

The Representation of Gen Z Slang in Online News: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Kompas.Com

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Abstract

This study investigates the representation of Generation Z (Gen Z) slang in online news discourse by analyzing a Kompas.com article entitled “Bahasa Gaul Gen Z Kian Marak, Begini Kata Peneliti Bahasa” published on November 8, 2024. The research aims to reveal how Gen Z slang is constructed as a social phenomenon and how ideological meanings are embedded through media language. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method under a critical paradigm, using Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework: textual analysis (micro level), discursive practice (meso level), and socio-cultural practice (macro level). The findings show that the article frames Gen Z slang as an increasingly widespread trend through evaluative lexical choices such as “kian marak” and the inclusion of popular terms like FOMO, YOLO, JOMO, healing, and ghosting. At the discursive practice level, Kompas.com legitimizes the phenomenon by combining Gen Z voices with expert commentary, creating a hierarchy of authority in which academic interpretation becomes dominant. At the socio-cultural level, the discourse reflects broader contexts of digital culture, globalization, and generational identity, while also revealing an ideological tension between viewing slang as linguistic creativity and treating it as an influence-driven trend that may challenge standard language norms. Overall, the study confirms that online news media plays an active role in shaping public perceptions of youth language, constructing Gen Z slang not only as a linguistic variation but also as a cultural marker tied to identity and power relations in contemporary Indonesian society.

Keywords: Gen Z Slang, Representation, Online News, Critical Discourse Analysis, Kompas.com.



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INTRODUCTION

Language practices among Generation Z have emerged as one of the most salient indicators of cultural change in contemporary Indonesia, particularly within digitally mediated communication. As a cohort whose socialization is inseparable from the internet, social networking platforms, and algorithm-driven content circulation, Gen Z actively produces and disseminates linguistic innovations that move rapidly across online spaces. Abbreviations, hybrid lexical items, and globalized slang expressions circulate intensively through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X (Twitter), forming a dynamic repertoire that distinguishes this generation from its predecessors. These patterns demonstrate that language functions not merely as a communicative tool, but as a symbolic resource through which identity, belonging, and generational consciousness are articulated (Budd & Raber, 1996; Gulbrandsen, Just, & Kragh, 2019).

The increasing visibility of Gen Z slang has transformed youth language into a matter of public concern, drawing sustained attention from mainstream online news media in Indonesia. Slang expressions that were once confined to peer interaction are now widely recognized, discussed, and evaluated in journalistic texts addressed to broader audiences. This shift indicates that youth language practices are no longer treated as marginal phenomena, but as socially significant developments linked to digital culture and globalization. Media discourse surrounding Gen Z slang thus becomes a strategic site where social meanings about youth, modernity, and linguistic legitimacy are negotiated (Amer, 2009; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019).

A clear illustration of this process appears in a Kompas.com news article entitled “*Bahasa Gaul Gen Z Kian Marak, Begini Kata Peneliti Bahasa*”, published on November 8, 2024. The article reports on the widespread use of slang among Gen Z speakers while incorporating commentary from both young users and a language researcher. Popular terms such as *FOMO*, *YOLO*, *JOMO*, *healing*, and

ghosting are highlighted as emblematic of contemporary youth communication and as evidence of linguistic change shaped by global digital interaction. Through the characterization of these expressions as *kian marak* or increasingly pervasive, the article frames Gen Z slang as a phenomenon that merits observation, explanation, and public reflection (Budd & Raber, 1996).

Online news portals hold a powerful position in shaping how linguistic change is perceived, interpreted, and evaluated within society. Journalistic texts operate as discursive practices that select specific vocabularies, sources, and narrative angles, thereby constructing particular versions of social reality. In the context of Gen Z slang, media coverage may frame youth language as creative and adaptive, or conversely as excessive and disruptive to established norms of standard Indonesian. Such representations influence public attitudes toward young people and reproduce broader ideological assumptions about authority, correctness, and cultural continuity in language use (Amer, 2009; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019).

The discourse surrounding youth slang also reveals deeper power relations between generations, institutions, and knowledge systems. When media texts privilege expert voices, especially academic researchers, they legitimize certain interpretations of youth language while marginalizing others. At the same time, the selective inclusion of Gen Z perspectives positions young speakers as objects of explanation rather than as autonomous agents of linguistic change. This interplay between youth experience, expert authority, and journalistic framing demonstrates how discourse functions as a mechanism through which social hierarchies and ideological meanings are maintained (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Rachmawati, Retnaningdyah, & Setiawan, 2022).

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a systematic approach for examining how such meanings are produced and circulated through media texts. CDA conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice that is inseparable from power relations, institutional structures, and ideological processes. Scholars have consistently emphasized that media discourse not only reflects social realities but actively participates in shaping them through representation and framing (Fairclough, 2023; Huspek, 1991). Within this tradition, language is understood as a site where dominance, resistance, and negotiation occur in subtle yet consequential ways (Mirhosseini, 2006).

Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model is particularly relevant for analyzing online news discourse on Gen Z slang. The model integrates textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice, enabling researchers to connect linguistic features with processes of production and broader social contexts. Textual elements such as lexical choice, modality, and quotation patterns reveal how youth language is evaluated and categorized. Discursive practices highlight how news texts are produced and consumed, while socio-cultural analysis situates these practices within digital culture, generational identity, and ongoing debates about language standardization (Fairclough, 2023; Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

Building on this framework, the present study investigates how Gen Z slang is represented in the Kompas.com article "*Bahasa Gaul Gen Z Kian Marak, Begini Kata Peneliti Bahasa*." The analysis seeks to uncover how linguistic choices, narrative structures, and authoritative voices contribute to specific portrayals of youth language. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis, this research aims to reveal the ideological meanings embedded in media representations of Gen Z and to demonstrate how online news discourse participates in constructing social understandings of language change in contemporary Indonesia (Amer, 2009; Ginting, 2026).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach within a critical paradigm to examine the representation of Gen Z slang in an online news text published by Kompas.com. The data consist of a single Indonesian-language news article entitled "*Bahasa Gaul Gen Z Kian Marak, Begini Kata Peneliti Bahasa*" (November 8, 2024), selected as secondary data due to its relevance to contemporary linguistic trends and its inclusion of both youth perspectives and expert commentary. Data collection was conducted through documentation and literature study, with the news text serving as the primary research instrument, alongside consideration of Kompas.com as a media institution that shapes public discourse. The analysis applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, examining textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts to uncover how Gen Z slang is framed, how authority is constructed, and how broader ideological meanings about youth language, digital culture, and language norms are embedded in mainstream online media discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discursive Construction of Gen Z Slang in Online News Media

The findings demonstrate that the Kompas.com article constructs Gen Z slang as a socially charged discourse rather than a neutral linguistic variation, aligning with core assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis that language operates as social practice embedded in power and ideology (Fairclough, 2023; Van Dijk, 2001). Through Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the representation of slang emerges simultaneously at textual, discursive, and socio-cultural levels, revealing layered meanings about youth, technology, and linguistic legitimacy. This pattern confirms earlier arguments that media texts function as interpretive devices that actively shape public understanding of social phenomena (Budd & Raber, 1996; Gulbrandsen, Just, & Kragh, 2019). In this sense, Gen Z slang is positioned as an object of explanation, evaluation, and regulation within mainstream discourse (Amer, 2009).

At the textual level, lexical choices such as *kian marak* signal an evaluative stance that frames slang as a rapidly expanding trend requiring attention and interpretation. This aligns with CDA scholarship emphasizing that evaluative vocabulary is rarely accidental and often reflects ideological positioning within news discourse (Van Dijk, 1993; Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). The repeated emphasis on frequency and spread constructs slang as a visible social force rather than a marginal youth practice. Such framing parallels findings in media studies showing that repetition and intensification function to elevate everyday practices into matters of public concern (Reza et al., 2024).

The selection of English-based slang items such as *FOMO*, *YOLO*, *ghosting*, and *spill the tea* further situates Gen Z language within a globalized digital ecosystem. Youth language research has long noted that global popular culture and online interaction accelerate lexical borrowing and hybridization (Tagliamonte, 2016). In the Kompas.com article, these terms symbolically associate Gen Z with transnational cultural flows and digital cosmopolitanism. This representation resonates with studies on Indonesian online discourse that highlight the increasing dominance of global English-inflected registers in youth communication (Kusumalestari, Permatasari, & Satriani, 2025).

The portrayal of Gen Z as social actors oscillates between agency and dependency, producing an ambivalent identity construction. On one side, Gen Z is described as actively creating and popularizing new expressions, reinforcing the idea of youth as linguistic innovators. On the other side, explanations emphasizing imitation and exposure to external information subtly frame Gen Z as followers of global digital trends rather than autonomous creators. Such dual representation mirrors patterns identified in prior CDA research, where marginalized or emerging groups are simultaneously empowered and constrained through discourse (Amer, 2009; Stephani, 2025).

Grammatical patterns further reinforce this ambivalence by shifting agency across different explanatory frames. Active clauses attribute creativity to Gen Z when slang use is discussed at the surface level, while abstract forces such as technology and social media dominate causal explanations. This linguistic strategy foregrounds structural determinants over human intention, echoing critiques that media discourse often naturalizes technological influence as inevitable (Gulbrandsen et al., 2019). Similar agency shifts have been observed in analyses of online political and cultural discourse in Indonesia (Ginting, 2026; Fikri, Azhar, & Pradana, 2025).

A central discursive mechanism in the article lies in its quotation strategy, which constructs a hierarchy of voices between youth speakers and academic experts. Gen Z informants function as experiential witnesses who provide authenticity, while the researcher from Universitas Negeri Semarang is positioned as the authoritative interpreter of meaning. This pattern reflects a broader journalistic tendency to legitimize narratives through institutional expertise, reinforcing epistemic power relations (Huspek, 1991; Mirhosseini, 2006). Comparable hierarchies have been documented in studies of media representations of religion, gender, and social movements in Indonesia (Romadlan et al., 2024; Alim, Ghalim, & Saputra, 2026).

At the meso level, journalistic framing transforms informal youth language into a formal object of public discourse. By situating slang within a newsworthy narrative, Kompas.com contributes to the recontextualization of private linguistic practices into the public sphere. This process aligns with discourse theories that emphasize how media institutions shape what counts as legitimate social knowledge (Van Dijk, 2014; Budd & Raber, 1996). The article's structure, moving from phenomenon

to explanation, exemplifies how news texts guide readers toward preferred interpretations (Reza et al., 2024).

To strengthen the interpretation, empirical data from previous research and official reports illustrate the broader pattern of youth language and digital media influence in Indonesia and beyond. The table below summarizes selected findings that contextualize the Kompas.com discourse within established empirical trends, drawing on direct research outcomes and institutional reports (Tagliamonte, 2016; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019; Kompas.com, 2024).

Table 1. Empirical and Theoretical Evidence Supporting the Representation of Gen Z Slang in Online News Discourse

Source	Key Finding	Relevance to This Study
Tagliamonte (2016)	Youth language favors innovation and global lexical borrowing	Explains prevalence of English-based Gen Z slang
Gulbrandsen et al. (2019)	Media shape public understanding of digital culture	Supports analysis of journalistic framing
Kompas.com (2024)	Slang framed as increasingly widespread	Confirms evaluative discourse in primary data
Stephani (2025)	Media construct social identities through representation	Parallels Gen Z identity construction

At the macro level, the discourse reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics of digitalization and globalization in Indonesia. Social media platforms operate as linguistic incubators where new expressions gain rapid circulation and symbolic value. The article implicitly normalizes this environment by presenting digital exposure as the primary driver of language change. Such normalization aligns with CDA arguments that dominant discourses often naturalize structural conditions while obscuring alternative explanations (Fairclough, 2023; Van Dijk, 2001).

Generational identity emerges as a central ideological theme, with slang functioning as a marker of in-group belonging and social distinction. The discourse suggests that mastery of slang signals youth authenticity, while lack of understanding positions others as outsiders. This boundary-making function of language has been widely documented in sociolinguistic and discourse studies (Tagliamonte, 2016; Rachmawati, Retnaningdyah, & Setiawan, 2022). Media reproduction of this distinction reinforces generational hierarchies within public communication (Stephani, 2025).

Ideologically, the article balances admiration and concern by framing Gen Z slang as both creative and externally driven. This tension reflects enduring cultural debates about modernization, authenticity, and linguistic purity in Indonesia. Similar ideological ambivalence has been observed in media analyses addressing political discourse, religion, and youth culture (Amer, 2009; Ginting, 2026; Romadlan et al., 2024). The Kompas.com text thus becomes a discursive arena where competing values about language change and cultural influence are negotiated.

The discussion confirms that the representation of Gen Z slang in Kompas.com is shaped by intersecting textual strategies, institutional practices, and socio-cultural ideologies. The findings reinforce CDA scholarship asserting that media discourse plays a decisive role in legitimizing certain interpretations while marginalizing others (Fairclough, 2023; Van Dijk, 2014). By framing youth language through expert authority and technological determinism, the article subtly regulates how linguistic innovation is understood in Indonesian society. This study contributes to broader discourse studies by demonstrating how everyday language practices become sites of power, identity construction, and ideological negotiation in online news media (Amer, 2009; Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019).

Discursive Construction of Gen Z Slang in Kompas.com

This discussion examines how the Kompas.com news article “*Bahasa Gaul Gen Z Kian Marak, Begini Kata Peneliti Bahasa*” constructs Gen Z slang as a socially meaningful discourse rather than a purely linguistic trend. Drawing on Norman Fairclough’s conception of discourse as social practice, the

article is understood as an active participant in shaping public knowledge about youth, language, and modernity (Fairclough, 2023; Huspek, 1991). Media discourse is never detached from power relations, since language choices simultaneously describe reality and organize social meanings (Van Dijk, 2001; Budd & Raber, 1996). Within this framework, the Kompas.com text functions as a discursive arena where youth language is explained, legitimized, and subtly evaluated through institutional authority (Amer, 2009).

At the micro level, lexical selection plays a central role in shaping interpretation. The headline expression *kian marak* signals intensification and expansion, constructing Gen Z slang as a phenomenon that has exceeded private youth spaces and entered public concern. Such evaluative lexicalization aligns with critical discourse scholarship that identifies headlines as key ideological entry points guiding reader perception (Van Dijk, 1993; Reza et al., 2024). Through this phrasing, slang is framed as visible, influential, and socially consequential rather than incidental (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018).

The repeated listing of slang expressions such as *FOMO*, *YOLO*, *JOMO*, *ghosting*, *healing*, *spill the tea*, *backburner*, and *pick me* further reinforces this construction. These lexical items situate Gen Z language within global digital culture, foregrounding English-dominant registers that circulate widely through social media. Youth language studies demonstrate that such borrowing indexes cosmopolitan identity and symbolic alignment with transnational culture (Tagliamonte, 2016). At the same time, this lexical pattern introduces an ideological hierarchy in which globalized forms appear more visible and legitimate than locally grounded linguistic creativity (Gulbrandsen, Just, & Kragh, 2019).

Representation of social actors in the article reveals a structured hierarchy of voices. Gen Z speakers appear as experiential informants whose statements authenticate the existence of slang in everyday interaction. The language researcher, however, occupies the role of authoritative interpreter whose explanations define the social meaning of the phenomenon. This asymmetry reflects broader patterns identified in CDA research, where institutional expertise frames and stabilizes interpretation while lay voices remain illustrative (Mirhosseini, 2006; Rachmawati, Retnaningdyah, & Setiawan, 2022).

Grammatical choices further shape how agency is distributed in the text. Active constructions attribute innovation and dissemination of slang to Gen Z, portraying young speakers as dynamic participants in linguistic change. When causal explanations are introduced, agency shifts toward abstract forces such as digital technology, social media platforms, and globalization. This shift naturalizes language change as an outcome of structural conditions, echoing critiques that media discourse often foregrounds technological determinism while backgrounding social negotiation and resistance (Van Dijk, 2014; Ginting, 2026).

The discursive pattern observed in the Kompas.com article resonates with empirical findings from previous research and official media reports. Studies on youth language consistently show that slang functions both as a marker of identity and as a product of mediated cultural circulation (Tagliamonte, 2016). Media discourse analyses demonstrate that institutional framing plays a decisive role in transforming everyday practices into publicly debated issues (Amer, 2009; Gulbrandsen et al., 2019). To situate the present findings within this broader empirical landscape, selected supporting evidence is summarized below.

Table 2. Empirical and Theoretical Evidence on Youth Language, Media Framing, and Digital Discourse

Source	Empirical Focus	Key Insight
Tagliamonte (2016)	Youth language variation	Slang indexes identity, innovation, and global alignment
Gulbrandsen et al. (2019)	Media and digital public sphere	News discourse shapes public understanding of digital culture
Kompas.com (2024)	Indonesian online news	Gen Z slang framed as increasingly widespread
Stephani (2025)	Media representation	Identity constructed through selective framing
Reza et al. (2024)	Online news framing	Headlines guide ideological interpretation

At the meso level, journalistic routines determine how Gen Z slang becomes newsworthy. The article follows a familiar structure that introduces a trend, provides examples, and anchors interpretation through expert commentary. This structure reflects how mainstream media institutionalize informal practices by translating them into legitimate objects of public knowledge (Budd & Raber, 1996). Similar framing strategies have been documented in Indonesian media analyses addressing political discourse and social movements (Fikri, Azhar, & Pradana, 2025; Alim, Ghalim, & Saputra, 2026).

Audience positioning within the text also reveals implicit power relations. Gen Z readers are addressed indirectly through recognition of their linguistic practices, while older audiences are positioned as observers who require explanation and clarification. This dual orientation constructs a generational boundary in which slang functions as insider knowledge. Such boundary-making through language aligns with sociolinguistic findings that slang operates simultaneously as inclusionary and exclusionary social capital (Tagliamonte, 2016; Kusumalestari, Permatasari, & Satriani, 2025).

At the macro level, the discourse reflects broader socio-cultural narratives about digital modernity in Indonesia. Social media platforms emerge as normalized spaces of linguistic production, where speed, visibility, and trend circulation shape language use. By framing digital exposure as the primary driver of slang, the article embeds youth language within globalization discourse and technological progress. CDA research emphasizes that such framing often obscures alternative interpretations, including local creativity and resistance to dominant norms (Fairclough, 2023; Van Dijk, 2014).

Generational identity is reinforced through repeated association between slang and youthfulness. The article suggests that mastery of slang signifies belonging to Gen Z, while lack of familiarity signals distance from contemporary culture. This mirrors findings in media studies where language becomes a symbolic boundary marking social categories such as age, gender, and ideology (Stephani, 2025; Romadlan et al., 2024). Through repetition and normalization, media discourse stabilizes these associations within public consciousness (Amer, 2009).

Ideologically, the Kompas.com article balances two competing narratives. Slang is celebrated as creative, adaptive, and socially bonding, while also framed as heavily influenced by global trends and digital imitation. This ambivalence reflects enduring cultural debates in Indonesia regarding authenticity, modernization, and linguistic authority. Similar tensions have been identified in discourse analyses of political and cultural representation, where innovation and dependency coexist within media narratives (Ginting, 2026; Van Dijk, 2001).

The discussion confirms that Gen Z slang in Kompas.com is constructed through layered discursive strategies that operate across textual, institutional, and socio-cultural dimensions. The article does more than describe language change; it actively participates in shaping how youth communication is understood and evaluated in Indonesian society. By privileging expert interpretation, naturalizing digital influence, and framing slang as both creative and excessive, the text reinforces particular ideological perspectives about language legitimacy. These findings support the central claims of Critical Discourse Analysis that media discourse functions as a powerful site where language, identity, and power intersect (Fairclough, 2023; Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Van Dijk, 1993).

Discursive Construction of Gen Z Slang in Indonesian Online News Media

The representation of Gen Z slang in Kompas.com operates as a complex discursive formation in which language change is framed as a socially significant phenomenon shaped by institutional media practices and broader cultural ideologies. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis as conceptualized by Fairclough and Van Dijk, this discussion situates the news article not as a neutral reflection of linguistic reality, but as an active site where meanings about youth language, authority, and modernity are produced and stabilized (Van Dijk, 1993; Van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2023). Within mainstream Indonesian media, linguistic practices associated with young people are elevated into public discourse through journalistic routines that privilege relevance, trendworthiness, and expert legitimacy, aligning with observations on media power in the digital public sphere (Gulbrandsen, Just, & Kragh, 2019). The Kompas.com article exemplifies how youth slang is transformed from everyday communicative practice into an object of explanation, evaluation, and regulation through discourse (Amer, 2009).

At the level of text production and discursive practice, the article reflects dominant news values that emphasize novelty, social relevance, and accessibility, positioning Gen Z slang as a “phenomenon” that deserves public attention. The framing of slang as “kian marak” constructs an image of expansion

and intensity, subtly invoking a sense of urgency without explicit moral judgment, a strategy frequently identified in media representations of social change (Reza et al., 2024; Stephani, 2025). This narrative choice aligns with broader journalistic tendencies to package cultural practices as trends that require interpretation, particularly when they emerge from youth or digital cultures perceived as unfamiliar to older audiences (Budd & Raber, 1996). Through this process, everyday linguistic creativity becomes mediated knowledge, filtered through institutional discourse rather than direct youth self-representation.

Source selection plays a decisive role in shaping discursive authority within the article, as Gen Z voices are present mainly as illustrative examples rather than as interpretive agents. The reliance on linguistic experts to explain slang practices reinforces a hierarchy of knowledge in which academic or institutional perspectives are positioned as more legitimate than lived experience, reflecting established power relations in discourse production (Huspek, 1991; Mirhosseini, 2006). This strategy resonates with findings in CDA research showing that mainstream media often validate social phenomena through expert commentary to stabilize meaning and reduce ambiguity (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Rachmawati et al., 2022). As a result, Gen Z slang is framed as something to be decoded and managed, rather than as a self-explanatory form of in-group communication.

The digital nature of Kompas.com as an online news platform further intensifies the circulation of this discourse within the same communicative environment that generates slang itself. Social media infrastructures enable rapid dissemination, allowing the article to travel across platforms where Gen Z language practices are already visible and normalized (Kusumalestari et al., 2025; Fikri et al., 2025). This creates a reflexive loop in which digital culture produces slang, media reports on it, and audiences consume and reinterpret both simultaneously. Such circulation illustrates how discourse functions not only through content but also through technological affordances that shape who encounters the text and how it is understood (Gulbrandsen et al., 2019).

From a socio-cultural perspective, the discourse reflects the broader impact of digital globalization on the Indonesian linguistic landscape. The prominence of English-based slang terms in the article highlights unequal global cultural flows, where English operates as a dominant symbolic resource associated with modernity, prestige, and digital literacy (Tagliamonte, 2016). This tendency implicitly reinforces ideological assumptions that globally circulating expressions carry higher social value than locally generated forms, echoing concerns raised in CDA about linguistic hierarchy and cultural dominance (Van Dijk, 2014). In this context, Gen Z slang becomes a marker of global connectivity as much as generational identity.

Slang is also discursively constructed as a tool of social bonding and identity formation among young people, reinforcing sociolinguistic understandings of language as a resource for solidarity and group membership. The article implicitly acknowledges that shared slang creates intimacy and belonging, yet it simultaneously emphasizes difference by positioning non-Gen Z audiences as observers who require explanation (Tagliamonte, 2016). This dual positioning reproduces generational boundaries, transforming linguistic variation into a symbolic divider between “insiders” and “outsiders.” Such representation aligns with CDA findings that media discourse often naturalizes social categories while presenting them as descriptive rather than ideological (Amer, 2009; Romadlan et al., 2024).

At the ideological level, the discourse oscillates between celebrating linguistic innovation and expressing implicit concern over linguistic regulation. Gen Z slang is portrayed as creative and adaptive, yet the emphasis on its spread and global origins subtly invokes anxieties about the stability of standard language norms in education and public life. This tension mirrors long-standing debates in Indonesian society regarding language purity, national identity, and the role of standard Indonesian as a unifying tool (Fairclough, 2023). Media discourse thus becomes a space where competing ideologies about language change coexist without direct confrontation.

The hegemonic function of mainstream media is evident in how neutrality is performed through selective framing and sourcing. By privileging expert voices, emphasizing global slang, and situating youth language within explanatory narratives, the article guides readers toward a particular “common sense” understanding of Gen Z communication (Van Dijk, 1993; Van Dijk, 2001). This process demonstrates how power operates discursively, not through overt persuasion, but through the normalization of specific interpretations that appear objective and reasonable (Ginting, 2026). Media discourse, in this sense, does not merely reflect social reality but actively organizes it.

The empirical grounding of this analysis is strengthened by triangulating media text analysis with prior research and institutional reports on discourse, media framing, and digital communication. Studies on online news framing, political discourse, and religious representation consistently show that mainstream media function as ideological filters that shape public perception while maintaining an appearance of balance (Alim, Ghalim, & Saputra, 2026; Stephani, 2025). Within this broader scholarly landscape, the Kompas.com article fits a recognizable pattern in which youth-related issues are mediated through adult institutional perspectives. The table below summarizes key empirical and theoretical data that support this interpretation.

Table 3. Empirical and Theoretical Sources Informing the Discursive Construction of Gen Z Slang in Online News

Source Type	Key Findings Relevant to the Study	Source
Online news article	Gen Z slang framed as a growing digital phenomenon explained through expert commentary	Kompas.com (2024)
Youth language research	Slang functions as identity marker and solidarity tool among young people	Tagliamonte (2016)
CDA theory	Media discourse shapes power relations and common-sense knowledge	Van Dijk (1993); Fairclough (2023)
Media framing studies	Neutral framing often reproduces dominant ideologies	Reza et al. (2024); Stephani (2025)
Digital discourse studies	Online platforms intensify circulation and normalization of discourse	Gulbrandsen et al. (2019); Fikri et al. (2025)

The implications of this discourse extend into educational and social domains, where youth language is often evaluated against formal standards. The article implicitly encourages recognition of slang as a meaningful part of students' communicative repertoires, resonating with pedagogical CDA studies that advocate contextual language awareness rather than prescriptive rejection (Rachmawati et al., 2022). At the same time, the framing reinforces the authority of standard language by positioning slang as context-bound and requiring explanation. This dual effect illustrates how media discourse can simultaneously open and limit interpretive possibilities.

Synthesizing the micro, meso, and macro dimensions reveals that the Kompas.com article constructs Gen Z slang as a socially significant practice embedded in digital globalization, generational identity, and institutional authority. Lexical choices and narrative framing at the textual level establish salience, journalistic routines and expert sourcing at the discursive practice level legitimize interpretation, and broader socio-cultural ideologies at the macro level give the discourse its normative force (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Van Dijk, 2014). Through this process, youth language is transformed into a manageable object of knowledge within mainstream media. The analysis confirms that online news discourse plays a decisive role in shaping public understanding of linguistic change in contemporary Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Kompas.com article constructs Gen Z slang not merely as a linguistic trend but as a socially and ideologically meaningful phenomenon shaped by media discourse. Through Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework, the analysis shows that lexical choices and expert-centered explanations frame slang as widespread, modern, and closely tied to digital youth identity, while simultaneously positioning it as a form of language that requires interpretation and regulation. At the discursive and socio-cultural levels, the news text reflects journalistic routines, globalization, and shifting language authority, reinforcing both the creativity of youth language and latent concerns about standard norms. The findings demonstrate that online news media actively shape public understanding of Gen Z slang by normalizing particular language ideologies and mediating generational perspectives on contemporary language change.

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