

CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THROUGH SLANG OF THE YOUNG GENERATION OF JAPAN AND MANADO: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Slang for the younger generation is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that marks the construction of social identity in the digital era. This study analyzes the construction of social identity through the slang of the young generation of Japan (*wakamono kotoba*) and Manado in a comparative sociolinguistic perspective. The purpose of the research was to analyze linguistic characteristics, identify the mechanisms of social identity construction, and compare identity construction patterns between the two cultural contexts. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a literature study, analyzing the literature in 2021-2025 through content analysis. The results showed that *wakamono kotoba* has 13 complex formation processes with the influence of four Japanese script systems, while Manado slang is more flexible through *blending*, *clipping*, and integration of regional languages. The identity construction mechanism takes place through three layers (*personal*, *enactment*, *communal*) with a strategy of convergence and divergence on digital platforms. The similarities of both contexts include the function of group solidarity and linguistic creativity. Significant differences were identified in the very rapid cycle of Japanese slang change and stronger confidentiality functions, while Indonesia experienced a shift in regional languages with the dominance of foreign languages on social media. The research suggests the development of longitudinal studies, educational approaches that acknowledge the creativity of slang, and regional language revitalization strategies relevant to the digital ecology of young generations.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Slang or *hose* The younger generation has become a global sociolinguistic phenomenon that marks the dynamics of social identity construction in the digital age. The use of slang is not just an informal linguistic variation,

but rather a symbolic instrument that youth groups use to build group affiliation, express collective identity, and differentiate themselves from other age groups. Contemporary sociolinguistic studies show that *hose* serves as a powerful marker of group identity, facilitating social solidarity and membership in a particular community of practice among the younger generation (Putri & Nurhayati, 2024). This phenomenon is increasingly complex in the context of digital globalization, where social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter are accelerating the diffusion and evolution of cross-cultural slang at an unprecedented pace.

In the Japanese context, *wakamono kotoba* (Youth Words) or the slang of the younger generation has become an interesting field of research due to its unique characteristics that reflect social and technological changes. Recent research shows that *wakamono kotoba* on social media X (Twitter) in 2024 is dominated by the form of *shouryaku* (abbreviation), which involves omitting certain parts of a word to speed up digital communication (Novitasari & Muzaki, 2024). The process of forming the inner word *wakamono kotoba* includes changes in pronunciation (*Here is no henka*), Japanese to English conversion (*Squirrel*), a combination of words (*konkou*), acronymization (*kashirajika*), noun affixes (*meishi no haisei*), and word reversal (*touchi*), which reflects the extraordinary linguistic creativity in responding to the need for rapid communication in the digital space. On the other hand, the slang of Manado's younger generation, known as *Manado dialect* or *bahasa prokem*, showing different but equally dynamic patterns. A comparative study between Indonesian and Japanese slang reveals that the formation of Indonesian slang is more dominated by abbreviations, while Japanese uses more accent flattening and characterization (Novitasari & Muzaki, 2024).

Empirical findings show that these two slang phenomena have similar social functions despite their different cultural contexts. Research on *hose* Generation Z on TikTok identified that slang works for emotional expression (28.5%) and social positioning (22.3%), with cross-platform variations reflecting the specific characteristics of each social media (Siagian et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, the use of slang among adolescents reflects their identity and self-expression, with the importance of maintaining a balance between language creativity and communication politeness so that slang can enrich social interaction without damaging formal language structures (Dinova et al., 2024). This phenomenon shows that slang serves not only as a pragmatic communication tool, but also as a mechanism for the construction of complex social identities among the younger generation (Ramadhanti et al., 2021).

Although there has been a lot of research on the slang of the younger generation in various countries, there is still a significant *research gap* in understanding the construction of social identity through a cross-cultural comparative perspective, especially between Japan and Manado. Existing research tends to focus on structural linguistic analysis or the impact of slang on standard languages, but not much has explored in depth how the mechanisms of social identity construction through slang function in different cultural contexts. Existing comparative studies are also still limited to morphological formation aspects without integrating broader sociolinguistic dimensions, such as the practice of identity construction, symbolic power negotiation, and self-representation in digital spaces. In addition, the literature on Manado slang in a sociolinguistic perspective comparative with Japan is still very minimal, even though these two contexts offer valuable insights into how cultural locality affects slang practices.

The *novelty* of this research lies in a sociolinguistic comparative approach that integrates the analysis of social identity construction through the slang of the young generation of Japan (*wakamono kotoba*) and Manado in the framework of a comprehensive literature study. This research not only analyzes linguistic aspects, but also explores the social, cultural, and ideological dimensions behind the use of slang as an instrument of identity construction. By comparing two geographically and linguistically different cultural contexts, this research is expected to generate a deeper understanding of the universality and particularity of slang practices in the construction of the social identity of the younger generation. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of a culturally sensitive sociolinguistic analysis framework to understand the phenomenon of slang as a complex social practice, rather than just an informal language variation.

Based on the above background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: (1) What are the linguistic characteristics of the slang of the young generation of Japan (*wakamono kotoba*) and Manado from a sociolinguistic perspective? (2) What is the mechanism of social identity construction through the use of slang in the young generation of Japan and Manado? (3) What are the similarities and differences in the pattern of social identity construction through slang between the young generations of Japan and Manado in a comparative perspective?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (*library research*) which aims to analyze the construction of social identity through the slang of the young generation of Japan and Manado in a comparative sociolinguistic perspective. Literature study is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing library collection materials without the need for field research, by utilizing written sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other relevant academic publications (Fadilla & Wulandari, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study emphasizes an in-depth analysis of sociolinguistic phenomena by revealing meanings and processes in a holistic-contextual manner, where findings are obtained through an in-depth interpretation of literature data (Hennink et al., 2021). The data sources are derived from primary and secondary literature published from 2021 to 2025, including articles from reputable national and international journals on the slang of the Japanese younger generation (*wakamono kotoba*), Manado slang, social identity construction, and contemporary sociolinguistics. The literature selection criteria include the relevance of the theme, the credibility of the publisher, the year of publication, and the theoretical contribution to the field of sociolinguistics.

The data collection technique was carried out through systematic searches on academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, and electronic journal portals using the keywords: *youth slang*, *wakamono kotoba*, *Manado slang*, *social identity construction*, *sociolinguistics*, and *language variation*.

The data analysis technique uses a qualitative content analysis method that involves the process of reading, reviewing, identifying, classifying, and synthesizing key concepts from the literature. The analysis was carried out by comparing and contrasting findings to identify patterns, themes, similarities, and differences in the construction of social identity in both cultural contexts. The analysis process begins with data reduction through the identification of relevant information, followed by data categorization based on linguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions, then comparative interpretation to understand the mechanism of social identity construction across cultures. Validity and reliability are maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing information from various literatures as well as repeated and critical reading. The entire analysis process is carried out in an inductive-interpretive manner by integrating sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Characteristics of Japanese and Manado Young Slang in a Sociolinguistic Perspective

The linguistic characteristics of the slang of the younger generation of Japan, known as *wakamono kotoba*, showing a unique complexity of formation compared to slang in other contexts. Hidayat & Kusri (2022) identify the tendency to use the form of shortening words in *wakamono kotoba* that serve as an interjection in LINE conversations, such as *March* which is a shortening of the *majime* which means "serious" and *seed* from *are toori* which indicates "consent". Ariefandi (2023) reinforcing these findings by revealing that there are 13 formation processes *hose* Japanese internet or *Net Go*, which includes 9 processes according to Yonekawa's theory, plus derivations *zero*, onomatopoe, and the combination of two or more types of characters. This uniqueness is inseparable from the influence of the use of four character systems in the Japanese language, namely *Kanji*, *Hiragana*, *katakana*, and *Sō Paulo* which triggers high creativity in vocabulary formation *hose*. Other concrete examples include *sutabaru* (Starbucks) dan *five* (temporarily) which shows a pattern of systematic shortening in the communication of the young generation of Japan (Nteli et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the linguistic characteristics of the slang of the young generation of Manado display a different but still complex pattern. Musyarrifah et al. (2025) identify that form of language *Prokem* used by Makassar teenagers includes words, phrases, abbreviations, acronyms, question words, and adjectives that are influenced by the Makassar regional language. Although the geographical context is different, a similar pattern can be found in the young generation of Manado who also integrate elements of regional languages in the construction of their slang. Azika et al. (2025) clarifies this phenomenon by identifying five sociolectic types in the language variation of Generation Z in Tippulue Hamlet, Bone Regency, namely *acrolek* which includes the use of formal languages or a mixture of foreign and regional languages, vulgar, *slang*, *kolokial*, dan *jargon*. Septiani (2025) shows that Generation Z Indonesia is actively integrating loan words from English, Korean, Japanese, and other languages through the process of *blending*, *clipping*, and modify spelling to match local linguistic patterns, with examples such as *healing*, *Vibes*, and *oppa* which acquires new cultural nuances in the Indonesian context.

Mechanism of Social Identity Construction through the Use of Slang in the Young Generation of Japan and Manado

Mechanisms of social identity construction through the use of *wakamono kotoba* in the young generation of Japan takes place through a layered and dynamic process. Gusri et al. (2020) reveals that gender identity is formed through three layers: *personal layer*, *enactment layer*, and *communal layer*, where the *Fujoshi* tend to have a dual identity and are more daring to show their identity regarding their hobbies on social media. Immanuel et al. (2025) reinforcing this perspective through a study of OMORI virtual communities that show that communication accommodation strategies take place through convergence as the dominant strategy through observation, imitation, and gradual adoption of *hose* with semantic shifts, with small groups serving as safe spaces for experimentation and learning, while divergence occurs when *hose* conflicts with personal identity or self-image. Purnomo et al. (2025) adding that *hose* It serves to strengthen social identity, build group cohesion, and enable creative self-expression through a variety of linguistic patterns including phonetic changes, abbreviations, metaphors, loanwords, and morphological adaptations.

In the context of the young generation of Manado and Indonesia in general, the mechanism of social identity construction has distinctive characteristics but with comparable patterns. Paramita et al. (2025) explains that *Cosplay* as a representation of Japanese pop culture serves not only as entertainment but also as a form of symbolic communication that reflects the integration of Japanese culture with the values and social identity of Generation Z in Manado City, becoming a space to build community, assert identity, and fight social stigma. Reski et al. (2025) identifying that language choices in multicultural public spaces such as Makassar Culinary Night show that Bahasa Indonesia dominates in buying and selling transactions, while code switching and code mixing with Makassar and Bugis languages is often used as a strategy to express identity and solidarity. Siddique et al. (2025) Clarify that social media doubles in providing opportunities for self-exploration and creative expression while creating challenges that can trigger identity conflicts, with the implementation of *Modeling Theory* which explains how adolescents adopt the linguistic behaviors and patterns they observe on social media.

Table 1. Comparison of Identity Construction Mechanisms through Slang

Aspects	The Young Generation of Japan	The Young Generation of Manado/Indonesia
Main Functions	Annoyance, creativity, secrecy, intimacy	Symbolic communication, solidarity, expression of identity
Identity Layer	Personal, enactment, communal layer	Personal identity, social groups, local-global culture

Accommodation Strategy	Dominant convergence, selective divergence	Linguistic flexibility, contextual adaptation
Examples of Slang	Maji, sorena, sutabaru, torima	healing, vibes, oppa, mix area codes
Platform Dominan	LINE, Twitter	Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2019

Source: Processed from Hidayat & Kusri (2022); Gusri et al. (2020); Immanuel et al. (2025); Paramita et al. (2025); Reski et al. (2025); Ntelu et al. (2022)

Similarities and Differences in Social Identity Construction Patterns between the Young Generation of Japan and Manado in a Comparative Perspective

The similarities in the pattern of social identity construction between the young generation of Japan and Manado can be traced through several fundamental dimensions. Aishah et al. (2026) reveals that language shifts in the form of *code-switching* and *code-mixing* It serves as a communication strategy to build solidarity, facilitate understanding, and affirm multilingual identity, a pattern that is universal in both academic and non-academic interactions. Inriani & Fiddienika (2024) shows that adolescents in Barru Regency experience a shift in language use when interacting on social media, where Indonesian or social media slang is more dominant than regional languages, a phenomenon that parallels the adoption of *Net Go* by the young generation of Japanese in digital platforms. Both contexts also show a tendency to perceive the use of foreign words as a trend that reflects modernity and openness to global influence.

However, significant differences were also identified in the social identity construction patterns of the two groups. Ntelu et al. (2022) found a strong defense of the Bajo language in Boalemo Regency which was characterized by a positive attitude of the community towards the regional language through the selection, use, and defense of the language, conditions that were different from the findings Inriani & Fiddienika (2024) which shows that teenagers tend to perceive regional languages as less attractive and modern. In the Japanese context, Sörensson (2023) emphasizes that many expressions previously researched as the language of youth are no longer recognized by today's young generation, indicating the dynamics of very rapid change and life cycles *hose* short. Meanwhile, Ariefandi (2023) reveals that the use function *hose* Japanese internet specifically includes wit, forms of creativity, density and concreteness of expression, self-differentiation, secrecy, and familiarity which all play a role in representing identity in cyberspace with more complex characteristics than the Indonesian context.

Structural differences can also be seen from the aspect of linguistic formation. Musyarrafah et al. (2025) identify that factors that influence language use *Prokem* includes interlocutors, topics of conversation, kinship, social media platforms, emotional situations, social groups, and trends that reflect openness to flexible language variations and social symbols with strong influences from Makassar regional languages. Instead, Ariefandi (2023) shows that the characteristics of the formation process *wakamono kotoba* has its own uniqueness because of the influence of the use of four writing letters in Japanese which triggers high creativity in making words *hose* in a variety of ways, including the use of derivatives *zero*, onomatopoe, and a combination of scripts that are not found in the Indonesian context.

Table 2. Comparison of the Characteristics of Social Identity Construction

Dimensions	Equations	Japanese Differences	Difference between Manado/Indonesia
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Formation Process	Abbreviations, abbreviations, morphological adaptations	Influence of 4 character systems, zero derivation, onomatopoeia	Blending, clipping, local spelling modification
Social Function	Solidarity, group cohesion, creativity	Confidentiality, high intimacy, fast cycle	Expression of multicultural identity, flexibility
Attitude towards Regional Languages	Integration of local elements	Relatively stable defense	A significant shift, traditional stigma
Influencing Factors	Social media, global trends, peer groups	Character system, specific virtual communities	Interlocutor, kinship, emotional situation
Dynamics of Change	Rapid evolution following digital platforms	Old expressions are not recognized by the new generation	The dominance of Indonesian and foreign languages on social media

Source: Processed from Inriani & Fiddienika (2024); Ntelu et al. (2022); Ariefandi (2023); Musyarrafah et al. (2025); Sörensson (2023); Aishah et al. (2026)

CONCLUSION

This comparative study reveals that the construction of social identity through the slang of the young generation of Japan and Manado have fundamental similarities but differ in mechanism and complexity. The linguistic characteristics of *wakamono kotoba* show high complexity with 13 formation processes including *zero derivation*, onomatopoe, and a fusion of four character systems (*kanji, hiragana, katakana, romaji*), while Manado slang is more flexible through *blending, clipping*, and regional language integration. The identity construction mechanism takes place through three layers (*personal, enactment, communal layer*) with convergence and divergence strategies in digital platforms. The similarities of the two contexts include the function of group solidarity, linguistic creativity, and adaptation to global trends through social media. Significant differences were identified in the very rapid cycle of Japanese slang change, stronger confidentiality and intimacy functions, and the preservation of different regional languages—Japan is relatively stable while Indonesia is experiencing a shift away from traditional stigma against regional languages and the dominance of foreign languages in the digital space.

Further research needs to explore the *longitudinal* dimensions of slang change to understand the evolutionary cycles and the factors that accelerate or slow linguistic shifts in both contexts. In-depth ethnographic studies of specific virtual communities are needed to identify micronuances in communication accommodation strategies and identity negotiations. The development of theoretical frameworks that integrate sociolinguistic perspectives, digital communication, and *cultural studies* can enrich the understanding of slang phenomena as complex social practices. Practically, educational institutions need to recognize slang as a source of linguistic creativity while promoting the preservation of regional languages through a non-stigmatizing approach. Language policymakers are advised to design regional language revitalization strategies that are relevant to the digital ecology of the younger generation. Similar comparative research can be extended to other geographic and generational contexts to build a holistic understanding of the dynamics of language, identity, and technology in an era of digital globalization.

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