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Social Communication and Language Use in Digital Era: A Critical Multiliteracies View

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how social communication and language use among university students are shaped by digital media, using a critical multiliteracies perspective. In an era where online interaction dominates daily communication, especially among youth, understanding the evolving nature of language practices becomes crucial. The study involved 40 EFL undergraduate students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang who participated in project-based tasks involving digital literacy, reflective writing, and multiliteracy activities. Data were collected through student-created digital artifacts, observations, and reflective interviews. The analysis revealed that students used a blend of formal and informal language, frequently engaging in code-switching, digital slang, and multimodal expressions to construct meaning and identity. While digital tools facilitated creativity and expressive freedom, challenges emerged in maintaining academic tone and critical awareness. The findings highlight the importance of integrating multiliteracies pedagogy into

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language education, enabling students to critically navigate digital discourse while developing communicative competence. This study contributes to the growing body of research on digital literacies by offering insights into how multilingual learners make sense of social interaction in technologically mediated environments. It also offers pedagogical implications for language teachers seeking to bridge traditional literacies with the evolving demands of the digital age.

Keywords: Literacy Skill; Social Interaction; Language Usage; Digital Era; Multiliteracy

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, technology and the internet have become integral to the daily lives of individuals, characterizing this period as the digital era. This era has introduced significant transformations in communication, driven by the rapid advancement of digital technologies connected to the internet. The widespread availability of smartphones, laptops, and diverse internet networks has effectively addressed various needs across multiple sectors, particularly in information technology ^[1].

Moreover, the digital era has created substantial opportunities for innovation and achievement across various domains, including ideological, economic, cultural, and political spheres. The term “digital age” describes the period that began with the widespread adoption of digital technology at the close of the 20th century and continues to evolve alongside advancements in technology, becoming increasingly embedded in everyday lives. Embracing the changes brought about by the digital age is essential for fostering growth and success in an interconnected global landscape ^[2].

The rapid growth of technology and the internet also has a significant influence on language use, which can be seen in the decline in the level of ability of several generations in good oral communication, without using code mixing or code switching in interacting ^[3]. In plain view, the oral interaction using codes between slang, foreign languages, national languages, and local languages is once encountered when the young generation interacts among them on campus or public spaces. Moreover, the occurrence of such interaction models is also inseparable from the rapid development of cyberspace that can be accessed by anyone and anywhere, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, YouTube, etc. Furthermore, the young generation communication model not only changes in oral interaction, but in all lines of communication, which eventually creates new forms of communication, such as the

use of emojis, hashtags, shorthand, images, GIFs, etc.

The rise of digital platforms—such as Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, and YouTube—has created new models of communication that are more informal, visual, and immediate. Language has evolved into hybrid forms, combining text with digital visuals such as hashtags, stickers, GIFs, and memes. One significant example is the influence of K-pop culture, especially BTS, which has promoted the use of Korean phrases, expressions, and interaction styles in global online communication among youths ^[4]. This linguistic influence is evident in their online interactions, where fans often incorporate Korean words, expressions, and even sentence structures into their English conversations. Moreover, BTS’s use of social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Weverse has fostered a unique mode of communication characterized by emojis, hashtags, and playful language, further blurring the lines between different linguistic registers. As a result, the pervasive presence of K-pop, particularly BTS, contributes significantly to the evolving landscape of youth language, where cultural influences intertwine with digital communication trends, shaping a vibrant and dynamic linguistic repertoire among the younger generation.

At the same time, the digital communication landscape raises concerns about the quality of interaction, politeness norms, and clarity in language use. Informal styles dominate, yet the awareness of language as a reflection of social identity and interpersonal relationships is often overlooked. These phenomena raise a crucial question: how can we ensure that digital communication remains socially and ethically responsible?

This is where critical multiliteracies offer a vital lens. Moving beyond traditional literacies, the concept emphasizes the ability to engage with diverse forms of communication—textual, visual, spatial, and digital—while developing critical awareness of the power, bias, and social implications embedded in language use. Despite some existing studies on language use in digital spaces, there re-

mains a gap in understanding how young people critically navigate their social interactions and multiliteracy practices, especially in the Indonesian context.

The use of language in the digital era has created a strong sense of urgency across various sectors, as individuals, organizations, and governments must quickly adapt to rapid technological change. In business, companies must continuously update their digital strategies to remain competitive in a fast-evolving market. In education, the way students learn has shifted, requiring teachers to embrace new technologies to prepare learners for the digital workforce. Governments, too, must adapt by providing efficient and secure digital services that meet public needs. In the health sector, digital advancements in medical technology have supported professionals in delivering improved care. Meanwhile, the rise of online activities has increased the demand for strong digital security to protect data and prevent cyber threats. These changes highlight the pressing need for all sectors to embrace innovation to stay relevant, efficient, and secure in this digital age ^[5,6]. In line with the digital communication and language use, multiliteracy criticism can be the solution to see the situation and condition among young generation interaction. Critical multiliteracy in social communication and language usage is an approach that emphasizes the importance of developing critical thinking skills, particularly in the way we use language and communicate in various social contexts. Through multiliteracy critics a use of language can be analysed more deeply, because language not only about conveys information but also reflects social forces, identities, and cultural practices in a particular society. Therefore, a view related to critical multiliteracy needs to be understood as one approach in critiquing the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the use of language and social communication occurs.

This research begins with the phenomenon observed among the younger generation living around Tangerang and Jakarta, and this study examines their language use in both online and offline communication. For a moment, it seems that the young generation is too ignorant and relaxed when communicating and even more inclined to prefer in using abbreviations of words, slang words, it is not uncommon for them to even use emojis when communicating online. Consequently, it is feared that the declining

awareness of the younger generation in using good communication language will create a gap in understanding and application of good language for the young generation of Indonesia. With these concerns, researchers conducted studies related to social communication and language use among the younger generation, because according to a linguist that the speaker of the language will affect the continuity and preservation of the language itself ^[7].

The research will be conducted in two different areas of Indonesia, each representing distinct social communication styles shaped by their cultural contexts. Jakarta, the capital city, is known for its diverse population and culture. It functions as a melting pot of various ethnicities and languages, with Bahasa Indonesia serving as the national language ^[8]. In Jakarta, many young people also communicate in English, particularly in social contexts such as business, education, and entertainment. In contrast, Tangerang is a city in the province of Banten, adjacent to Jakarta. It has a more homogeneous population, with most residents primarily speaking Bahasa Indonesia. However, due to its proximity to Jakarta, many young people in Tangerang also use English in their daily lives, especially in academic and professional settings ^[9].

In terms of social interaction, Jakarta and Tangerang also have different characteristics. Jakarta is a fast-paced and dynamic city, offering diverse range of social activities and events where young people can interact with people from different backgrounds and cultures, while Tangerang is a city that exhibits a more relaxed atmosphere and adheres to a more conventional approach to social engagement ^[10]. The adolescent cohort tends to primarily involve themselves within the confines of their particular social groups and familial spheres.

These places are chosen due to the situation and language transformation among the young generation is massive in their social media platform or daily interactions. The investigation of language usage and social interaction among younger generations in Jakarta and Tangerang has the potential and valuable insights into the cultural and linguistic variations prevalent in these two regions.

Otherwise, in the context of social communication and language usage, critical multiliteracy involves several key components, such as Interpersonal skills: the ability to communicate effectively in different social contexts,

including awareness of how language use affects interpersonal relationships and how to use language in building positive relationships and resolve conflicts ^[11–13].

This involves an understanding of how language use is shaped by different social and cultural contexts, and how to use language effectively in different settings. Critical analysis: The ability to critically analysis language use in different contexts, including the social, cultural, and political implications of language use. Otherwise, the engagement with the comprehension of how language can be employed to fabricate and fortify power structures, along with the means to question and oppose the utilization of oppressive language.

In line with that, the implementation of critical multiliteracy in social communication and language use stands as a noteworthy approach capable of fostering the acquisition of skills and awareness essential for effective communication within a diverse and complex society. Furthermore, it poses a challenge to social disparities and injustices (Lauren, 2016).

This study aims to address the social communication and language use phenomena among the younger generation in their interactions. The objective is to find answers to several research questions: (1) How does the young generation interact socially communication interaction in the digital era? (2) How is language usage by the young generation in their social communication? (3) How can multiliteracy critics be involved in the young generation's communication and language use?

The study about social communication and language usage is not something new in this era, but throughout this research, the researcher would like to emphasize the language use and social communication in the digital era, due to the young generation's interaction having lots of styles and obstacles.

1.1. Social Communication in the Digital Era

The models of communication in the current digital era exhibit a wide range of diversity, encompassing direct communication such as face-to-face interaction, as well as communication facilitated through the internet network utilizing platforms like social media, WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, Instagram, email, and numerous others. However, people today more often use social me-

dia—such as WhatsApp and Messenger—for interaction and communication. With the transformation of societal interaction paradigms, individuals must gain a profound understanding of the rules, regulations, and protocols of electronic communication to prevent misunderstandings among users and interlocutors. It is common for certain individuals, particularly those who are younger, to use symbols or emojis in digital communication. In conjunction with reducing the duration required to construct written discourse, this approach also facilitates the expression of their sentiment ^[14,15].

Furthermore, relying on emojis, and certain symbols in digital communication can make users lazier in constructing text by , so attention to proper language use in the digital age is necessary to ensure communication remains understandable, polite, and effective for the future generation.

The development of digital technology has expanded opportunities for social communication, making social media a very popular medium among teenagers, students, and workers ^[16]. However, the use of language in this digital space often poses challenges, such as maintaining politeness, interpreting emojis, understanding abbreviated messages that cause misunderstandings, and conflicts between individuals or groups.

For a digital generation, digital literacy and understanding of the use of good and correct language are highly recommended in avoiding digital communication conflicts. Previous research also note that while digital platforms provide a separate space in interact, users sometimes forget that recipients have their own emotions and ways, when getting digital messages, especially the messages include abbreviations, emojis or memes ^[17]. This also requires a person to practice language in communicating according to existing semantic rules to avoid these misunderstandings. Social communication in the digital era refers to the way of communication and social interaction among population with technology. Through the internet and social media, digital communication has become a pervasive and influential part of social life,

In line with that, social communication in the digital era takes many forms, including: (1) Instant Messaging: People can share text, photos, and multimedia and converse in real time with one another by using instant mes-

saging services like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Telegram. (2) Social Media: People may interact and communicate with others to share information, and develop connections using social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Video Calls: Video calling services like Zoom, Skype, and FaceTime enable individuals to have face-to-face conversations, even if they are in different locations. (3) Online Gaming: Online gaming platforms such as Fortnite, Minecraft, and League of Legends allow players to interact with each other in virtual worlds and communicate through in-game chat or voice chat ^[18].

Digital technology's role in social communication has significantly impacted society by changing how people interact and communicate, the speed and frequency of communication, and the types of relationships formed. Digital communication has additionally facilitated the process of establishing connections with individuals who reside in far-flung locations or possess similar interests, thereby enhancing the overall communication.

However, digital communication can also lead to problems such as cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and a lack of face-to-face interaction. It is important for individuals to use digital communication responsibly and balance it with other forms of communication.

1.2. Characteristics of Social Communication in the Digital Era

The digital era has brought tremendous change in interaction and communication styles. Some studies identify characteristics of social communication in the digital era: (1) Instantaneous: Digital communication allows people to connect with each other instantly, regardless of their location. Furthermore, the expectation of immediate responses and constant connectivity. (2) Global: Digital communication has made it easier for people to connect with others across the world ^[19]. Otherwise, This globalisation can connect with others across diverse cultures and backgrounds. (3) Informal: Digital communication tends to be more informal than traditional forms, leading to the development of new forms of language such as emojis, acronyms, and slang specific to digital communication. (4) Multimedia: Digital communication allows for the exchange of multimedia content, such as photos, videos, and

audio recordings ^[20], making correspondence more expressive and enabling clearer sharing of their experiences.) (5) Long-lasting: digital communication is frequently permanent, which means that messages and content can be saved and accessed at any time. This has prompted worries about protection and the permanence of online correspondence ^[21].

1.3. Language Use in the Digital Era

This section highlights the notable shifts in language usage and communication methods in the digital age. These changes manifest in various ways, including: (1) Abbreviations and Acronyms. People often use abbreviations and acronyms in digital communication to save time without losing the message meaning. For the examples "LOL" ("laugh out loud"), "GTG" ("going to go"), and "OMG" ("Oh my God"). (2) Emoticons and Emojis ^[7,22]. Digital communication has popularized the use of emoticons and emojis, which are graphical representations of emotions, objects, or concepts. They are often used to convey nonverbal cues, such as sarcasm or humour, which may be lost in text. (3) Slang and Jargon: Digital communication has given new slang and jargon, which are often specific for online communities or social groups. For example, "FOMO" ("fear of missing out"). (4) Language Mixing: The digital era has made it easier for people to communicate across languages and cultures. Thus, individuals use words or expressions from various dialects in a similar sentence, and code blending has become more normal in computerized correspondence. Indonesian also features "*bahasa Jaksel*", a mixed language of Indonesian and English, exemplified by "*gw butuh healing*" (I need to refresh my mind). (5) Informality ^[23,24]. Digital communication is often more informal than traditional forms of communication, leading to the creation of new forms of language, such as Internet slang, that are specific to digital communication.

All in all, language use in the computerized time is set apart by an accentuation on speed, efficiency, and casualness. Moreover, the emergence of new semantic structures specific to digital correspondence has affected how people interact with one another.

1.4. Social Communication and Multiliteracies Critics

Social communication and critical literacy are important skills in today's fast-paced and interconnected world. Social correspondence includes the capacity to connect really and fittingly with others in various social circumstances, both online and offline. On the other hand, multiliteracies critics involves the ability to analysis and evaluate various forms of media and communication, such as news articles, advertisements, and social media posts, to assess their credibility and underlying messages.

In an era shaped by pervasive digital connectivity, social communication and multiliteracies critics emerge as vital frameworks for understanding how the younger generation navigates meaning, identity, and interaction across online and offline spaces. Social communication is not merely conveying messages but negotiating meaning in context—requiring sensitivity to tone, audience, platform, and cultural norms. In digital settings, this process becomes more complex as non-verbal cues are often substituted with emojis, abbreviations, or multimodal elements, challenging traditional communication norms.

Meanwhile, multiliteracies critics provide a critical lens to examine not only how texts are consumed and produced but also how power, ideology, and identity are embedded in everyday digital communication. Originating from the work of the New London Group ^[25] and further refined by scholars like Cope and Kalantzis ^[26], multiliteracies critics urge individuals to reflect on how language and representation shape social inclusion and exclusion. It emphasizes the need for communicators to interrogate what is said, how it is said, and why it is said that way, especially in a global digital culture saturated with curated narratives, performative identities, and algorithmic influences.

In youth social communication, multiliteracies critics challenge the assumption that digital fluency equates to critical engagement. Scrolling, swiping, posting, or sharing does not automatically imply understanding the ethical and ideological implications behind language choices ^[27]. Through this lens, researchers and educators are encouraged to guide young individuals not only to use language but also to question it: Who is represented? Whose voices are amplified or silenced? What assumptions underlie viral content or trending terms?

Ultimately, integrating social communication with multiliteracies critics enables deeper inquiry into how youth construct meaning, negotiate belonging, and participate in discourse. It moves beyond functional literacy to foster reflective, inclusive, and socially aware communication where digital expression is not only efficient but also ethical and transformative.

1.5. Assessing Social Communication and Language Use in the Digital Era

Since 21st century learning is known globally, assessing social communication and language use in the digital era is a complex and multifaceted process. With the rise of social media and digital communication technologies, people now communicate more frequently and in more varied ways than ever ^[28]. This presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for researchers and practitioners who are interested in assessing social communication and language use.

Moreover, it is also important to consider the ethical implications of assessing social communication and language use in the digital era. Privacy concerns must be considered when collecting and analysing data, particularly when working with sensitive information such as personal communications or health records ^[29].

Moreover, assessing social communication and language use in the digital era should not only be based on theoretical models but also on actual usage and attitude in daily communication. For instance, evaluating politeness in greeting and responses within digital communications ^[30,31]. Additionally, for communication to proceed smoothly, it is crucial to know one's interlocutor—including their age, employment history, educational background, and other relevant details—to tailor polite language use. These factors should also be considered when evaluating social communication and language use in this digital era.

In conclusion, assessing social communication and language use in the digital era requires a thoughtful and multi-faceted approach that considers a wide range of factors, including technological trends, communication habits, and ethical considerations. By carefully designing studies and using a variety of data collection and analysis methods, researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into how people communicate and use language in

the digital age.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive design to explore the patterns of social communication and language use among young people in the digital era. The research focused on individuals aged 18 to 30 living in Jakarta and Tangerang, Indonesia, including university students and young professionals. A total of 40 participants were selected via purposive sampling, ensuring that all respondents had regular engagement with digital communication platforms.

Data collections were conducted through three main instruments: observation, interviews, and a questionnaire. The observation process was carried out over several months through a participatory approach, allowing the researcher to observe communication behaviors in both face-to-face and digital environments naturally. This approach aimed to uncover habitual language use and interactional styles of the young generation.

The semi-structured interviews, consisted of 10 open-ended questions and were conducted online to gain deeper insights into participants' language preferences and social interaction experiences. Meanwhile, the questionnaire focused on how participants apply their multiliteracy skills in communication. It used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants were categorized based on gender, occupation, and age; all respondents participated in every phase of three data collection. This triangulation strengthened the validity of the findings by capturing both observable behaviors and self-reported experiences of language use and communication in digital contexts.

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of study participants. The study involved a total of 40 purposively selected participants representing young individuals aged 18 to 30 residing in Jakarta and Tangerang. Participants were divided into three demographic groups—reflecting diversity in gender, occupation, and educational background—to align with the study's objective of understanding language use and social communication patterns across different social roles within the same age range.

1. Female Workers (18–30 years old)

Fourteen female workers were actively working in various professional sectors. Their inclusion provided insights into the social and linguistic behaviors of young women in real-world, workplace communication settings, both online and offline.

2. Male Workers (18–30 years old)

This group comprised 12 males workers. Their responses contributed to understanding gendered communication practices and digital engagement in both work-related and informal social interactions.

3. University Students (Undergraduate and Postgraduate, Male and Female)

Fourteen university students—both male and female—were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. They represented the academic population regularly engaging with digital tools for educational, social, and personal purposes.

This distribution ensured a balanced representation of genders and social contexts (work and education). All participants were actively involved in digital communication environments and participated in the study through observation, questionnaires, and interviews, which allowed the researcher to capture authentic, real-time language use and reflections grounded in their daily communication practices.

Table 1. Total of Respondents.

Respondents	Number of Respondents
Female worker (18–30 years old)	14 people
Male worker (18–30 years old)	12 people
Female and male university students (Undergraduate and postgraduate students)	14 people
Total respondent	40 people

3. Results

3.1. The Questionnaire data of Youth Social Interaction in Digital Era

The young generation is perhaps the most digitally connected in history and used digital communication extensively to interact with others. There are several ways in

which young people use digital communication to interact with others ^[32]. One of the most common methods is using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Messenger, and Snapchat. These platforms allow young people to connect with friends and peers, share photos and videos, and engage in conversations. These phenomena can be seen in the young generation in **Figures 1** below:

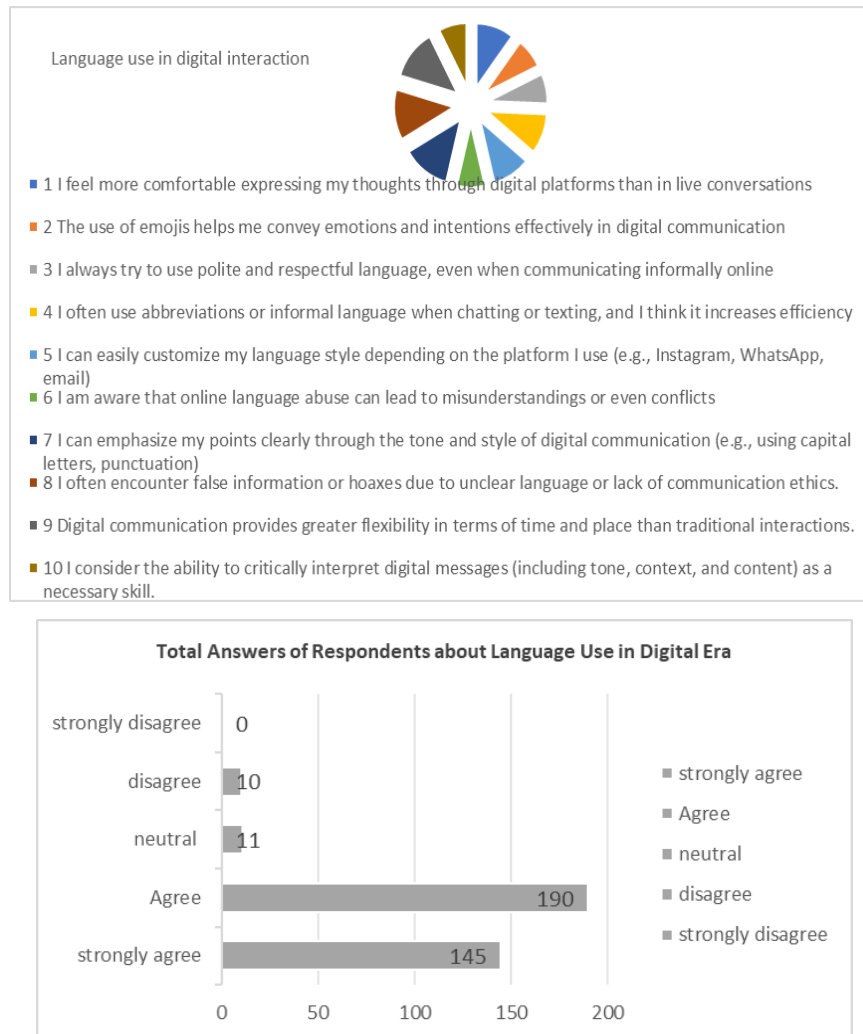


Figure 1. Total Responses of Young Generation Preferences Social Interaction in The Digital Era.

The analysis of questionnaire responses revealed a strong digital awareness and communicative adaptability among young respondents. Most participants felt comfortable in expressing their thoughts through digital platforms rather than in face-to-face conversations, indicating a preference for the reflective and less confrontational nature of online communication. The use of emojis is widely rec-

ognized as an effective tool for expressing emotions and intentions, highlighting the value of visual and multimodal elements in digital interactions. Additionally, most of respondents emphasized the importance of politeness and respectful language, even in informal online settings, reflecting a strong sense of digital etiquette.

There was also substantial agreement regarding the

use of abbreviations and informal expressions, which many respondents view as efficient for digital communication. Furthermore, participants demonstrated a high degree of adaptability by adjusting their language based on the platform they are using, such as social media, messaging apps, or email. They were also aware that language misuse can cause misunderstandings or conflicts, demonstrating a critical understanding of ethical online communication.

The ability to emphasize meaning through written tone—such as the use of capital letters and punctuation—was also seen as an effective strategy. Respondents acknowledge frequently encountering hoaxes or misinformation, which some attribute to unclear language or poor communication ethics. Respondents strongly emphasized the flexibility and convenience offered by digital platforms, particularly for managing communication time and space. Finally, there was remarkable agreement that critical interpreting digital messages—including tone, context, and content—is a necessary skill in the digital age. Collectively, these findings support the growing importance of multiliteracy critics and digital literacy in shaping effective, ethical, and reflective communication practices among today’s youth. In detail, the diagram also illustrates that were 190 responses (47.5%) in the “Agree” category, making it the most popular choice. This indicates that most young people share similar views on the phenomenon of language use in digital interactions, such as awareness of etiquette, effectiveness of emojis, and flexibility of online communication^[33].

Moreover, 145 responses (36.25%) chose “Strongly

Agree,” reinforcing that most respondents strongly support or feel confident about the statements presented in the instrument. Thus, 11 responses (2.75%) fell into the “Neutral” category, indicating that a small portion of respondents have not formed a firm stance on certain statements. 10 responses (2.5%) selected “Disagree,” which may indicate uncertainty or differing viewpoints on certain topics. At the end, no responses fell into the “Strongly Disagree” category, indicating that no respondents firmly rejected the statements related to this topic.

In conclusion, these data indicate that the level of acceptance and awareness among young people regarding digital communication practices are very high in terms of ethics, flexibility, and effective interaction strategies in digital media. This underscores the urgency of multiliteracies critics and digital literacy education in the context of YG and social communication today.

3.2. The Interview of YG Language Use in Their Interaction

The language used by the young generation in their social communication has been heavily influenced by the widespread use of digital communication technologies. This has resulted in the emergence of new forms of language and communication that are often characterized by brevity, informality, and the use of emojis and other visual elements (Banerjee, 2014). Moreover, the language uses in this research can be seen in **Figure 2** below:

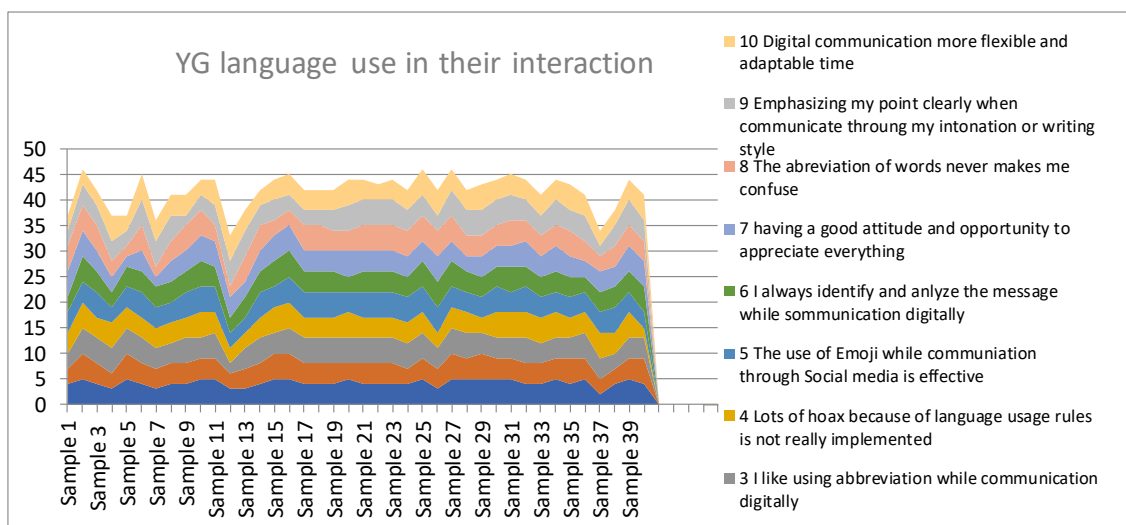


Figure 2. Young Generation Language Use in the Digital Era.

This graph illustrates young people's perceptions of language use in digital social interactions across 10 thematic indicators based on ^[34] derived from interviews with 40 participants. Each colour on the figure represents a different indicator, and the height of the area indicates the level of recognition or respondents' agreement to each raised issue.

The most dominant indicator is indicator 10 ("Digital communication is more flexible and adaptable with time", light yellow), confirming that most respondents perceive digital communication as efficient and flexible in , preferring to use abbreviations alongside polite language. Otherwise, the abbreviations sometimes enhances communication flow and more flexible condition. This reflects the younger generation's preference for communication platforms that allow them to adjust communication across time and space according to their needs.

Furthermore, the 9th indicator ("Emphasizing my point clearly through intonation or writing style," light gray) and indicator 8 ("The abbreviation of words never makes me confuse," light orange) also received high scores. This indicates that most younger generation feel comfortable expressing meaning through digital language styles such as abbreviations and written emphasis (e.g., capital letters, emoticons, punctuation marks). This indicates high awareness of the expressive function of writing style in online communication and highlight that one of the most notable features of youth language usage is the prevalence of abbreviations and acronyms. For example, instead of typing out the full phrase "laugh out loud," young people may simply use the acronym "LOL," and instead of writing out "talk to you later," they may use "TTYL." This phenomenon shows that the younger generation prefers to use simple forms over complete, longer phrases in digital communication. This use of abbreviations and acronyms has become commonplace in digital communication and reflects a desire for brevity and efficiency.

Indicator 7 ("Having a good attitude and opportunity to appreciate everything", light purple), showed that respondents were enthusiastic and sad when they encounter impolite language, as polite language helps make communication partners comfortable. Indicator 6 ("I always identify and analyse messages in digital communication, green") are also scored significantly. This shows that most

respondents are aware of positive values in communication and strive to remain critically evaluate messages—including the possibility of bias, inaccuracies in meaning, or even hoaxes.

Interestingly, indicator 4 ("Lots of hoaxes because language usage rules are not really implemented," dark yellow) also appears strongly in most samples. This reflects the concerns of the younger generation about the spread of false information due to weak mastery of ethics or rules of language use in the digital realm.

Meanwhile, indicators 2 (polite language use) and 1 (emotional responses to coarse language) remained present but not as strong as were less pronounced than other indicators. This indicates that while language ethics are still valued, the younger generation's primary focus tends to be on efficiency and expression of meaning rather than formality.

Overall, interview data show that the younger generation tends to be adaptive, expressive, and beginning to demonstrate critical awareness of digital communication. They adapt their language style to the context of the platform and understand the challenges posed by online communication, such as potential for misinformation and misunderstandings. These findings underscore the urgency of digital literacy and multiliteracies education in the EFL curricula, enabling students can develop reflective, ethical, and contextual communication skills.

3.3. The Data of Multiliteracy Critics in Social Interaction and Language Use

Effective communication and language proficiency are significantly shaped by an individual's literacy, encompassing robust reading skills, domain knowledge, and critical literacy. In essence, a person's multiliteracy plays a crucial role in how individuals communicate and employ proficient language during interactions ^[35].

Multiliteracy critics can play an important role in helping young people navigate the complex landscape of digital communication and language use ^[36,37]. By promoting critical thinking and analysis, multiliteracy critics can help young people develop the skills they need to effectively communicate and interact with others in the digital age. **Table 2** is represents the result of questionnaire in relation with how young generation multiliteracy critics among their society;

Table 2. Data Questionnaire Related to YG Multiliteracy Critics in Social Interaction and Language Use.

No	Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	I use informal/slang more often when talking to friends	78%	12%	10%
2	I mix Indonesian and foreign language when communication	65%	65%	65%
3	I noticed that the style of language I use changes depending on the context (e.g. formal vs. casual)	83%	83%	83%
4	I use emojis to express emotions while chatting online	85%	13%	2%
5	I use GIFs, stickers, or memes in conversations on social media	72%	20%	8%
6	I watch or create content (TikTok, Reels, YouTube Shorts) as part of social interaction	68%	22%	10%
7	I can distinguish hoax information during communication	56%	30%	14%
8	I feel it's important to think critically before sharing content on social media	81%	14%	5%
9	I understand that the language I use can reflect my identity and social position	67%	20%	13%
10	I often criticize certain information and the use of terminology when interacting	54%	28%	18%

Based on the questionnaire, 78% of the younger generation admitted to using informal or slang language more often in their daily communication, and 65% are used to mixing Indonesian and English, reflecting flexible and contextual communication patterns. In addition, 83% of respondents stated that they adjust their language style according to the situation, showing a high awareness of pragmatics. In digital communication, 85% frequently use emojis to express emotions, 72% use GIFs, stickers, or memes, and 68% are active in short video content such as TikTok or Reels, signalling the dominance of visual communication in their interactions. Meanwhile, in terms of critical multiliteracies, 81% of respondents felt it was important to think critically before sharing digital content, yes only 56% felt able to distinguish between valid information and hoaxes, suggesting that evaluative literacy need to be improved. Additionally, 67% alized that language reflects social identity, and 54% had discussed social issues online. This data shows that young people have developed complex forms of multiliteracies, although they still need to strengthening in aspect of information evaluation and critical engagement in social discourse.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Social Communication Interaction in Digital Era of Young Generation

Most of respondents prefer to communicate via social media. This choice reflects the communication patterns of the younger generation, which now dominants in the digital world ^[38]. Social media is not only a means of exchanging messages but also a new social space facilitate the connections, self-expression, and cross-border interactions. This indicates that communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions, but has evolved into text-based, image-based, symbol-based, and video-based communication that is instantaneous and flexible.

Interestingly, the trend toward online communication extends beyond social media into the world of web-based gaming. Multiplayer online games have become a significant medium for social interaction among the younger generation. Through these games, they form global communities, interact via in-game chat, and collaborate with players from various countries. This demonstrates that digital communication is not merely a form of entertainment but also a virtual social space that strengthens their interpersonal connections.

However, this phenomenon also presents challenges. The habit of communicating online tends to weaken direct (face-to-face) communication skills, as digital interactions do not require non-verbal expressions such as eye contact, voice intonation, or body language^[39]. Many of them are more comfortable interacting virtually but struggle with direct interpersonal communication. This is noteworthy in the social development of the younger generation: they excel at forming digital relationships but experience declines in conventional social interactions skills.

Beyond entertainment, digital communication is widely used in the educational realm. Learning apps and online platforms enable young people to connect with teachers and classmates, collaborate on projects, and access global learning resources. Digital media, in this context, serve as both collaboration tools and bridges between their academic and social needs^[40,41].

Thus, social media, online games, and other digital platforms are not merely ordinary communication tools but new social spaces where the younger generation can express their identities, build connections, and develop multiliteracies skills that align with the challenges of the digital age.

In conclusion, young people use digital communication extensively to interact with others in a wide variety of ways, where the digital platform can be used without any limitation. Social media and messaging applications are sometimes also utilized for improving the way of communication in implementing a good language during online gaming and educational platforms. Digital communication is integral to how young people in Indonesia—especially those live in Tangerang and Jakarta—connect with others and navigate the world around them.

4.2. Language Usage by Young Generation in Their Social Communication

Language usage of the young generation in social communication has evolved significantly with the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the proliferation of online platforms. One prominent characteristic is their linguistic behaviour for informal language and slang. This form of expression plays a vital role in constructing group identity, signalling belonging, and establishing rapport among peers. Numerous studies highlight that a substantial

percentage of young people opt to use slang in daily conversations, particularly when interacting with their peers, as a strategy to bridge communication gaps and express solidarity^[42-44].

Slang usage among the youth is not merely a linguistic choice but also a reflection of their cultural alignment and generational identity. For instance, terms like “lit” (exciting or excellent), “on fleek” (perfectly styled), or more recently “rizz” (charisma) are deeply embedded in youth culture and are spread and reinforced through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter^[45,46]. These expressions typically do not conform to standard language norms and are rare in formal writing or speech, yet thrive in informal digital spaces. The rapid emergence and evolution of new slang also underscores the dynamic and transient nature of youth language, often leaving older generations unfamiliar or even excluded from certain communicative practices.

Another defining feature of the young generation’s communication style is reliance on multimodal elements such as emojis, stickers, GIFs, and memes. Emojis have become powerful semiotic tools for conveying emotional nuances, social cues, and affective stances that are otherwise difficult to articulate through text alone^[47-49]. Emojis serve not only as complements to written language but also sometimes as a replacement for words entirely, offering a more efficient and expressive mode of interaction. For instance, a single heart emoji can encapsulate affection, support, or agreement depending on context. Similarly, animated GIFs can capture reactions with subtlety and humour, enriching digital dialogue and creating shared cultural references.

Moreover, these visual modes of communication also contribute to the brevity and immediacy that characterize much of youth discourse. In an age dominated by instant messaging and short-form content, the young generation tends to favor concise and impactful language, often blending text with visuals to maintain engagement and clarity^[50]. This hybrid form of communication reflects a broader shift toward a multiliteracies framework, where linguistic, visual, spatial, and digital literacies intersect in everyday communication practices.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the linguistic creativity and digital fluency of today’s youth challenge traditional notions of what constitutes ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ lan-

guage use. Rather than viewing slang or informal digital expressions as inferior, many linguists argue these forms represent complex, adaptive, and meaningful engagement with language ^[51]. Youth discourse showcases linguistic innovation, social awareness, and the ability to navigate diverse communicative contexts—a valuable skill set in the contemporary digital era.

Furthermore, the language usage patterns of younger generation in digital communication show that ethical and emotional aspects remain a major concern. This is reflected in the high level of response to the importance of politeness, appreciation for others, and feelings of discomfort when encountering impolite language used online. In addition, the younger generation shows a high adaptation to digital language forms such as abbreviations and emojis. They not only use them actively but also do not feel confused by them, indicating linguistic flexibility and sensitivity to the digital context. Conversely, critical awareness of communication content is also quite developed: students acknowledge the importance of analyzing messages reflectively and aware of the potential for the spread of hoaxes due to the lax application of language rules ^[52,53]. The most notable finding is that temporal flexibility and adaptability in digital communication are the main reasons for preferring digital media. Overall, these results indicate that students, as part of the younger generation, have developed multiliteracy practices that include ethical understanding, technological-linguistic skills, and critical awareness in communicating in the digital age.

In conclusion, the language usage of the young generation in social communication is multifaceted, shaped by digital media, cultural trends, and peer dynamics. It is characterized by informality, linguistic creativity, and the integration of visual elements such as emojis and GIFs. Far from being a degradation of language, these features exemplify the evolving nature of communication in a technologically mediated world ^[54]. As such, they offer rich ground for linguistic inquiry and provide insight into how language adapts to meet the communicative needs of emerging generations.

4.3. Multiliteracy Critics in Young Generation's Communication and Language Use

Effective communication and language proficiency

are significantly shaped by an individual's literacy, encompassing strong reading skills, knowledge, and critical literacy. In essence, a person's multiliteracy plays a crucial role in determining how they communicate and employ proficient language during interactions with others. Multiliteracy critics can play an important role in helping young people navigate the complex landscape of digital communication and language use by promoting critical thinking and analysis, multiliteracy critics can help young people develop the skills they need to effectively communicate and interact with others in the digital age.

The interview results show that today's young generation has developed multiliteracy competencies in their digital social context. Multiliteracy, as defined by the New London Group and Cope & Kalantzis, encompasses not only the ability to understand written text, but also to interpret and produce meaning through various modes of communication—including visual language, digital expression, and social context.

In everyday practice, respondents showed a tendency to use informal language, including slang and a mixture of Indonesian and foreign languages. This demonstrates their ability to navigate cross-linguistic and cross-situational communication and shows that translanguaging is part of their digital communication practices. The ability to adapt language style based on context—both formal and casual—also demonstrates a high level of pragmatic awareness in their interactions.

Multimodal aspects of digital communication are very prominent. The use of emojis, GIFs, stickers, and memes is not only considered a form of expression, but also a tool to emphasize meaning, tone, or emotions that cannot always be conveyed through words ^[55]. This indicates that the younger generation understands how various visual semiotics play an important role in reinforcing or complementing messages in online communication.

On the other hand, the dimension of critical literacy is also beginning to emerge in their responses. Most respondents emphasized the importance of thinking reflectively before sharing content on social media, as well as being aware of the potential for misinformation due to careless use of language. This shows that they have developed an awareness of the risks of digital communication, both in terms of information and ethics.

However, not all respondents showed an active critical attitude in responding to information or terms they encountered in the digital world. This shows that the level of evaluative engagement is still varied and requires further strengthening through language education that emphasizes reflection and social responsibility.

The awareness that language choices reflect identity and social position is also reflected in their responses. They understand that language use is not merely a communication tool, but also a representation of the self that shapes how they are perceived in the digital society. In line with that, multiliteracy critics can get involved by promoting media literacy education. This involves teaching young people how to critically evaluate the information they encounter online, and how to identify bias and misinformation in news articles, social media posts, and other forms of digital communication ^[56]. Furthermore, this skill can also encourage young generation to develop their own voice and style in their communication, while still adhering to basic principles of grammar and usage. This can involve providing feedback on writing and communication projects, or helping young people develop their own personal brand and online presence ^[57].

Moreover, multiliteracy critics can work to promote inclusive communication practices that consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of young people. This can involve promoting the use of inclusive language, and encouraging young people to actively listen to and engage with others who may have different perspectives or experiences

5. Conclusions

The study of social communication and language usage serves as a reflection of cultural shifts and linguistic variations within the contemporary younger generation, particularly in the digital age. This pertains to the adept use of language in digital communication, including social media, instant messaging, and various online platforms. The research delves into representing language utilization in social communication across digital platforms, exploring linguistic features, patterns, and norms prevalent in the current digital landscape. Additionally, the study investigates how language adapts to align with the capabilities of

the online environment in the present era.

Multiliteracy in this context involves not only the ability to read and write but also the ability to understand, create, and interpret meaning through various modes of communication. Interview results indicate that young people demonstrate pragmatic awareness and translanguaging skills, as well as adaptability in adjusting language style to context. Critical literacy aspects are also beginning to emerge, as evidenced by caution in disseminating information and awareness of language ethics in digital media.

Otherwise, critical multiliteracy emerges as a guiding medium for the younger generation to effectively communicate and employ language in social interactions. It offers diverse means of expressing messages, including images and other forms of self-expression, facilitating the transmission of comprehensive and concise messages. In-depth analysis suggests that the Internet has facilitated the formation of diverse online communities and social networks for the younger generation. Within these digital communities, youth practice norms and social structures, exploring the role of language in shaping group identity, norms, and collective action.

Furthermore, social communication and language use have become crucial arenas in public discourse, encompassing activism and persuasion. Critical multiliterate individuals can play a pivotal role in assisting young people in navigating the complexities of digital communication and language use. This includes fostering critical thinking, analytical skills, and inclusivity in their communication practices, while preserving the intended meaning and purpose in the conveyed messages

Researchers can further explore the role of language in shaping online identity, communication dynamics in digital communities, and the use of emojis, slang, and other signs in digital communication with multiliteracies critics. In the context of ethics research, it is important to investigate issues of privacy, security, and cyberbullying. The development of new analytical tools and methods is also important to address the complexity of digital data. User involvement in research will provide valuable insights. By deepening understanding of these phenomena, researchers can make a significant contribution to understanding cultural and behavioural changes in the digital age.

Author Contributions

For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “Conceptualization, A.A. (Arjulayana Arjulayana); methodology, R.M.; software, R.M.; validation, D.A.; formal analysis, R.M. and N.A.; investigation, D.A. and R.M.; resources, D.A.; data curation, R.M. and N.A.; writing—original draft preparation, A.A. (Arjulayana Arjulayana), D.A., R.M., N.A. and A.A. (Ahmad Ahmad); writing—review and editing, A.A. (Ahmad Ahmad); visualization, R.M.; supervision, A.A.(Ahmad Ahmad); project administration, A.A. (Arjulayana Arjulayana); funding acquisition, A.A. (Arjulayana Arjulayana). All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this research.

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