" strengthening social bonds. On Twitter, markers like "I think" and "maybe" are concise, reflecting the platform's emphasis on brevity. Overall, the selection of markers is shaped by each platform's context, audience, and objectives.

2) Main Patterns or Themes That Emerge

The use of Language markers among Generation Z in Indonesia reflects key themes: the balance between formal and informal contexts, the creation of digital identities, and the translation of emotions in text-based communication. In formal settings, politeness markers like "please" and "thank you" are common, while informal settings see familiarity markers like "wkwk," "bro," and "sis" to foster closeness. These markers help create a relaxed digital identity, emphasizing emotional connections. They also aid in expressing emotions like uncertainty or humor, which are often challenging to convey through text alone, making digital communication more expressive and emotionally rich.

> **Dialogue 21. The transcription of FGD:**
> a) "Di WhatsApp grup kerja, aku lebih sering pakai kata formal kayak 'mohon' atau 'maaf' biar lebih profesional."
> b) "Kalau di Instagram, penanda kayak 'bro' itu kayak template. Semua teman udah ngerti maksudnya santai."
> c) "Twitter itu lebih pendek-pendek aja. Jadi 'I think' atau 'maybe' cukup buat kasih konteks."

Discussion

Social and Cultural Meanings of Language Marker Use

The use of Language markers in digital communication by Generation Z in Indonesia reflects a fusion of local cultural values and global digital influences. Language markers, essential tools in expressing attitudes and intentions, extend beyond communication to reveal social identity. They embody values like politeness, inclusiveness, and familiarity,

shaping how Gen Z interacts on platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter.

Politeness, a cornerstone of Indonesian culture, emphasizes respect, even in informal settings. Despite English's global influence, Indonesian Gen Z retains this value in digital conversations. For instance, expressions like "Can you help me with this, please? Thank you!" on WhatsApp reflect English's adoption while preserving Indonesia's polite cultural essence. Nkirote, (2024) observed similar trends, where digital conversations blur formal and informal lines while maintaining respect.

Inclusivity is evident in terms like "guys," used to address groups regardless of gender. Siagian & Yuliana (2023) highlighted such terms' role in fostering equality. Indonesian Gen Z has adapted "guys" to replace "teman-teman," reflecting egalitarian values while retaining local linguistic nuances.

Familiarity manifests in markers like "lol," "haha," and "wkwk," creating relaxed, socially connected interactions. While "wkwk" is local, "lol" and "omg" showcase global trends influencing Indonesia's digital culture, blending global and local elements seamlessly.

The Influence of Cultural Values on Language Marker Choice

The use of Language markers in Indonesia demonstrates a fascinating balance between local cultural values, such as collectivism and politeness, and the influence of global communication trends. Markers like "I'm sorry" and "please" are used to express respect, particularly in interactions with elders, reflecting the high value placed on maintaining harmonious relationships. Conversely, markers such as "lol" and the local "wkwk" are popular in peer-to-peer conversations, showcasing a relaxed yet socially cohesive communication style. This duality aligns with Peng (2023), who found that while younger generations worldwide adopt elements of global language, they retain local values like respect and familiarity.

Indonesian Generation Z's use of Language markers illustrates this blend. In interactions with elders, respectful markers such as "please" and "terima kasih" dominate, reinforcing hierarchical respect. Among peers, informal markers like "wkwk," "haha," and "bro" convey familiarity and solidarity. This hybrid approach contrasts with Western norms, where individualism often shapes digital communication. In the United States, markers like "seriously" or "whatever" are used more directly and sometimes sarcastically,

reflecting a culture that values personal expression over group harmony (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2011).

Cultural influences significantly affect Language marker selection. Priwati & Sanitioso (2024) highlights how collectivistic cultures, such as Indonesia, emphasize respectful communication and group cohesion. Generation Z in Indonesia adapts their language to social contexts, using formal markers in hierarchical interactions and casual ones among friends. In contrast, Frankenberg-Garcia (2018) observe that in individualistic cultures, digital communication often prioritizes personal attitudes, with markers conveying direct or humorous expressions.

Indonesian Generation Z's Language marker use reflects their ability to balance tradition and modernity. While adopting global markers like "lol" and "omg," they contextualize them to maintain cultural values of politeness and inclusivity. This hybrid style highlights their adaptability, showcasing a unique digital identity shaped by local heritage and global connectivity.

Implications for Digital Communication

The findings on Generation Z's use of Language markers in digital communication in Indonesia provide valuable insights into evolving interaction patterns on platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. This tech-savvy generation uses Language markers not only to enhance communication but also to craft a social identity that reflects their unique cultural and global values.

Globalization's influence is evident in the widespread use of English Language markers, even among predominantly Indonesian speakers. Markers like "please," "thank you," and "sorry" highlight the enduring significance of politeness, deeply rooted in Indonesian culture, while accommodating the global lingua franca's inclusivity. Despite the informality of digital communication, these markers emphasize the priority placed on maintaining harmonious relationships.

Casual markers like "guys," "lol," "wkwk," and "omg" create intimate, inclusive atmospheres, fostering emotional connections while challenging traditional hierarchies. This reflects a growing trend toward egalitarian communication, aligning with findings by Lifintsev & Wellbrock (2019). The adaptability of Generation Z in adopting terms like "guys" across genders illustrates a shift toward inclusivity and cross-cultural Languages, as observed by (Siagian & Yuliana, 2023).

These trends underscore the need for businesses and educators to adapt communication strategies to resonate with this generation. By

understanding the blend of global and local influences in their digital interactions, stakeholders can engage more effectively with this dynamic, digitally connected group.

Conclusion

This study highlights that the use of Language markers by Generation Z in Indonesia reflects the values of politeness, familiarity, and inclusiveness in digital communication. Markers such as "please," "thank you," "guys," and "lol" demonstrate efforts to maintain positive social relationships and strengthen emotional connections in conversations. The characteristics of different digital platforms—such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter—play a role in shaping the use of these markers. Informal platforms like Instagram and Twitter often feature markers of familiarity, while WhatsApp balances formality with social closeness. Additionally, Generation Z demonstrates adaptability to globalization, evident in their extensive use of English and casual communication elements. In this context, Language markers serve to affirm social identity and foster an inclusive space, which is vital for interpersonal communication.

The social and cultural implications of these findings suggest that, despite the informality of digital communication, Generation Z continues to uphold values of politeness. Furthermore, the use of English Language markers underscores the influence of globalization, introducing flexible and international elements to their communication. This fosters a broader communication space, enabling more egalitarian and open interaction between generations and diverse communities. Future research should explore the differences in the use of Language markers among other generations, such as Millennials (Generation Y) and Generation X. A deeper understanding of these generational distinctions would provide valuable insights into how social and cultural values interact with technological advancements to shape communication patterns across different age groups.

References

Journals

Danielewicz-Betz, A. (2013). (Mis)Use of E-Mail in Student-Faculty Interaction: Implications for University Instruction in Germany, Saudi Arabia and Japan. *JALTCALL, 1*, 1832–4215.

https://doi.org/10.29140/jaltcall.v9n1.147

Fitriani, R. S., Hidayati, R. P. P., & Budiarti, A. (2021). Language Markers and Events on Social Media in New Habit Era of COVID-19 Outbreak. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, *5*(2), 1061–1071. https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS2.1698

Frankenberg-Garcia, A. (2018). Investigating the Collocations Available to EAP Writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *35*, 93–104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2018.07.003

Fraser, B. (1999). What Are Discourse Markers? *Journal of Languages*, *31*, 931–952. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5

Lifintsev, D., & Wellbrock, W. (2019). Cross-Cultural Communication in The Digital Age. *Communication Studies*, *1*(28), 93–104. https://doi.org/10.25768/fal.ec.n28.a05

Nkirote, A. (2024). The Languages of Politeness in Cross-Cultural Communication. *European Journal of Linguistics*, *3*(3), 27–39. https://doi.org/10.47941/ejl.2052

Peng, Y. (2023). Understanding the Cultural Identity of EFL Learners from the Eco-Linguistics Perspective: Evidence from Students in Arts College Before and After the COVID-19 Epidemic Period. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1249334

Priwati, A. R., & Sanitioso, R. B. (2024). Exploring National Identity and Collective Memory Across Cultures: Comparison of Indonesia and France. *Frontiers in Political Science*, *6*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1233210

Ramírez-Esparza, N., Chung, C. K., Sierra-Otero, G., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2011). Cross-Cultural Constructions of Self-Schemas: Americans and Mexicans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *43*(2), 233–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022110385231

Seyfi, S., Vo-Thanh, T., & Zaman, M. (2024). Hospitality in the Age of Gen Z: A Critical Reflection on Evolving Customer and Workforce Expectations. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *36*(13), 118–134. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-01-2024-0035/full/html

Siagian, N. R., & Yuliana, N. (2023). The Role of Social Media in Generation Z Communication. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Advanced Research and Innovation*, *1*(3), 109–118. https://doi.org/10.58860/ijari.v1i3.27

Telaumbanua, Y. A., Zendrato, N. E. C., Nazara, B. T., & Harefa, E. C. (2024). Analyzing the Language Style of Generation Z Teenagers in Their Instagram Posts. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature*, *5*(2), 588–600. https://doi.org/10.56185/jelita.v5i2.790

Books

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambride University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813085

Schiffrin, D. (2008). Discourse Markers: Language, Meaning, and Context. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 54–75). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470753460.ch4

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2004). Relevance Theory. In L. Horn & G. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Languages* (pp. 606–632). Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756959.ch27