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Linguistic Variations and Social Functions of Slang in Indonesian Television Talk Shows: A Sociolinguistic Study of *Brownis* Trans TV

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the forms, meanings, and social functions of slang expressions in the Indonesian television talk show *Brownis* on Trans TV, a program widely recognized for its humorous and informal interactions. Slang, as a dynamic variety of language, plays a central role in shaping youth identity and media discourse, yet its use in mainstream entertainment contexts remains underexplored. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with a content analysis approach, twenty episodes broadcast between May and June 2022 were purposively selected and transcribed. Data collection involved systematic observation and documentation, while the analytic procedure consisted of identifying slang items, classifying them into forms, interpreting their semantic dimensions, and analyzing their communicative functions. The findings revealed four primary forms of slang basic words, reduplications, abbreviations, and phrases with abbreviations and basic words being the most frequent. Semantically, slang operated at lexical, grammatical, terminological, and reflective levels, while functionally it facilitated social bonding, attracted attention, delivered satire, compressed expressions, enriched vocabulary, created intimacy, and generated humor. Frequency analysis showed that a few dominant terms such as *gue*, *elo*, and *bucin* coexisted with a wide range of less frequent but innovative expressions, as visualized through bar charts and word clouds. These outcomes suggest that televised discourse not only mirrors youth linguistic practices but also amplifies and legitimizes them, contributing to the diffusion of non-standard language in Indonesian society. The study contributes a novel perspective to sociolinguistic research by situating slang within entertainment media, with implications for cultural studies, language education, and media literacy, while also noting limitations in scope and duration that future research should address.

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Introduction

Language is inherently dynamic, shaped by the interaction of social, cultural, and technological factors that influence how people communicate in everyday life. Rather than existing as a monolithic entity, language manifests in a wide range of variations that reflect the identities, social backgrounds, and communicative purposes of its users (Adli & Guy, 2022; Louf et al., 2023; Sun & Xu, 2022). Among these variations, slang emerges as a particularly significant phenomenon in youth and popular culture. Slang is characterized by its informality, creativity, and rapid

evolution, serving both as a linguistic resource and a marker of group identity (Alawiyah et al., 2021; Keidar et al., 2022; Roth-Gordon, 2020; Sun & Xu, 2022). In Indonesia, slang—commonly referred to as *bahasa gaul* or *prokem*—has become a central part of social interaction among young people, influenced not only by local sociocultural dynamics but also by global media and digital communication trends (Alawiyah et al., 2021; Pasiyah Tahe, Elen Inderasari, 2020).

The rise of digital platforms and mass media has accelerated the spread and transformation of slang expressions. Social media, online communities, and entertainment media provide fertile ground for the circulation of new slang terms, which are often adopted and reinterpreted across different contexts (Khalid & Srinivasan, 2022; Ly Ngoc Toan, 2022; Sun & Xu, 2022; Zhu & Jurgens, 2021). In the Indonesian context, television talk shows represent one of the most influential spaces where linguistic innovations are performed and disseminated to mass audiences. Talk shows are not only sites of entertainment but also arenas of sociolinguistic performance, where hosts and guests negotiate identity, intimacy, humor, and power through their choice of language (Manipuspika, 2014; Niswa Khairun, 2021). This makes them critical cultural texts for understanding how slang operates within public discourse and how it mediates the relationship between media, language, and social identity.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, slang can be analyzed in terms of its structural features, semantic dimensions, and social functions. Structurally, slang includes creative lexical forms such as abbreviations (*bucin*, *PDKT*), phonological distortions (*gokil*, *jaim*), and playful reduplications (*gombal-gombal*), which deviate from standard linguistic norms (Keidar et al., 2022; Kulkarni & Wang, 2017). Semantically, slang often carries layered meanings, functioning not only at the lexical level but also at symbolic and pragmatic levels, reflecting irony, satire, or group solidarity (Roth-Gordon, 2020; Slotta, 2016; Sun & Xu, 2022) Socially, slang serves as a communicative resource for establishing in-group cohesion, resisting authority, expressing humor, and signaling intimacy (Guzman, 2017; Roth-Gordon, 2020; Zhang, 2023). These dimensions highlight the multifunctionality of slang as both a linguistic practice and a social strategy.

In Indonesia, several studies have explored the use of slang across different contexts. Pasiyah Tahe, Elen Inderasari, (2020) examined slang in the *Hitam Putih* talk show, finding that television entertainment fosters linguistic creativity and innovation among its participants. Savitri, (2021) investigated the use of slang among YouTube content creators, demonstrating how digital media promotes the circulation of informal linguistic styles and shapes youth identity construction. Similarly, Setiawan, (2019) analyzed slang usage in everyday interactions at *angkringan* food stalls in Ponorogo, showing that slang is deeply tied to local community identity and social intimacy. These studies collectively emphasize the pervasiveness of slang in both offline and online settings, reinforcing its significance as a linguistic and cultural resource. However, they also reveal the need for comparative analyses across different media platforms to better understand how slang functions in shaping public discourse.

Despite the growing body of literature on slang in Indonesia, research has disproportionately focused on digital platforms and everyday informal interactions, with fewer studies systematically analyzing televised talk shows as linguistic sites. While talk shows such as *Hitam Putih* have received scholarly attention, other influential programs like *Brownis* Trans TV—widely popular for its casual and humorous style—remain underexplored. *Brownis* is notable for its dynamic use of language, particularly slang, in interactions between hosts, celebrity guests,

and audiences. Given its wide reach and popularity, the show plays a substantial role in mediating linguistic innovation and shaping popular cultural expressions among Indonesian youth. Yet, little is known about the specific forms, meanings, and functions of slang employed in this program, and how these reflect broader sociolinguistic dynamics in contemporary Indonesian media.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a qualitative content analysis of slang used in *Brownis* Trans TV. Specifically, it aims to describe the forms, meanings, and functions of slang as they occur in the program's discourse. By doing so, the study seeks to extend sociolinguistic research on Indonesian slang beyond everyday interaction and digital platforms, offering insights into how televised entertainment contributes to language variation and identity construction. The findings are expected to contribute both to the academic literature on sociolinguistics and to broader discussions of media, language, and culture in Indonesia.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a content analysis approach, which is particularly appropriate for examining language use in media discourse. Content analysis allows researchers to identify, categorize, and interpret linguistic patterns in communication, providing insights into both structural and functional aspects of language variation (Krippendorff, 2013; Schreier, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The corpus of this study consisted of twenty episodes of the *Brownis* Trans TV talk show aired between January and February 2022. The episodes were purposively selected to capture diverse conversational contexts and the consistent use of slang expressions by hosts, celebrity guests, and live audiences. Data collection involved systematic observation and documentation. Each episode was repeatedly observed and transcribed verbatim, after which slang expressions were extracted and compiled into a dataset. These expressions included basic words, reduplications, abbreviations, and phrases that reflected informal and creative linguistic practices. To enhance data validity, triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing transcriptions with available online recordings and through peer discussion to confirm coding reliability. The analytic procedure was carried out in several stages. First, slang items were identified and classified according to their linguistic forms. Second, semantic interpretation was applied to categorize meanings into lexical, grammatical, terminological, and reflective dimensions. Finally, functional analysis was undertaken by mapping the occurrences of slang against sociolinguistic functions such as humor, intimacy, satire, and attention management, drawing upon theoretical frameworks from language variation studies (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Legère et al., 1994; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). To ensure rigor, the coding process was iterative, with continuous comparison between data and theory until analytical saturation was reached. This methodological design allowed the researchers to capture both the micro-level features of slang expressions and their macro-level social implications within the televised discourse.

Results and Discussion

Forms of Slang in Brownis Trans TV
The analysis revealed that slang in *Brownis* Trans TV appeared in four main linguistic forms: (1) basic words, (2) reduplications, (3) abbreviations, and (4) phrases. Basic words were the most dominant, with examples such as *elo, gue, ogah, lebay,* and *lemot,* which represent informal lexical

items deviating from standard Indonesian. Reduplication was less frequent, exemplified by *gombal-gombal*, which demonstrates playful repetition. Abbreviations, however, were highly productive, such as *bucin* (budak cinta), *jaim* (jaga image), *PDKT* (pendekatan), and *LDR* (long distance relationship), showing the tendency to condense expressions for efficiency and stylistic effect. Finally, phrasal constructions like *squad kece* and *sok cool* highlight how colloquial creativity extends beyond single lexical items into multiword expressions.

Table 1. Forms of Slang Identified in *Brownis* Trans TV

Form	Examples	Characteristics
Basic words	elo, gue, ogah, lebay, lemot, rumpi	Single morphemes, informal, identity-marking
Reduplications	gombal-gombal	Playful repetition, emphasizing humor
Abbreviations	bucin, jaim, PDKT, LDR, VT, TBL, baper	Shortened forms, efficiency, popularized in media
Phrases	squad kece, sok cool	Creative combinations, reflecting youth subculture

These findings indicate that slang in *Brownis* is not random but follows patterned morphological and lexical innovations, resonating with earlier studies on Indonesian media discourse (Keidar et al., 2022; Kulkarni & Wang, 2017).

Semantic Dimensions of Slang

The semantic analysis shows that slang expressions in *Brownis* convey multiple layers of meaning. Lexical meanings include direct equivalents, such as *gue* (I/me) and *elo* (you), which are informal replacements of standard Indonesian pronouns. Grammatical meanings emerged from morphological modifications, as seen in reduplications. Terminological meanings reflect specialized interpretations within youth culture, for instance, *bucin* and *jaim*, which are intelligible primarily within certain age groups. Reflective meanings involve humorous or ironic nuances, such as *lebay* (overacting) and *gokil* (crazy/funny), which operate beyond literal denotations.

Table 2. Semantic Dimensions of Slang in Brownis Trans TV

Semantic Category	Examples	Description
Lexical	gue, elo, say, beb	Direct, informal equivalents of standard forms
Grammatical	gombal-gombal	Morphological reduplication with emphatic function
Terminological	bucin, jaim, PDKT, LDR	Specialized meanings, tied to youth sociocultural context
Reflective	lebay, gokil, toxic	Figurative and humorous uses beyond literal meaning

This layered semantic system reflects how slang is multifunctional, bridging literal communication with cultural symbolism (Roth-Gordon, 2020; Slotta, 2016).

Social Function of Slang

The analysis further identified seven key social functions of slang in the talk show: (1) facilitating social relations, (2) attracting attention, (3) delivering satire, (4) compressing expressions, (5) enriching vocabulary, (6) signaling intimacy and friendliness, and (7) producing humor. For instance, *bucin* and *lebay* were often used humorously to provoke laughter, while terms like *gue* and *elo* reinforced intimacy and in-group solidarity between hosts and guests. Satirical functions were evident in expressions like *julid* (excessively critical), which served as subtle commentary.

Table 3. Social Functions of Slang in *Brownis* Trans TV

Function	Examples	Communicative Role
Social bonding	gue, elo, bestie	Building intimacy and in-group solidarity
Attracting attention	cie, cus	Capturing audience interest
Satire/criticism	julid, norak	Implicit commentary and social critique
Expression compression	PDKT, LDR, VT	Efficiency and brevity
Vocabulary enrichment	squad kece, sok cool	Linguistic innovation and stylistic creativity
Intimacy/friendliness	say, beb, bestie	Expressing closeness and familiarity
Humor/playfulness	lebay, gokil, ngakak	Entertaining and humorous interaction

Frequency Distribution of Slang Usage

In addition to analyzing the forms, meanings, and functions of slang in *Brownis* Trans TV, the study also identified the most frequently occurring expressions. Frequency analysis demonstrates that certain slang words such as *gue* (15 times), *elo* (13 times), and *bucin* (10 times) dominate conversational interactions, reflecting their entrenched role in everyday youth discourse. Other frequent items include *jaim*, *lebay*, *gokil*, and *ngakak*, all of which carry humorous or identity-marking functions. Less frequent but culturally significant terms, such as *julid*, *bestie*, and *squad kece*, indicate ongoing lexical innovation within Indonesian popular culture.
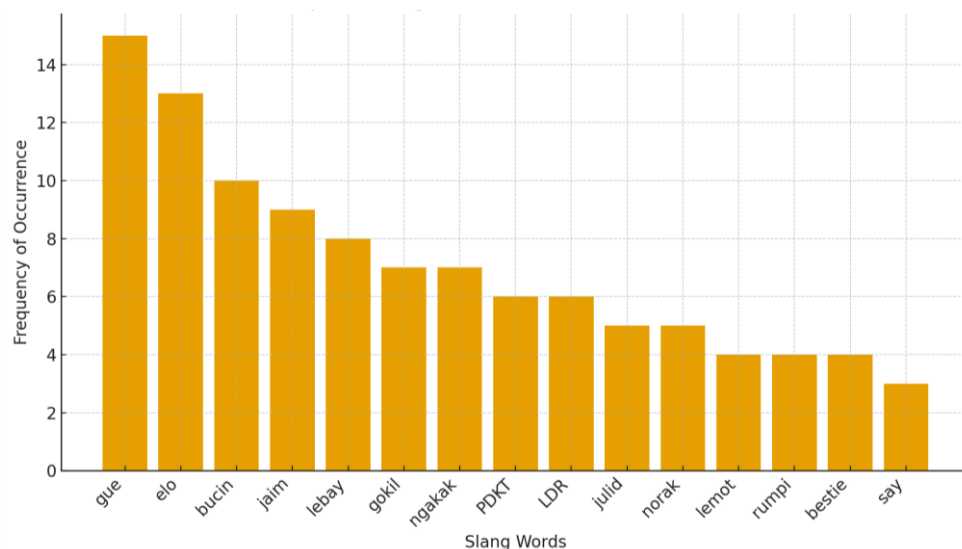

Figure 1. Top 15 Slang Words in Brownis Trans TV

As shown in Figure 1, the distribution of slang demonstrates both concentration and diversity. While a few terms dominate in frequency, a long tail of less frequent expressions reveals the continuous expansion of the slang repertoire. This supports earlier observations that slang operates as a dynamic and ever-changing register (Androutsopoulos, 2014). The visualization

also highlights the performative nature of televised discourse, where repetition of familiar slang terms sustains audience engagement, while occasional introduction of novel expressions signals linguistic creativity.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that slang expressions in *Brownis* Trans TV are systematically constructed, semantically layered, and socially multifunctional. The dominance of basic words such as *gue* and *elo*, together with the frequent use of abbreviations like *bucin* and *PDKT*, reflects the ways in which televised discourse appropriates everyday youth language into entertainment contexts. This supports Guzman, (2017) assertion that slang is both a reflection of youth identity and a mechanism for establishing solidarity, while also aligning with Androutsopoulos, (2014) argument that media plays a central role in the mediatization of language variation.

The semantic analysis highlights that slang in *Brownis* is not restricted to lexical substitution but extends to cultural symbolism and pragmatic functions. Words like *lebay* and *gokil* convey humor and evaluation beyond their literal meanings, resonating with Guzman, (2017) claim that slang often carries figurative or ironic connotations. This finding also echoes Seargeant & Tagg, (2014), who emphasize the creative and playful dimensions of non-standard language in digital and mediated communication. In this sense, *Brownis* demonstrates that television remains a powerful site for the performance and diffusion of such linguistic creativity, complementing but also diverging from the dynamics observed in online platforms.

From a functional perspective, the seven roles of slang identified in this study—ranging from bonding and humor to satire and vocabulary enrichment—highlight the versatility of slang as a communicative resource. These functions are consistent with previous findings on Indonesian talk shows such as *Hitam Putih* Pasiyah Tahe, Elen Inderasari, (2020), where slang was shown to enhance audience engagement, and with Savitri, (2021) analysis of YouTube creators, where slang reinforced digital persona and group identity. However, the present study extends these insights by demonstrating that televised discourse not only mirrors existing linguistic practices but actively legitimizes and circulates them at the national level. This amplifying effect underscores the unique influence of mass media compared to localized offline contexts, such as the *angkringan* slang studied by Setiawan, (2019), where variation was tied more closely to regional identity and community intimacy.

The novelty of this research lies in situating slang analysis within the specific context of a popular entertainment program that has not previously been examined in scholarly literature. While much attention has been given to slang in social media and interpersonal interactions, studies of its use in mainstream television entertainment remain limited. By focusing on *Brownis* Trans TV, this study contributes to filling that gap and expands the sociolinguistic understanding of how slang operates at the intersection of youth culture, media discourse, and popular entertainment.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. At the cultural level, they highlight the role of television in shaping and normalizing youth linguistic practices, demonstrating how entertainment media can reinforce non-standard varieties as socially acceptable. At the pedagogical level, they raise questions about the impact of such exposure on language norms and

educational practices, suggesting the need for critical literacy approaches that help learners navigate the distinction between informal and formal registers. At the scholarly level, they emphasize the importance of analyzing media as an influential agent in the diffusion and standardization of slang.

Nonetheless, this study is not without limitations. The data were restricted to 20 episodes of a single talk show within a two-month timeframe, which limits the generalizability of the findings across different programs and time periods. Furthermore, the analysis focused solely on linguistic aspects, without accounting for non-verbal cues or multimodal features that may also shape the use and perception of slang in televised interaction. Future research should address these limitations by conducting longitudinal analyses, cross-program comparisons, and multimodal studies that integrate gestures, prosody, and audience reactions. Such expansions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how slang operates across different media and sociocultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that slang expressions in *Brownis* Trans TV exhibit systematic forms, layered semantic meanings, and diverse social functions that extend beyond mere linguistic play to become central tools for bonding, humor, satire, and stylistic innovation in televised discourse. The findings demonstrate that slang is both entrenched in everyday youth interaction and amplified by media performance, thereby contributing to the diffusion and legitimization of non-standard language varieties within Indonesian popular culture. By situating slang in the context of a mainstream entertainment program, the research adds a novel perspective to sociolinguistic scholarship that has predominantly focused on digital platforms and localized community interactions. The implications are significant for understanding how mass media shapes linguistic practices, fosters identity construction, and influences public perceptions of language norms, while also raising questions for education and media literacy about the balance between informal and formal registers. At the same time, the study acknowledges its limitations in scope and time frame, suggesting the need for further longitudinal and cross-platform investigations to capture the evolving dynamics of slang across multiple media ecologies.

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