

Meaning Strategies in Generation Z's Social Media Utterances in Indonesia: A Hallidayan Functional Linguistics Study

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ABSTRACT: This study examines Generation Z's distinctive language style on Indonesian social media platforms TikTok and Instagram, focusing on vocabulary choices and strategies used to convey messages to interlocutors. The aim is to analyze meaning strategies in Generation Z's social media utterances through the lens of systemic functional linguistics. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in literature review, the study uses illustrative data from public posts on Instagram and TikTok by Indonesian Generation Z users. The analysis draws on Halliday's three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Findings reveal that Generation Z's social media utterances display a marked tendency toward interpersonal expressivity, condensed yet creative textual structures, and a dominance of emotional and identity-driven themes in the ideational function. These insights suggest that functional linguistics remains a highly pertinent framework for interpreting the dynamics of contemporary digital language.

KEYWORDS: functional linguistics, Generation Z, Halliday, meaning strategies, social media

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has transformed how people communicate, especially among younger generations. The function of language as a communication tool for today's youth has become increasingly complex, spanning not only real-world interactions but also the digital sphere. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter/X have emerged as primary spaces for Generation Z—those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s—to shape identity, express emotions, and engage in social interaction (Ador, 2023:42-43). This generation is deeply immersed in the digital realm and actively constructs a communication style that is unique, expressive, and often diverges from formal language norms (Ahmad et al., 2024:8). The language they use is no longer limited to transmitting messages; rather, it has been explored as a medium for subtle psychological expression. In this context, social media functions not merely as a communication tool but as a cultural arena where language evolves into a complex vehicle for social expression (Apyunita & Asdah, 2025:1081).

Current phenomena indicate that the language used by Generation Z on social media reflects new tendencies. These include the use of short phrases, code-mixed lexicons, and high affective load (Marzona, 2025:160-161). Utterances such as “*gue gak kuat, tapi harus kuat*” (“I can't handle it, but I have to stay strong”), “*healing is real*”, or “*capek kerja tapi tetap kiyowo*” (*kiyowo*—borrowed from Korean 귀여워 *gwiyeowo*, meaning “cute”) illustrate the emotional and social layers of meaning embedded beneath seemingly simple forms (Madani & Rahma Hafisyah, 2025). In this practice, language becomes a medium for managing psychological burdens, building relationships, and reinforcing affective solidarity among users in digital communities (Andriani et al., 2024:42). A typical example found on TikTok is the comment “*overthinking tiap malam tapi senyum di story pagi*” (“overthinking every night but smiling in the morning story”), which reflects a contradiction between inner states and the social image being projected. These examples demonstrate that Generation Z's use of language goes beyond mere utterances; it operates as both a carrier of social symptoms and an expression of psychological states. From the perspective of language functions, such practices resonate strongly with the principles of systemic functional linguistics (Hanifa & Abadi, 2025:1-2).

Within the SFL framework, Halliday divides the basic functions of language into three main metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction refers to the role of language in representing experiences of the world—both external and internal—through the transitivity system, which includes processes, participants, and circumstances (Atsani Wulansari, 2016:31). In the context of social media, this function can be seen in how Generation Z expresses experiences and feelings through short, metaphorical, and even visual forms. An utterance such as “*capek ga sih jadi strong terus*” (“aren't you tired of being strong

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all the time?") encapsulates emotional experiences within a simple grammatical structure, yet is enriched by visual symbols that enhance the ideational meaning.

The second metafunction is interpersonal: the function of language for building and negotiating social relationships (Zijia, 2024:20). In digital communication, Generation Z employs various linguistic strategies such as slang, emoticons (Ujjwal Kumar, 2024), loanwords, and even ironic and sarcastic humor to construct self-image and mark social group identity. Language like "*aku bukan insecure, tapi emang aku jelek aja wkwk 🤔*" ("I'm not insecure, I'm just plain ugly lol 🤔") shows how declarative mood, personal stance, and implicit modality contribute to horizontal, egalitarian interaction and the creation of solidarity among social media users. As Kumar said (Kumar, 2024) points out the interpersonal function allows language to serve as a tool for expressing attitudes, social positioning, and negotiating meaning between individuals (Rahardi, 2022:53).

Meanwhile, the textual metafunction relates to how information is organized in text to be communicated effectively. This function involves the selection of theme–rheme, the organization of information (given–new), and devices of cohesion and coherence (Jayadi, 2024:567). In social media, Generation Z structures their messages not only with words but also with emojis, hashtags, GIFs, and memes as semiotic elements that shape the flow of meaning. For example, the sentence "*Hari ini, aku ngevlog sambil scroll TikTok 😊*" ("Today, I vlogged while scrolling TikTok 😊") places the temporal marker as the theme, while the rheme carries the main meaning, reinforced by visual cues. In SFL, this illustrates that linguistic messages in the digital era are multimodal and cannot be analyzed through verbal text alone (Rahardi, 2024:128).

The linguistic style of Generation Z on social media demonstrates plainly that language online is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a socially meaningful practice (Apyunita & Asdah, 2025:1080). In relation to this, Halliday frames language as a social semiotic system—a system of signs that carries functions and meanings within context. Language, in his view, is not merely a grammatical structure but the principal medium through which humans represent experience, build relationships, and organize meaningful texts (Haratyan, 2011:260). Another example supporting this concept is found in Generation Z utterances on social media, such as "*mental down tapi tetap senyum wkwk*" ("mentally down but still smiling lol") or "*self reward dulu biar waras*" ("self-reward first to stay sane"). These are often considered light remarks, but when analyzed through the SFL lens, the structures and lexical choices reflect linguistic strategies to cope with social pressure, voice exhaustion, and construct an image of being "okay."

Research in digital linguistics has shown that studies on Generation Z's language on social media have been conducted, but they remain limited in approach and depth of analysis. (Putri, 2024) analyzed abbreviated word forms used by Gen Z on the X account @Tanyarlfe, identifying 66 slang forms including acronyms, clippings, and shortened words. Their study concluded that these forms function as concise, expressive communication strategies and identity markers. Another study by (Tusa'adah & Otong Setiawan Djauhari, 2025) examined English abbreviations frequently used by Generation Z on TikTok, identifying 30 abbreviations categorized by expressive, interpersonal, informative, and contextual functions. However, that study did not provide concrete examples of each abbreviation or compare them with Indonesian forms, thus failing to fully address bilingual dynamics and code-switching. In 2023, Lathifah Ayu Syafa'ah and Sigit Haryanto also explored language development on social media, spanning slang to popular abbreviations. Their findings highlighted slang terms like *kece* (cool), *ngab* (a playful reversal of "bang," meaning "bro"), *ngegas* (to overreact aggressively), and international acronyms like LOL and ASAP, showing slang as both a tool for quick communication and a marker of social group identity among Gen Z online. Yet, the study lacked quantitative data on frequency or specific usage contexts, as well as in-depth morphological analysis of abbreviations, and did not explicitly link them to identity structures or stylistic awareness (Syafa'ah & Haryanto, 2023).

Compared to previous studies, this research focuses more specifically on the meaning strategies employed by Generation Z on social media to convey intended meanings in specific social contexts. These strategies encompass lexical choices, syntactic forms, and rhetorical patterns used to shape and direct meaning—both explicitly and implicitly. By analyzing Generation Z's utterances through Halliday's metafunctional lens, these strategies can be unpacked to reveal how language functions as a tool for both psychological and social survival.

Based on this background and problem focus, the primary aim of this study is to explain how the language used by Generation Z on social media reflects their emotional experiences, social affiliations, and distinctive communication styles in navigating contemporary pressures. In doing so, this research not only contributes to the development of digital linguistics and SFL studies but also opens new understandings of language as a mirror of the psyche and culture in the digital society.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach of the descriptive-analytic type. This approach was chosen because the study aims to explain and interpret the meanings embedded in utterances produced by Generation Z on social media at Indonesia, rather than to test a hypothesis quantitatively. The focus of the research is on how meaning is expressed and constructed through language choices in a digital social context, aligning with the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Haratyan, 2011).

The data source comprises 7 authentic utterances taken from posts by Generation Z users on TikTok and Instagram. The utterances were selected based on specific criteria: originating from active accounts, showing high engagement (measured by the

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number of likes, comments, or reposts), and containing emotional expressions or distinctive forms of communication that reflect social practices within digital communities. Data were collected through digital documentation by searching, recording, and archiving screenshots of relevant content.

A crucial methodological decision in this study is to retain all slang expressions (e.g., *anjayy*, *fix*, *kiyowo*) in their original Indonesian form and present them in *italics* to preserve authenticity and cultural nuance. Each slang item is glossed in English upon first mention—e.g., *anjayy* (an emphatic exclamation roughly equivalent to “damn” or “wow”)—so that the intended meaning is clear to readers. A glossary containing all slang expressions, their literal meanings, and pragmatic functions is provided in the Appendix to maintain clarity and consistency throughout the analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as developed by Halliday. Each utterance was examined to identify clause elements, processes, participants, and circumstances (ideational metafunction); modality and evaluative choices (interpersonal metafunction); and thematic–rhematic structures (textual metafunction). The analysis was conducted systematically to explore how Generation Z employs meaning strategies to manage emotional expression, construct identity, and negotiate social relationships in digital spaces. The findings from this process were then interpreted within a sociocultural framework to portray language as both a tool for psychological survival and a cultural resource in the contemporary digital landscape.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before delving into detailed analysis, it is important to provide an overview of how the collected data reflects broader patterns in Gen Z social media discourse. The seven utterances analyzed in this study were carefully selected to represent the diversity of linguistic practices found on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. These utterances contain hallmark elements of Gen Z's digital register and playful code-mixing, infused with layered emotional and social meanings. Each data point is examined through Halliday's three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—to reveal how language simultaneously expresses mental states, negotiates relationships, and organizes meaning. This section presents the findings sequentially, beginning with micro-level analyses of each utterance and moving toward a broader interpretation of the patterns that link language use with identity, affect, and cultural positioning in digital spaces.

Data 1

“Capek banget tapi harus tetap kiyowo.”

(Source: TikTok caption by Sessy Apriliana, October 2024)

Data 1 demonstrates language functioning ideationally. The utterance in this data reflects experiences of the world—both external (the surrounding world) and internal (the speaker's mental and emotional experiences). In this utterance, the ideational process is constructed through a conflict between a mental condition (*capek* – “tired”) and social/cultural demands (*tetap kiyowo* – “to remain *kiyowo*”). Linguistically, the clause structure contains two relational processes indicated by its phrases: (a) *capek banget* reflects an existential/attributive relational process that states the speaker's emotional condition; and (b) the phrase *harus tetap kiyowo* represents a modulation of action based on an implicit imperative, in which the word *harus* (“must”) signals deontic modality (a sense of social obligation).

This ideational meaning illustrates the social pressure experienced by Generation Z to appear cute/attractive (“*kiyowo*,” a borrowing from the Korean *kkyopta*) despite mental fatigue—something that can be interpreted as a form of self-presentation pressure within the digital sphere. From an interpersonal function perspective, the utterance shows how language is used to negotiate social relationships, express stance, and build solidarity. The utterance also conveys evaluative attitudes and mitigating strategies toward psychological burdens. The modality *harus* here indicates an obligation that does not come from the speaker themselves, but from unspoken social norms (a social obligation). This means that Gen Z feels “forced” by the standards of digital communities to present themselves as *kiyowo*, even when their mental state does not allow it.

The use of the term “*kiyowo*” (an adaptation from the Korean word “*kkyopta*”) represents an internal lexicon within the Gen Z community that implies a sense of closeness and equality among group members. It is part of social solidarity expressed through a distinctive language style (a *register gaul* or colloquial register). Meanwhile, from the textual function, the utterance in Data 1 demonstrates how an utterance is organized coherently as a meaningful text within its context. In other words, the text's structure shows an orientation toward expressiveness and emotional connectedness, rather than being purely informative or descriptive.

Data 2

“Capek. Hahaha.”

Source: Instagram caption by *i.amwaffle*, April 2025

From the ideational perspective, this utterance depicts a personal emotional experience of exhaustion, but without further explanation of its source or cause. The word “*capek*” represents a mental process that refers to an internal state, without explicitly mentioning the *senser* (the experiencer). This condition illustrates an existential or “empty” attributive representation—simply stating a condition without the need to explain a cause-and-effect relationship. The structure reflects Generation Z's tendency to

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express emotions briefly, even abruptly, as a response to information overload and affective burdens that are difficult to articulate in long narratives.

The use of laughter in text—“*Hahaha*”—reveals a distinctive interpersonal mechanism: humor as an affective shield. The laughter here is not an expression of joy, but rather a form of self-deprecating humor or social sarcasm that characterizes Gen Z's style of digital communication. This sentence also demonstrates an emotional mitigation strategy: the speaker does not wish to appear entirely “weak,” and therefore inserts an element of joking. In terms of mood, the clause is in declarative mood with an elliptical subject. The implied subject can be interpreted as “I,” yet it is left unspoken, creating a universal impression (“anyone could feel this”).

From the textual function, the structure of the utterance in Data 2 is an example of expressive fragmentation, common in social media texts; there is no complex clause, only two separate words/phrases standing alone, relying on pragmatic coherence rather than formal grammatical structure. The word “*capek*” serves as the unmarked topical theme—immediately presenting the condition as the entry point. Meanwhile, “*Hahaha*” functions as the rheme that carries irony. The textual effect is one of inner tension wrapped in a casual and ironic style, a hallmark of Gen Z's way of framing light trauma.

Data 3

“Bestie jangan overthinking dong. Insecure tuh normal!”

(Source: TikTok caption by *Nurmahae*, July 2025)

From the ideational function, this utterance addresses two mental experiences: *overthinking* and the feeling of *insecure*. The processes at work are affective mental processes (emotions) which include: (a) *overthinking* and *insecure* are affective conditions; and (b) the word *normal* at the end serves as a relational process—stating that *insecure* is a trait that is socially acceptable and normal. Furthermore, from its ideational meaning, the utterance displays Gen Z's affective experiences that have already become a form of “shared normalization.” The sentence voices a collective understanding of social anxiety and psychological pressure, while at the same time responding to it with a positive affirmation.

Meanwhile, from the interpersonal function, the vocative “*bestie*” signals a horizontal and intimate relationship. It acts as an interpersonal opening strategy that fosters closeness within the community. The imperative “*jangan overthinking dong*” uses a command mood (a soft invitation) that is softened by the particle *dong*, functioning as a mitigator to make the directive sound friendlier and more supportive. The second sentence, “*insecure tuh normal!*”, is a form of interpersonal evaluation that conveys an attitude of appreciation and subtly encourages self-acceptance. The choice of diction demonstrates a strategy for building affective solidarity among group members.

From the textual function, the word “*bestie*” opens the text as an interpersonal theme—a relational entry point. The structure of the first sentence is an implicit command (imperative mood) with a mental predicate and a nominal object (*overthinking*). The second sentence uses an attributive relational structure, with “*insecure*” as the theme and “*normal*” as the value—a common pattern in light persuasive utterances.

Data 4

“Fix hari ini mental down tapi masih bisa senyum wkwk.”

(Source: TikTok caption by *unglyprinces_4*, December 2022)

From the ideational function, this utterance contains two mental processes: (a) *mental down*, which represents a negative psychological experience; and (b) *masih bisa senyum* (“still able to smile”), which indicates an affective expression that is in fact positive. The clause represents a contradiction between the inner state and the outward appearance. The word *fix* signals propositional reinforcement (graduation) for the clause, while the conjunction *tapi* (“but”) links two opposing affective realities.

From the interpersonal function, the word *fix* asserts the speaker's high level of certainty (an intensive monogloss). The phrase *mental down* conveys negative affect, yet it is contrasted with the action *masih bisa senyum*, which reflects a coping strategy or an element of self-parody. The addition of *wkwk* (Indonesian onomatopoeic text for laughter) indicates a mechanism of emotional avoidance or denial through humor. This creates an interpersonal stance that feels lighthearted, even though the utterance is in fact addressing a heavy issue.

From the textual function, the utterance in this data is constructed with a paratactic structure consisting of two independent clauses connected by the adversative conjunction “*tapi*” (“but”). The phrase “*fix hari ini mental down*” serves as the unmarked topical theme, forming a strong opening statement. The use of lexicon such as “*mental down*”, “*fix*”, and “*wkwk*” demonstrates intertextuality with digital narrative styles, including the deliberate use of so-called “*broken English*” as a distinctive stylistic variation.

Data 5

“Bestie, jangan baper dong, itu cuman jokes anjayyy.”

(Source: a common Gen Z comment on social media, in a joking context)

This data illustrates how Generation Z's social media utterances function ideationally. The main topic in this data is the emotional reaction to a joke. The word “*Baper*” (short for *bawa perasaan* – “to take things too personally”) is an informal term for

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negative affect. The processes involved are: (a) behavioral – *baper* reflects an emotional response; and (b) relational – shown in the phrase “*itu cuman jokes*” (“it’s just a joke”).

From the interpersonal function, the vocative “*bestie*” opens the utterance by signaling closeness. The modality “*jangan*” is a negative imperative, softened by the mitigator *dong* to make the directive more friendly. The word *anjayyy* is an expressive interjection that underscores the joking tone and distances the remark from confrontation. Interpersonally, this utterance functions as a de-escalation strategy within digital communication conflict.

The textual function in the data show by the utterance displays a thematic structure consisting of: (a) an interpersonal theme in the word “*Bestie*”; (b) a topical theme marked by the phrase “*jangan baper*”; and (c) a rheme represented by the phrase “*itu cuman jokes anjayyy*.” The vowel repetition in “*anjayyy*” highlights a digital suprasegmental feature: written intonation used as a way to convey facial expression or vocal tone.

Data 6

“Self reward dulu abis capek seharian kerja. Healing is real!”

(Source: TikTok caption by Vanesia Raatuli, December 2024)

This sixth data point illustrates the ideational function as seen in the two clauses. The clause *Self reward dulu abis capek seharian kerja* (“self-reward first after a full day of work”) expresses the act of giving oneself a reward. The clause *Healing is real!* is an affirmative declarative clause. The ideational processes that appear in this utterance include: (a) a material process, found in the phrase *self reward dulu*, which depicts a concrete action carried out by an implicit actor (“I”); (b) a mental/behavioral process, shown by the phrase *capek seharian kerja* (“tired after a whole day of work”) as a representation of the physical and emotional state caused by work activities; and (c) a relational attributive process in the phrase *healing is real*, which states the existence and value of the healing process. The meaning conveyed in this utterance is a personal action aimed at balancing work-related pressure and emotional recovery. This meaning represents a strong self-care narrative among Gen Z.

From the interpersonal function, the words *self reward* and *healing* represent a positive attitude—namely, self-acceptance and self-kindness. The choice of diction shows an affirmative stance toward the act of giving time and attention to oneself. The modality *is real!* strengthens the proposition as an intensive declarative monogloss. This style implies full confidence in the value of *healing*—not merely as rhetoric, but as an actual practice.

The textual function in this data is shown by the phrase *self reward dulu*, which serves as the unmarked topical theme. The sentence begins with an action (not an actor), highlighting the focus on the experience. The phrase *abis capek seharian kerja* functions as a circumstantial adjunct (indicating cause), and *healing is real* stands as a separate clause with a hyperbolic style that reinforces the message. The choice of English phrases (*self reward*, *healing*) reflects a bilingual digital register that strengthens the identity of the Gen Z community, which is closely connected to global discourse.

Data 7

“Ngab, hidup segini-segininya banget ya. Gajian numpang lewat, mental udah goyah.”

(Source: TikTok caption by gesyhsandy, July 2024)

From the ideational function, the utterance in this data illustrates two concrete conditions: (a) an economically difficult situation, indicated by the phrase *gajian numpang lewat* (“paycheck just passes through”), which represents a passive material process (money from work that has been received enters the account and is then spent quickly); and (b) a declining mental condition, indicated by the phrase *mental udah goyah* (“mental is already shaky”), which reflects a relational attributive process. The word *ngab* is an informal address term (a playful reversal of *bang*), creating an interpersonal situation that feels equal and casual.

From the interpersonal function, the address term *ngab* builds a sense of familiarity among Gen Z community members. The sentence carries a negative attitude (disaffect) in the form of frustration, weariness, and resignation. The modality *segini-segininya banget* is a form of graduation: force, indicating the intensity of the life situation being described. This sentence carries an ironic evaluation of economic reality and mental stability.

Its textual function is shown by the thematic structure that begins with an interpersonal theme, namely the word *ngab*, followed by the topical theme in the phrase *hidup segini-segininya banget ya* (“life is this extremely much, huh”). The use of repetition (*segini-segininya*) and the emotional particle *ya* marks a register of complaint wrapped in a joking style. Finally, the clause *mental udah goyah* (“mental is already shaky”) lands as an emotional punchline—serving as the climactic rheme in this short text.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the analyzed data reveal that the language used by Generation Z on social media is not merely a communication tool, but rather a complex vehicle for expressing emotional pressure, building social solidarity, and negotiating self-identity within the digital cultural landscape. By applying Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, it becomes evident that every utterance simultaneously carries three layers of meaning: ideational (mental and social experience), interpersonal (social relations and stance), and textual (the construction of coherence and the manner of delivery).

At the ideational level, it is predominantly found that Gen Z’s utterances display mental and relational processes—namely inner experiences, emotional conflicts, and expressions of psychological fatigue that are not always conveyed through long

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narratives, but instead through short, meaning-laden phrases such as “*capek banget tapi harus tetap kiyowo*” or “*gue gak kuat, tapi gue harus kuat.*” This ideational structure illustrates how Generation Z tends to explore language as a medium for narrating inner contradictions, between lived reality and the performative expectations shaped by social media culture.

Meanwhile, from an interpersonal aspect, the data demonstrates the presence of a strong system of attitude and solidarity. Gen Z forms social relationships in a horizontal and expressive manner through address terms such as “*bestie*”, “*ngab*”, or additional particles like “*dong*”, “*wkwk*”, and “*anjayyy*.” These elements serve as markers of digital community solidarity while also functioning to soften the tone of commands, avoid confrontation, and reinforce the impression that the language they use is not meant to dominate, but rather to foster mutual understanding. This supports Halliday’s theory that the interpersonal function concerns not only mood and modality, but also strategies for managing attitudes, values, and social relationships in communication.

On the other hand, from the textual function, it is evident that Generation Z constructs texts with highly distinctive structures: elliptical, fragmentary, paratactic, and filled with a lexicon shaped by code-mixing. Sentences like “*self reward dulu abis capek kerja*” or “*healing is real!*” demonstrate that coherence in these utterances is not always built through formal grammar, but through pragmatic and contextual coherence—through a shared understanding of speech style, emotional symbols, and digital humor. This indicates that Gen Z has created its own rhetorical system in the online space, one that differs from the rhetorical structures of both academic and formal communication.

Thus, the language used by Gen Z on social media can be read as a representation of three main tendencies. First, they use language to vent psychological pressure implicitly, without having to spell it out literally. Second, they construct social and cultural identity based on affection, irony, and humor, as a form of coping with the complexities of life. Third, they develop a new, hybrid, and affective style of language by employing distinctive digital linguistic strategies that are difficult to interpret without a holistic theoretical framework such as Halliday’s SFL.

Theoretically, the use of the Systemic Functional Linguistics approach in this study is justified because this theory provides a comprehensive framework for viewing language as a meaning-making system within a social context. Halliday emphasizes that every utterance always contains three core functions that operate simultaneously, and in the context of Gen Z’s social media, these three functions are not only present but also overlap in short, fragmentary, and emotionally charged forms of expression. Moreover, through Halliday’s theory, we can see that language forms that may appear “ungrammatical” or “non-standard” actually hold rich and ideological structures of meaning. In other words, this theory offers a sharp conceptual tool for reading language as a semiotic social practice that records conflict, survival strategies, and the dynamics of identity resistance.

Furthermore, in terms of social relevance and scholarly contribution, this study shows that the language of Gen Z on social media is not merely a youth speech style, but rather a reflection of collective mental pressure, expressions of emotional wounds, and a form of resistance to the demands of productivity culture and digital perfection. Utterances such as “*mental down tapi senyum wkwk*” or “*jangan baper, itu cuma jokes anjayyy*” illustrate how language is used to navigate ambivalence: between the desire to appear fine and the need to be heard in moments of weakness. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the development of digital linguistics and contemporary sociolinguistics, but also opens a path toward a more empathetic understanding of youth communication patterns, particularly in the contexts of education, psychology, and digital literacy. Social media becomes a new semiotic space where Generation Z crafts forms of expression that do not only reflect who they are, but also how they survive in a reality that so often demands them to appear “okay” at all times.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the language used by Generation Z on social media is a form of semiotic practice that reflects the emotional complexity, social relationships, and cultural pressures they face in everyday life. Ideationally, Generation Z’s language records internal conflicts between expectations and life realities, particularly those related to psychological pressure, work, social relationships, and mental health. Interpersonally, they display expressions of solidarity and empathy through humorous, ironic, and affective language styles, which strengthen emotional communities in digital spaces. Textually, their utterances are constructed with fragmentary, paratactic structures, and rich code-mixing elements, creating a distinctive style of digital generation communication that is efficient, expressive, and at times ambiguous.

These findings affirm that Halliday’s linguistic theory remains highly relevant for interpreting contemporary language practices, even in digital interaction spaces that seem informal. Language is not merely a medium for conveying thoughts, but also a tool for building social position, asserting the meaning of identity, and responding creatively to systemic pressures. Social media, in this case, has become an important arena where Generation Z reconstructs forms of self-expression—often in ways that cannot be fully explained without a comprehensive and contextual linguistic analysis framework.

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