



A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE WORD “COK” AS EMPHASIS IN TEEN SLANG LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Slang can be defined as a dynamic component of language that reflects the evolving nature of communication among youth. A notable illustration of this phenomenon in the Indonesian context is the colloquial term "Cok," which is derived from the Javanese expletive "jancok." This research explores the use of "Cok" among Indonesian teenagers and its importance as a linguistic, cultural, and social marker. The primary objective of this study is to analyze how "Cok" has undergone a semantic shift, evolving from a vulgar expression to a versatile pragmatic marker. The study employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, to collect data from a diverse group of teenage participants. The results of the study indicate that the term "Cok" is frequently used to express strong emotions, create emphasis, build group solidarity, and signal in-group identity. However, the utilization of the term is context-dependent, and its application may be considered improper in formal or intergenerational interactions. The findings underscore the adaptability of slang and its role in reflecting socio-cultural identity. This study makes a significant contribution to the broader discourse on youth language, linguistic pragmatics, and the cultural dynamics of language change. The findings of this study suggest potential for future research on similar slang transformations in other regions or communities.

Keywords: Slang, “Cok”, Linguistic Analysis, Indonesian Youth, Pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic system that continuously evolves alongside the social and cultural shifts of its users. For teenagers, language does not merely serve as a means of communication but also plays a vital role in self-expression, identity formation, and group solidarity. One of the most distinctive forms of linguistic creativity among the younger generation is the emergence and use of slang. Slang expressions are not just linguistic variations; they are deeply embedded in social practices and carry significant cultural meanings that reflect the identities and values of their users.

In Indonesia, one of the most prominent examples of youth slang is the word "Cok." Originally derived from the Javanese expletive "Jancok," the term was traditionally associated with vulgarity and negative connotations. However, as language adapts to the needs of its speakers, "Cok" has undergone a remarkable semantic transformation. Among teenagers, the word is no longer confined to its initial function as a profanity but has developed into a multi-functional slang term commonly used to express emotions, foster camaraderie, and strengthen social bonds (Santoso, 2024).

The evolution of "Cok" reflects the linguistic economy and pragmatic creativity of its users. Teenagers employ "Cok" in both casual and semi-formal contexts, demonstrating how slang can transcend its original social boundaries. This phenomenon not only illustrates the flexibility of language but also shows how cultural identity is constructed and negotiated through everyday speech. According to Irawan, Sudika, and Hidayat (2020), the use of slang like "Cok" functions as a social marker, signifying group membership and solidarity among peers.

Several studies have analyzed the broader patterns of slang usage among Indonesian youth. For example, Fawaid, Hieu, Wulandari, and Iswatiningsih (2021) emphasize the role of social media in accelerating the spread and normalization of slang terms in daily communication. Social platforms such as TikTok and Instagram facilitate the rapid dissemination of words like "Cok," making them part of national youth culture. Similarly, Jadidah et al. (2023) explain how traditional linguistic elements are quickly adapted into modern slang, showing that young people are highly responsive to linguistic trends that resonate with their social experiences.

Pragmatically, the word "Cok" carries multiple functions. It can signal surprise, emphasize emotional intensity, and even serve as an expression of familiarity or solidarity. As reported by Mahesti and Jaya (2024), "Cok" is widely used in peer group interactions, often strengthening a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. Nevertheless, its usage is context-dependent. While teenagers tend to accept the word as part of everyday language, its use in formal situations or among older generations is generally considered inappropriate or even offensive (Junadi & Laili, 2021). The growing prevalence of slang such as "Cok" raises questions about language appropriateness and its impact on linguistic norms. Although many young people view its use as harmless and indicative of linguistic creativity, others argue that excessive reliance on slang could erode the richness and precision of standard language (Bardi, Namang, & Yefi, 2024). These differing perspectives underline the importance of understanding both the functional and cultural dimensions of slang in contemporary Indonesian society.

Based on these observations, this study is designed to provide a comprehensive linguistic analysis of the word "Cok" as used by Indonesian teenagers. The research focuses on the semantic transformation of the term, its pragmatic roles in communication, and its socio-cultural significance. By synthesizing previous research and incorporating empirical data collected through surveys, this study aims to deepen the understanding of slang as an evolving linguistic phenomenon that is shaped by cultural practices and social interactions. The specific objectives of this study are to answer the following questions:

1. How has the word "Cok" changed in form and meaning from its original usage?
2. What are the pragmatic functions of "Cok" in teenage communication?
3. How does the use of "Cok" reflect the socio-cultural identities and group affiliations of its users?

By exploring these questions, this study seeks to contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics, particularly regarding how slang serves as a vehicle for both linguistic innovation and the negotiation of social identity. Understanding the dynamics of "Cok" in teenage slang not only enriches the academic study of language but also offers insights into the cultural currents shaping Indonesian youth in an era of rapid social change.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the word “Cok” in the context of teenage slang. This research integrates data collection from primary and secondary sources based on a sociolinguistic and pragmatic framework.

Primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires to Indonesian teenagers aged 18-23 who actively use “Cok” in their daily conversation. The questionnaire included questions designed to explore the participants’ understanding, frequency of use, and perceived function of “Cok”. The questionnaire was distributed online to ensure greater reach and convenience for participants.

Secondary data was obtained from existing studies and journal articles that discuss the dynamic of slang use in Indonesia. The main references used were “Use of Slang in Elementary School-Age Children” (Santoso, 2024), “Analysis of New Word Formation in Adolescent Slang” (Zalukhu, Harefa, Halawa, & Riana, 2024), and “Use of Slang in Millennial Teenagers on Social Media (Fawaid, Hieu, Wulandari, & Iswatiningsih, 2021).

The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in the transformation and use of “Cok”. The analysis focused on three main aspects:

- Semantic transformation: Examining how the meaning of “Cok” has shifted from its original expletive form to a multifunctional slang term.
- Pragmatic function: Examining how “Cok” is used to express emotions, emphasize statements, and foster social relationships.
- Sociocultural context: understanding the role of “Cok” as a marker of group identity and cultural belonging among Indonesian adolescents.

Findings were interpreted in light of existing sociolinguistic theories, particularly those related to slang, identity construction, and language adaptation. By triangulating data from multiple sources, the study ensures the validity and reliability of its conclusions. This methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of “Cok” as a linguistic phenomenon and provides insights into its significance within the broader framework of youth language and culture in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, data analysis was conducted using a mixed approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data obtained from an online survey by creating 9 questions and processed using statistical software to produce descriptive statistics that provide an overview of the slang usage behavior of the younger generation. The following is the data analysis regarding the use of “Cok” slang by the younger generation in communication.

Question list

1. How often do you use the word “Cok” in everyday conversation?
2. In what situations do you usually use the word “Cok”?
3. Do you feel the word “Cok” can help emphasize emotions in conversations?
4. When you use the word “Cok”, how do people around you react?
5. Do you think the word “Cok” is more accepted among teenagers than adults?
6. How do you assess the connotation of the word “Cok” in conversation?

7. Do you think using the word “Cok” strengthens friendships?
8. Does social media influence your use of the word “Cok” in conversation?
9. What do you think about the use of the word “Cok” as part of teen slang?

ANALYSIS



Figure 1. Responses of the Question Number 1

The majority of respondents used the word “Cok” with some intensity, either rarely (34.5%) or sometimes (41.4%). Only a few admitted to using it very often (17.2%) or never (6.9%), suggesting that for some, this word has become a significant part of everyday expression.

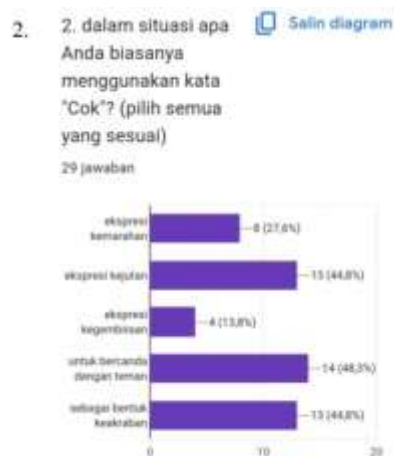


Figure 2. Responses of the Question Number 2

The word “Cok” is most often used as a joke with friend (48.3%) and as a form of familiarity (44.8%). It is also widely used to express surprise (44.8%). Usage for expressions of anger (27.6%) and excitement (13.8%) is relatively lower. This suggests that the word functions more as a social bond than as expression of extreme emotion. Its

use in serious situations such as anger or excitement is relatively low, as the context is more appropriate for informal relationships.



Figure 3. Responses of the Question Number 3

Most respondents were neutral (51.7%) about the ability of the word “Cok” to emphasize emotions. However, 31% agreed that this word can help to emphasize emotions, while only 6.9% disagreed. This shows that the effect of the word “Cok” on emotions is highly context dependent. Nevertheless, about 31% agreed that this word can enhance the expression of emotions, especially in spontaneous situations such as joking or surprise.



Figure 4. Responses of the Question Number 4

The majority of respondents (75.9%) reported that using the word “Cok” did not provoke any particular reaction from those around them. This suggests that the word has become so common in certain conversations that it is no longer considered special or provocative. A total of 17.2% felt a positive reaction, such as laughing or joining in on a joke, which might occur in a casual or humorous context among friends or in informal settings. A small proportion (17.2%) reported negative reactions, such as feeling annoyed

or offended. This could be due to differences in the context of use, social norms, or individual sensitivity to the word.

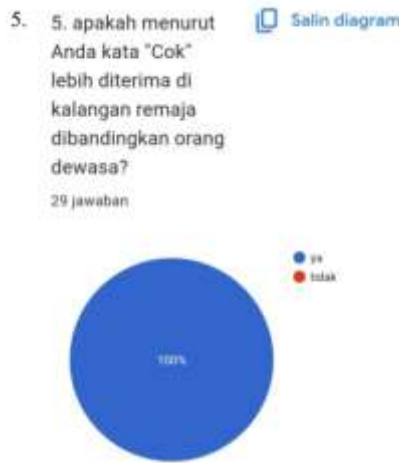


Figure 5. Responses of the Question Number 5

All respondents (100%) agreed that the word “Cok” is more acceptable among teenagers than adults. This shows that the younger generation tends to be more flexible and accepting of slang word in daily conversations. Meanwhile, adults may consider this word to be rude or not in line with the norms of politeness, especially in formal context.

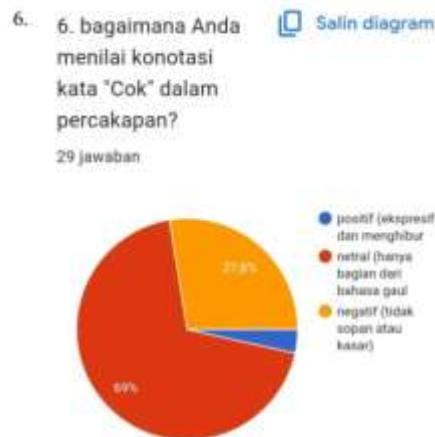


Figure 6. Responses of the Question Number 6

The majority (69%) considered this word to have neutral connotations, suggesting that it is understood as part of slang with no particular harmful intent. A total of 27.6% considered the word “Cok” to have negative connotations, perhaps because it is considered rude or disrespectful in certain context, such as in formal conversations or toward elders. Only 3.4% thought it had positive connotations, such as being entertaining or expressive. This suggests that the word is rarely used with the intention of creating a positive atmosphere, but rather as a spontaneous expression.

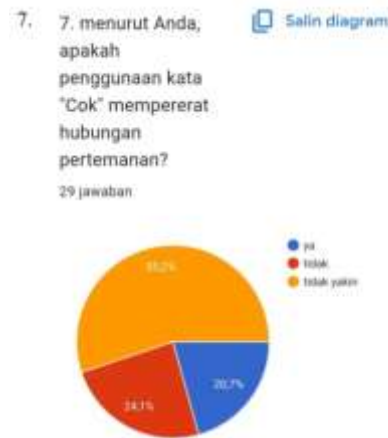


Figure 7. Responses of the Question Number 7

From the survey results, most respondents (55.2%) chose “not sure”, meaning that they were unsure or did not have a clear opinion on whether the word “Cok” really helps to strengthen friendships. A minority (20.7%) felt that it did help strengthen friendships, perhaps because it is used casually or is considered funny in informal conversations. However, 24.1% felt that the word had no effect or could even be considered negative if used out of context.

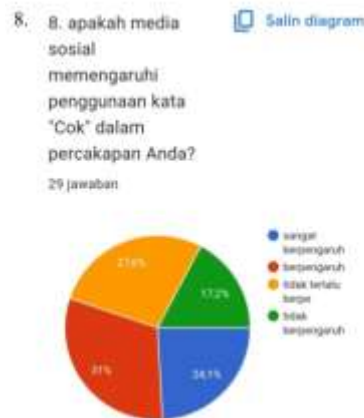


Figure 8. Responses of the Question Number 8

Most respondents stated that social media was influential (31%) or even very influential (24.1%) in popularizing the use of the word “Cok”. Social media is often where new language trends emerge, including the use of certain words that go viral. However, some other respondents felt that the influence of social media was not very significant (27.6%) or even had no influence at all (17.2%).

What do you think about the use of the word “Cok” as part of teen slang?

Table 9. Responses of the Question Number 9

Biasa aja
Keren
Sebenarnya kaya tersebut kalau tidak diucapkan agak teras kurang, padahal sebenarnya kata tersebut memiliki makna yang buruk.
Untuk penggunaan kata "Cok" dalam ekspresi biasa biasa saja dikalangan remaja itu tidak apa apa jika tidak mempunyai niat berbicara kotor (meledek), dengan kata lain berbicara kata "Cok" itu untuk berbahasa gaul sebagai pertanda keakraban bagi kalangan remaja.
Bukan gaya bicara saya, "cok" menggambarkan gaya bicara yang tidak berbobot. orang penting seperti saya hanya mengatakan hal-hal penting dan memiliki arti yang sulit dipahami oleh orang-orang diluar sana. kita harus menempatkan yang baik ditempat yang baik, dengan kata lain apa yang kita ucapkan harus sesuai dengan nilai-nilai yang dijunjung oleh seorang penuntut ilmu. orang bisa dinilai dari cara bicaranya.
Selama itu diartikan positif maka akan baik baik saja.
Pendapatku kata cok itu alay
Menurut saya, seharusnya dikurangi karena merupakan kata kasar.

The word “Cok” is mainly used as an emotional, e.g. to show surprise, familiarity or certain emotion. Most respondents considered it normal to use this word in a close or intimate friendship setting. Some respondents saw “Cok” as part of adolescent language creativity and normal in the development of slang. They emphasized that the use of this word acceptable as long as the context is appropriate and there is no negative intent. Many stressed the importance of context when using the word “Cok”. This word is considered impolite when used in formal situations or with older people. In addition, some respondents suggested that its use should be limited to avoid the perception of being rude or inappropriate. A minority of respondents said that the word “Cok” was inappropriate or did not reflect a good style of speech. They felt it was rude or weightless and should be replaced with a more positive word. Some respondents were neutral about the use of the word “Cok”, considering it normal or just part of the trend of teenage slang with no significant impact.

The word “Cok”, as analyzed in this study, presents a fascinating case of linguistic creativity and sociolinguistic dynamic within Indonesian teenage slang. Derived from the Javanese expletive “Jancok”, it has undergone semantic transformation and adaptation, becoming a versatile expression for emotion and social bonding. This discussion

synthesizes findings from both primary data, such as questionnaire responses, and secondary data from existing studies.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the linguistic and cultural significance of the word “Cok” in teenage slang. It serves as an expressive tool for emotions, social bonding, and identity formation. While its usage is generally accepted among peers, the context remains pivotal in determining its appropriateness. Misuse in formal or intergenerational settings can lead to negative perceptions, underscoring the importance of situational awareness in communication. As language evolves, “Cok” exemplifies the fluidity of slang and its role in reflecting societal norms and generational dynamics. Further research is encouraged to explore the influence of digital media on the proliferation of similar linguistic phenomena.

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