

JES (1) (2026), E-ISSN 3031-4232

JES**Journal of Educational Studies**<https://ejournal.baleliterasi.org/index.php/JEs>

Strategic Use of Youth Slang in TikTok Live Marketing and Its Pedagogical Implication for English Language Education

***¹Windasari, ²Rini Listyowati, ³Fitrah Yuliawati**

^{1,2,3} *Universitas Islam Madura*

¹*windasarimadura6@gmail.com, ²listyowatirini7@gmail.com, ³fitrahyuliawati@uim.ac.id*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of youth slang as a communication strategy in TikTok Live marketing and its implications for English language learning. The development of social media has influenced language use, especially among the younger generation, who tend to use informal and dynamic language in digital communication. TikTok Live, as an interactive platform, allows hosts to communicate directly with audiences, making language an important tool for building engagement and persuasive communication, particularly in the promotion of fashion and beauty products. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method involving ten TikTok Live hosts from various brands and online stores. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The results showed that youth slang was used strategically to increase audience engagement, create relaxed and friendly communication, and adapt communication styles to the characteristics of the audience, which is predominantly the younger generation. In addition, the use of slang helped reduce social distance between hosts and viewers and strengthened interaction during the live session. The research findings also showed that digital language practices differ from formal language taught in the classroom, so that the integration of digital language in learning can improve sociolinguistic awareness and students' communication competence in English learning.

Keywords: *Youth Slang, TikTok Live, Digital Marketing, Sociolinguistic Awareness, EFL Learning*

1. Introduction

Language is the primary human tool for communication and building social relationships. According to (Klein, 2024) Language is the most effective tool for conveying messages, thoughts, feelings, and building relationships and social interactions between humans through the communication process. Through language, a person not only conveys information but also demonstrates identity, attitude, and closeness to others Masyita (2025) state that language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a means of forming and marking social identity in everyday interactions. For example, the use of greetings like "me-you" in casual conversation conveys familiarity and solidarity, while the use of "me-you" indicates a more formal and distant situation. In scientific studies, language is studied in the field of linguistics, the science that systematically examines the structure, system, and use of language. Linguistics encompasses various branches, such as phonology (sounds), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (language use in context). In scientific studies, language is studied within the field of linguistics, which is defined as the systematic study of language. Linguistics examines the structure and organization of language at various levels, including phonology (the study of sound systems), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence structure), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (the use of language in context) (Yule, 2022). However, language is not understood solely as a structural system but also as a social phenomenon used in everyday life.

Therefore, a branch of linguistics called sociolinguistics has developed, which specifically examines the relationship between language and society. According to (Yule, 2022) Sociolinguistics examines how language varies and changes based on social factors such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, and situational context. It also examines how language reflects social identity, group membership, and power relations within society. In sociolinguistic studies, language is understood as part of social practices that are always influenced by factors such as age, social background, communication situation, and interaction goals. As a result, language variations often emerge within certain groups or communities, including among teenagers. For example, the use of slang such as "anjay," "bestie," "spill," or "healing" which are popular on social media not only function as communication tools but also as markers of group identity and forms of social solidarity among teenagers. Social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of group

identity and a form of social solidarity among adolescents.

The development of social media has also encouraged the emergence of new, more flexible and informal language variations. Users, particularly younger generations, tend to use slang to demonstrate social identity and build rapport with audiences in digital communication. This demonstrates that language in social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a means of building social relationships and group identity (Georgakopoulou, 2021). Recent research shows that digital communication is fostering the emergence of informal language variations and slang among younger generations. (Androutsopoulos, 2021) found that young people frequently use slang and informal expressions on social media to construct social identities and strengthen group relationships. Furthermore, (Zappavigna, 2022) explains that social media creates new language practices where users use informal language to build interpersonal relationships and group identities. Through the use of specific language styles, slang, and distinctive symbols, adolescents construct a collective identity and strengthen a sense of togetherness within their peer groups, in the digital space, language becomes a strategic tool for expressing attitudes, demonstrating group membership, and maintaining social relationships (Fransisca et al., 2025). The development of digital technology is increasingly expanding the scope for the use of these language variations, particularly through social media, which has become part of the daily lives of the younger generation. One social media platform that is very popular among the younger generation is TikTok, a short video-based social media application that allows its users to create, share, and watch creative content of short duration. (Karataş & Karakoç, 2024) state that TikTok has become one of the short video-based social media platforms widely used by the younger generation, influencing not only entertainment practices but also social behavior, identity expression, and digital engagement. It is equipped with various interactive features such as comments, live broadcasts, and an algorithmic system that adapts content to user interests. TikTok has also become an effective platform for digital communication and marketing. (Montag, C., Yang, H., & Elhai, 2021) stated that TikTok encourages a spontaneous and informal communication style that appeals to the younger generation. Furthermore, (Omar, B., & Dequan, 2020) found that TikTok's interactive features can increase audience engagement and participation.

Through the TikTok Live feature, users can interact directly with their audience. In this context, language plays a crucial role, particularly in marketing fashion and beauty products (for example, hosts use persuasive phrases like "this is a must-have," "the color automatically glows on the skin," or "it's a best seller, don't miss out" to entice viewers to buy.) Hosts not only explain

products but also strive to build rapport and capture the audience's attention. In TikTok Live marketing practices, the use of youth slang is often seen as part of a communication strategy (Amalia et al., 2025) shows that the use of slang by Generation Z on social media is not just a form of informal language, but rather a communication strategy used to express identity, strengthen group solidarity, and adapt to the dynamics of interactions in the digital space. Slang is used to create a relaxed, familiar impression, and align with the language style of a young audience (for example, the use of words like "bestie," "gas checkout," "spill dong," "real pict no tipu-tipu," or "this is really cheap" creates a closer and less awkward communication feel.) Thus, slang functions not only as a variation of informal language but also as a strategic tool to increase engagement and marketing appeal such as when brands use trending terms like "POV," "no cap," or "bestie" on platforms like TikTok to create intimacy, strengthen emotional connections with young audiences, and encourage higher engagement such as likes, comments, and shares. In the context of digital marketing, using informal language like slang can increase rapport between marketers and their audiences. Casual language makes communication feel more personal, making it easier for audiences to interact (Zhu, Y., & Chen, 2022).

Several previous studies have examined the use of slang and digital language on TikTok from various perspectives. (Hermansyah & Sadapotto 2025) used a qualitative sociolinguistic approach and found that exposure to English slang on TikTok helped students enrich their vocabulary and understand informal expressions, although it sometimes caused difficulties in formal language contexts. Furthermore (Karendra et al., 2025) used a quantitative survey method and revealed that the use of slang in TikTok advertisements significantly increased audience engagement and attracted young consumers, but did not necessarily affect long-term trust levels. Meanwhile, (Vincy et al., 2025) used a qualitative case study design and found that students tended to use cultural equivalence strategies in translating slang expressions from TikTok, with more emphasis on contextual meaning than literal translation.

However, research specifically analyzing how youth slang is strategically used in TikTok Live marketing of fashion and beauty products is still limited. Furthermore, the implications of this digital language use for English language learning have also been scarce. Although the use of youth slang in TikTok Live is increasingly common and part of marketing communication strategies, there is still little research analyzing how it is used consciously and strategically to build audience engagement. The relationship between this digital language phenomenon and English language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), is also rarely

studied. This situation demonstrates a difference between the language used on social media and the language taught in the classroom. In English learning, particularly in the EFL context, teaching materials typically emphasize formal language and adherence to grammatical rules, such as the use of standard sentence structures, formal expressions, and dialogue in academic or business situations. Meanwhile, the language used on social media tends to be more relaxed, flexible, and adaptable to the conversational situation. Users often use abbreviations, exaggerated expressions to express feelings, and mix English and Indonesian. This difference indicates that the use of language that is real and close to students' daily lives has not been widely incorporated into the classroom learning process.

Therefore, analyzing the use of youth slang in TikTok Live marketing can provide insights into authentic language practices relevant to improving students' sociolinguistic awareness and communication competency. The urgency of this research lies in the need to bridge the gap between the rapidly evolving digital language phenomenon and English language learning, which still tends to be oriented solely towards formal forms. Based on this background, this study is entitled "Strategic Use of Youth Slang in TikTok Live Marketing and Its Pedagogical Implications for English Language Education." This study aims to analyze how youth slang is strategically used in TikTok Live marketing of fashion and beauty products and identify its pedagogical implications for English language learning. To achieve this objective, this study formulates the following research questions: How is youth slang strategically used in TikTok Live marketing of fashion and beauty products, and what are its pedagogical implications for English language learning?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

This study involved 10 TikTok Live hosts from various brands and online stores, such as Wardah, Pixy, and several others. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique because they actively promote products through TikTok Live and frequently use slang when interacting with their audiences. The hosts came from various product categories, such as fashion, beauty, and electronics.

The purposive sampling technique was used because this study aimed to select participants with direct experience with the phenomenon being studied. According to (Patton, 2015), purposive

sampling allows researchers to select information-rich participants, thus providing in-depth understanding of the research topic. Furthermore, (Cresswell, 2012) stated that in qualitative research, participants are selected based on their ability to help researchers understand the main phenomenon being studied.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Instrument of Collecting Data

This study used several instruments to collect data, including observation sheets, interview guides, and documentation. Observation sheets were used to record how hosts interacted with viewers and their use of slang during TikTok Live sessions. Interview guides were developed to explore participants' reasons for using slang and its impact on audience engagement and marketing communications. Furthermore, documentation in the form of live recordings, screenshots, and viewer comments was collected as supporting data to strengthen the research findings.

According to (Sugiyono, 2022), data collection techniques in qualitative research can be carried out through observation, interviews, documentation, and triangulation. Furthermore, (Cresswell, 2012) also stated that qualitative research generally uses multiple data sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding and increase research validity.

2.2.2 Techniques for Collecting Data

Data in this study was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. First, observations were conducted by observing TikTok Live events to see how hosts used slang and interacted with audiences during product promotions. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected hosts to understand the reasons for slang use and its impact on communication effectiveness. Third, documentation in the form of live recordings, screenshots, and audience comments was used as supporting data to strengthen the analysis and ensure data triangulation.

According to (Johnson & Stake, 1996), case study research typically uses multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documentation, to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Furthermore, (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, 2018) explain that data triangulation is essential for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research by combining multiple data sources.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis process consisted of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant data related to the use of slang in TikTok Live marketing communications. Data presentation was carried out by grouping findings into themes such as the types of slang used, the reasons for slang use, and their impact on audience engagement. Next, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns identified, supported by interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the credibility of the research. According (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2014), qualitative data analysis consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. These stages help researchers analyze data systematically and identify patterns in the research findings.

3. Results

Based on interviews with ten participants who hosted TikTok Live for various brands and online stores, several key themes were identified regarding the use of slang in marketing communications during the live sessions. These themes were derived through an analysis of participants' responses, which shared similar meanings regarding their experiences using slang when interacting with their audience. A summary of the themes identified in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Analysis Themes

Theme	Supportive Participants	Key Findings
Slang increases audience engagement	P1, P6, P7	Slang makes communication more interesting and entertaining, thus increasing interaction.
Slang creates relaxed and friendly communication.	P3, P4, P9	Slang creates a more informal atmosphere and reduces the distance between the host and the audience.
Slang is used to suit the Gen Z audience.	P2, P5, P10	Most of the audience is Gen Z, who are more familiar with slang.

Based on Table 2, three main themes emerged from the interviews with TikTok Live hosts.

1. Slang as a Tool for Enhancing Audience Engagement

The first theme indicates that slang contributes significantly to increasing audience engagement during TikTok Live sessions. Participants emphasized that informal and youth-oriented expressions attract viewers' attention and sustain participation throughout live broadcasts. Slang expressions were perceived as making promotional communication more dynamic, entertaining, and relatable compared to formal marketing language.

Participant P6 explained that viewers tend to remain longer in live sessions when the host uses casual expressions commonly found in everyday online interactions. This suggests that slang functions as an engagement strategy that transforms promotional discourse into interactive entertainment. From a communicative perspective, slang appears to facilitate participatory communication, encouraging viewers to respond through comments, reactions, and purchasing inquiries. Thus, linguistic informality operates as a mechanism for increasing audience involvement and maintaining viewer retention.

2. Slang in Creating a Relaxed and Interpersonal Communication Climate

The second theme highlights the interpersonal function of slang in reducing communicative distance between hosts and audiences. Participants P3 and P4 noted that slang creates a conversational atmosphere resembling peer-to-peer interaction rather than seller–consumer communication. The use of informal vocabulary fosters psychological closeness, allowing audiences to perceive hosts as approachable and authentic individuals.

This finding indicates that slang serves a relational function by constructing social intimacy within digital environments. The relaxed tone produced by slang encourages viewers to participate actively by asking questions or expressing opinions without hesitation. Consequently, slang contributes to the establishment of a supportive interactional space where communication becomes dialogic rather than transactional. The findings suggest that linguistic style plays a crucial role in shaping audience comfort and trust during live marketing communication.

3. Linguistic Adaptation to Generation Z Audience Characteristics

The third theme reflects strategic linguistic adaptation based on audience demographics. Participants consistently reported that the majority of their TikTok viewers belong to Generation Z, a group highly familiar with slang usage in digital communication. Hosts intentionally adjusted their language choices to align with the communicative norms and cultural expectations of this audience segment.

Participants P2 and P10 emphasized that using slang enables hosts to appear culturally relevant and socially connected to younger viewers. This adaptation demonstrates audience-centered communication practices, where linguistic choices are shaped by platform culture and user identity. Therefore, functions as an index of group membership, signaling shared cultural understanding between hosts and audiences.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the findings reveal that slang operates as a marker of digital identity and generational belonging. By employing slang, hosts position themselves within the same communicative community as their viewers, thereby strengthening engagement and credibility.

4. Integrated Interpretation of Themes

Collectively, the three themes indicate that slang usage in TikTok Live marketing serves multiple interconnected functions: communicative, relational, and strategic. First, it enhances engagement by increasing entertainment value. Second, it fosters interpersonal closeness through informal interaction. Third, it enables effective audience adaptation aligned with generational linguistic norms.

These findings suggest that slang is not merely informal language but a deliberate communicative strategy embedded within digital marketing practices. The integration of entertainment, relational bonding, and audience alignment demonstrates how linguistic choices influence interactional success in social media environments. Therefore, slang emerges as a significant sociolinguistic resource that supports both communication effectiveness and marketing outcomes in live-stream commerce contexts.

4. Discussion

The research findings show that the use of slang in TikTok Live not only serves as a form of informal language variation but also as a communication strategy in the context of digital marketing. Slang is used by hosts to create more engaging, relaxed communication, and resonate with the characteristics of their predominantly younger audience.

First, the use of slang has been shown to increase viewer engagement during live sessions. Casual, popular language among young people makes communication more engaging and entertaining, encouraging viewers to stay tuned. This finding suggests that the host's language style can influence the level of audience interaction in digital communication. Second, slang also plays

a role in creating closer relationships between hosts and viewers. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language variations such as slang are often used to reflect social closeness and group identity. This concept is widely discussed in sociolinguistic studies by (Labov, 1972), who explains that language variations can reflect the social relationships and community identity of its speakers. In the context of TikTok Live, the use of slang helps hosts create a more relaxed communication atmosphere and reduces the distance between the presenter and the audience. Third, the use of slang is also related to the characteristics of TikTok's audience, which is dominated by Generation Z. This generation is known for having a more informal and creative communication style on social media. Therefore, the use of slang is one way for hosts to adapt their communication style to their audience's preferences.

The findings of this study also have implications for English language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Digital communication also provides opportunities for authentic language learning. (Reinhardt, 2021) explains that social media can help improve students' sociolinguistic competence through exposure to real-life language. Furthermore, (Godwin-Jones, 2022) states that platforms like TikTok can support English learning by providing authentic communication contexts. The phenomenon of slang use on social media shows that language practices in everyday life often differ from the formal language taught in the classroom. According to (Hymes, 1972), language competence encompasses not only grammatical skills but also the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. Therefore, understanding language variations such as slang can help students develop sociolinguistic awareness in language use.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of youth slang plays a crucial role as a communication strategy in TikTok Live marketing, particularly in the promotion of fashion and beauty products. The results show that slang is intentionally used by hosts to create more engaging, relaxed, and interactive communication with their audiences. The use of informal language and trending terms can increase audience engagement, encourage audience participation, and maintain attention during the live session. Furthermore, slang helps build closer relationships between hosts and viewers by reducing social distance and creating a more intimate and comfortable communication atmosphere. The use of slang is also influenced by the characteristics of the TikTok audience,

which is dominated by the younger generation, who are more familiar with informal and creative communication styles.

Furthermore, TikTok Live is an effective persuasive communication space because it allows hosts to spontaneously adjust language based on audience responses. Research findings also indicate that digital language practices differ from formal language taught in the classroom, as communication on social media tends to be more flexible, contextual, and dynamic. Therefore, the use of youth slang in digital contexts can contribute to improving students' sociolinguistic awareness and communication competency in English language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Overall, this study suggests that the strategic use of youth slang in TikTok Live marketing not only increases audience engagement but also provides important insights into bridging the gap between formal language learning and authentic digital communication practices.

References

- Amalia, F., Umar, F., & Zakaria, U. (2025). Penggunaan slang dalam komunikasi virtual pada media sosial oleh generasi Z. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9, 5242–5254.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2021). *Language and digital media: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.5005/jp/books/13016_6
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fransisca, V., Astuti, A. W., Siber, P., & Internasional, C. (2025). The influence of slang on social identity formation among teenagers in the digital era. *[Journal Title]*, 4(4), 205–213.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2021). *Small stories research, social media and the sociolinguistics of the digital age*. Routledge.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2022). Emerging technologies: TikTok and language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*.
- Hermansyah, S., & Sadapotto, A. (2025). The use of English slang in learning English by Generation Z students on TikTok social media: A sociolinguistic approach. *Macca: Journal of Linguistic Applied Research*, 2(2), 3063–4679.

- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Penguin Books.
- Johnson, K. E., & Stake, R. E. (1996). The art of case study research. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80(4), 556. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329758>
- Karataş, S., & Karakoç, E. (2024). The virtual world platform “TikTok”: A study on Generation Z. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 11(2), 517–537. <https://doi.org/10.17680/erciyesiletisim.1440628>
- Karendra, J., Dewi, M. K., Firdaus, N., Amilia, N., Daffa, M., Sutisna, P., & Ridwan, M. (2025). Analisis penggunaan bahasa gaul dalam iklan Pop Mie. *[Journal Title]*, 4(1), 1–10.
- Klein, L. (2024). The function of work in human life. In *The meaning of work* (pp. 33–41). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429482427-3>
- Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Masyita, A. R. (2025). Bahasa sebagai wahana pembentukan identitas sosial dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. *Maliki Interdisciplinary Journal (MIJ)*, 3, 497–503. <http://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mij/index>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Montag, C., Yang, H., & Elhai, J. D. (2021). On the psychology of TikTok use: A first glimpse from empirical findings. *[Journal Title]*.
- Omar, B., & Dequan, W. (2020). Watch, share or create: The influence of personality traits and user motivation on TikTok mobile video usage. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 14(4), 121–137.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Reinhardt, J. (2021). *Social media in second and foreign language teaching and learning*. Language Teaching.
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Vincy, D., Bahrudin, Y., Rohaniyah, J., & Madura, U. I. (2025). An analysis translation slang language based on sociolinguistic perspective. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 12(1), 2387–2409. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v12i1.6613>
- Yule, G. (2022). *The study of language* (8th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Zappavigna, M. (2022). *Digital discourse and social media communication*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Zhu, Y., & Chen, H. (2022). Social media and consumer engagement: The role of informal communication in digital marketing. *[Journal Title]*.