

Variations of Colloquial Language in the Daily Conversations of Students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of colloquial language among students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat. The research aims to describe how colloquial expressions are applied in daily communication within the university environment. A total of fifteen participants were selected using simple random sampling, which allows respondents to be chosen randomly without specific criteria. This qualitative research employs observation and interview methods to obtain in-depth insights into language use. Data collection was carried out using interviews, questionnaires, and documentation techniques, including voice recordings of respondents during natural conversations. The primary data sources for this study consist of questionnaire responses and interview transcripts. The focus of the study lies in analyzing the variations of colloquial language spoken by university students, with particular attention to patterns, frequency, and social context. Findings indicate that all participants use various forms of colloquial language in their everyday conversations. These variations are influenced by social factors, peer interaction, and informal communication settings typical in university life. The results reveal that colloquial expressions serve as a practical and social tool for establishing identity, creating solidarity, and maintaining ease in communication among students. The study concludes that colloquial language is an integral part of students' verbal interactions and reflects the dynamics of youth culture in academic environments.

Keywords: *colloquial; daily conversation; students, language variation; university environment.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a unique and diverse tool of human communication (Fedorenko et al., 2024; Kasneci et al., 2023). Various ethnic groups are widely spread across the globe, and each region has a different language variation from the others (Sharma & Dodsworth, 2020). To understand the language of a different region, one must understand the linguistic system of that region (Reed, 2020). In terms of variation, we are familiar with what is known as a *dialect*, which refers to a language variation based on geographical location (Adli & Guy, 2022). Language variation is

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influenced by many factors, one of which is geography (Adli & Guy, 2022). Apart from geographical dialects, there is also what is known as *social variation* or *sociolect*. The selection and use of language are heavily influenced by factors such as the speaker, the interlocutor, the context, and the formality level of the speech event.

Language variation occurs due to the different purposes, fields, mediums, and formalities in which the language is used. Language is closely connected to society because society essentially consists of individuals in a geographic area bound and built by a social structure with shared values, who interact socially. To develop interaction and these shared values, language is needed as a medium. However, the initially uniform language becomes diverse. This is due to the heterogeneous nature of speakers, various types of social interaction, and the large number of speakers across vast areas. This diversity is what is known as *language variation*. According to Johnson & White (2020), language variation is one of the most interesting aspects of sociolinguistics. The fundamental principle of language variation is that speakers do not always speak the same way in every situation or event. This means that speakers have alternatives or choices in how they speak in different contexts, and different speaking styles can carry different social meanings.

Language variation is caused by the diverse social interactions carried out by various community groups and the non-homogeneous nature of the speakers themselves. There are two main perspectives on language variation. First, variation is seen as a result of the social diversity of speakers and the various functions of language. Second, language variation is viewed as having developed to serve its function as a means of communication within the diverse activities of society.

One of the variations that arises due to social differences is *colloquial language variation*. *Colloquial* refers to the informal language commonly used in everyday conversations within a specific speech community (Sundaram et al., 2023). Colloquial language emerges from familiarity and similarity among speakers, including social closeness and shared linguistic backgrounds. The phenomenon of colloquial language is not a formal register; rather, it is used among peers (non-formal).

Colloquial language is sometimes referred to as “market language” (Ouaddi et al., 2024). In spoken communication, practicality is prioritized—even to the extent that grammatical norms are often “violated.” Everyday spoken language aims primarily to convey the speaker’s intention. If the interlocutor understands the speaker’s intent, communication is considered successful. Therefore, colloquial language is often viewed as a lower form of language compared to standard language.

In general, the public considers the use of colloquial language variation to be normal. Some even believe that it helps create a more relaxed conversational atmosphere. However, based on the research conducted, there are several contextual factors that trigger the use of colloquial language, including “to whom, when, and where” someone is speaking.

The use of colloquial language has previously been studied by Naimi Ait Aoudia et al., (2024), who analyzed the speech variety of female teenagers in informal conversations at UPI Tasikmalaya. Their speech was found to be influenced by geographical dialects, culture, and social-economic status. Through a survey-based approach and data analysis using observation and interviews over six months, the study concluded that informal conversations—involving vocabulary, phrases, and sentence structures—are shaped by

education and occupation. For instance, speakers with higher education levels demonstrate different variations than those with middle, lower, or no education. The higher the speaker's social-economic class, the closer their speech is to the ideal form. Among female teenage speakers in informal contexts, language use is complex and shaped by situational factors and ethical values—for example, their tendency to avoid expressing sensitive or moral issues using common language.

The phenomenon of colloquial language usage among university students is an interesting topic to explore because students, by virtue of their intellectual status, are expected to be more refined and structured in their use of language—especially those from language education programs. Therefore, this research needs to be conducted in the context of Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat. The findings are expected to provide insights for future researchers and be valuable for readers.

As a social phenomenon, language use is not only determined by linguistic factors but also by social factors. These include social status, education level, age, economic level, gender, and more. Additionally, language use is shaped by questions such as “to whom,” “when,” “where,” and “about what,” as summarized by Flusberg et al., (2024): “Who speaks what language to whom and when.”

Etymologically, sociolinguistics is derived from the words *socio* and *linguistics*. *Socio* comes from *sociology*, which studies the formation of society, social adaptation, socialization, and conflict resolution. *Linguistics* refers to the science of language. In other words, *sociolinguistics* emerged to address social and linguistic phenomena (Wang et al., 2023).

The diversity of social groups leads to language variation within society. This variation differs from region to region. Social groups tend to use language that aligns with their social context—mainly because society adheres to various social norms. The language spoken by a community displays a wide range of forms and functions, showing the presence of specific variations.

Ruch & de Benito Moreno (2023) classifies language variation into several categories: based on place, time, speaker, situation, dialects related to address terms, status, and users. By place: dialects, regional languages, colloquial (which can develop into slang), and vernaculars. By time: temporal dialects. By speaker: glossolalia (language used when possessed), idiolect, gender, monolingualism, roles, social status, and age. By usage: diglossia, creole, oral, non-standard, pidgin, register, repertoires, reputations, standard, written, spoken greetings, *ken* (secretive slang), and jargon. By situation: formal and informal. By status: mother tongue, regional, lingua franca, national, state, instructional, unifying, and official languages.

Chaer and Agustina (2010) categorize language variation by speaker into several types:

1. Idiolectal Variation

This refers to individual speech patterns. Each person has their own unique way of speaking, influenced by voice, word choice, style, sentence structure, and psychological or intellectual conditions.

2. Dialect Variation

A variation used by a group of speakers from a specific place or region. Even with

individual idiolects, they share features that distinguish them from other dialect groups (e.g., Banyumas, Pekalongan, and Surabaya dialects of Javanese).

3. Chronolect or Temporal Dialect

Language variations used by social groups during particular time periods. These typically vary significantly in vocabulary due to changes in culture, science, and technology.

4. Sociolect Variation

Language variation influenced by the speaker's status, class, or social group, including age, education, gender, profession, nobility, and economic status.

Sociolects can be further divided based on:

- **Age:** Children, teenagers, and adults use different language.
- **Education:** Language varies based on one's education level.
- **Gender:** Women and men often differ in language use.
- **Profession:** Each profession has specific jargon or speech styles.
- **Economic Status:** Higher economic classes may use more refined language.
- **Social Class and Status:**
 1. **Acrolect:** Considered prestigious.
 2. **Basilect:** Considered less prestigious.
 3. **Vulgar:** Used by uneducated or less literate speakers.
 4. **Slang:** Special, secretive, used by specific, often youth groups.
 5. **Colloquial:** Informal, spoken language that simplifies or shortens words.
 6. **Jargon:** Used within specific groups, e.g., mechanics with terms like "flywheel."
 7. **Argot:** Secret codes used in specific professions, like criminals using "leaf" for money.
 8. **Ken:** Melodramatic or exaggerated language used by beggars.

Among all these types of language variation, this study focuses specifically on *colloquial language variation*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of language variation is one of the most dynamic and complex areas in sociolinguistics. Language, by nature, is not a static system; it evolves and adapts according to the social contexts in which it is used. Flusberg et al. (2024) emphasizes that variation in language is inevitable because speakers belong to diverse social groups, have different communicative needs, and are influenced by their environments. Among the various forms of language variation, *colloquial language* is particularly prominent in informal interactions and is especially prevalent among youth and student populations.

Colloquial language, often referred to as *everyday language*, is characterized by informal structures, simplified grammar, contractions, idioms, slang, and non-standard vocabulary. Walther & Whitty (2021) notes that colloquial language is not to be dismissed as incorrect or improper; rather, it reflects the natural, spontaneous, and socially embedded ways people communicate in casual settings. It serves as a practical medium for expressing emotions, humor, solidarity, and shared understanding. It also allows for greater flexibility in expression, which is essential in peer-to-peer communication.

According to Sharma & Dodsworth (2020), language variation, including colloquial usage, is influenced by multiple variables such as geographical location, age, gender, social class, education level, and the specific communicative situation. In informal social interactions, especially among students, colloquial language becomes a strategic tool to foster closeness, reduce social distance, and display group identity. Wardhaugh further argues that speakers may intentionally shift their language style depending on the formality level of the situation, the identity they want to project, and the relationship with their interlocutors.

In student communities, language functions as a strong marker of identity and social affiliation. Ruch & de Benito Moreno (2023) propose the *Communication Accommodation Theory*, which explains that individuals modify their speech styles—such as using more colloquial or casual forms—to either converge (become similar) or diverge (emphasize difference) in relation to their audience. In university environments, students often converge their speech patterns to reflect their peer group's norms, leading to the frequent use of colloquial terms, phrases, and sentence constructions that may not align with formal or academic language standards.

Enung (2010), in her research on teenage female students at UPI Tasikmalaya, highlights that the use of colloquial language in informal campus conversations is heavily influenced by dialect, regional identity, cultural background, and socio-economic class. Her findings demonstrate that students with different educational backgrounds and social classes exhibit different levels and types of colloquial language use. For instance, students from urban areas may use more modern slang or borrowed terms from pop culture, while those from rural areas may retain regionally influenced colloquial features. Furthermore, students with higher education exposure tend to combine colloquial and formal expressions in more dynamic ways, showcasing linguistic adaptability.

Similarly, Dwiraharjo (2001) explains that colloquial language arises primarily in environments where the speakers share social proximity and common experiences. Within such groups, the pressure to conform linguistically can be strong, and the use of colloquial language becomes a means of inclusion and acceptance. This phenomenon is particularly common in universities, where informal conversations in dormitories, canteens, student lounges, and group discussions foster the natural emergence of colloquial expressions.

Chaer and Agustina (2010) categorize colloquial language under *sociolects*, or language variations shaped by social factors such as age, gender, education, and profession. According to them, colloquial language is typical in informal speech situations, and while it lacks the prestige of standard language, it plays a crucial role in social bonding. They argue that the simplification, abbreviation, and informal tone of colloquial expressions are not signs of linguistic degradation but are instead reflections of social intimacy and communicative efficiency.

Pateda (1992) expands on this by classifying colloquialism alongside other forms of social language variations such as slang, jargon, and argot. He suggests that colloquial language is often transitional—it evolves over time and may develop into slang or become integrated into regional dialects. This fluidity underscores the creative and adaptive nature of colloquial speech, especially among students, who are typically at the forefront of linguistic innovation.

Moreover, colloquial language is not only a reflection of current social dynamics but also a mirror of cultural change. As media, technology, and globalization influence how students communicate, new colloquial terms and phrases emerge, often blending languages (code-mixing) or adopting internet and popular culture references. This ongoing evolution makes the study of student colloquial language both timely and significant.

In the context of Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, no specific comprehensive study has yet documented the variations and patterns of colloquial speech among students. Given the diverse cultural backgrounds and regional dialects represented in the student body, it is likely that the use of colloquial language is rich and varied. The current study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how students employ colloquial language in their daily conversations, what types of expressions are most common, and what social or contextual factors influence their usage.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method using observation and interviews. In this research, interviews were conducted with respondents, and each response related to the interview questions or spontaneous conversations was recorded and noted using a prompting technique. The population of this study consists of students from the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, with a sample of fifteen individuals. The primary data source in this study is *primary data*, obtained from sentences and statements expressed by the respondents who served as the subjects of this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected through interviews and questionnaire responses, the following results were obtained:

1. All fifteen respondents who were the subjects of this study are speakers of colloquial language variations.
2. Among them, one respondent was within the age range of 13–18 years.
3. Fourteen respondents were within the age range of 19–30 years.
4. All fifteen respondents reported using colloquial language when speaking with people they considered close or familiar.

Colloquial Language Variations Among Students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat. Referring to the theoretical framework discussed earlier, colloquial language is generally perceived as less prestigious than formal language, though this does not imply it is unsophisticated or inappropriate. Based on interviews conducted with fifteen student respondents—all of whom are female—it was found that they all used colloquial language. One respondent was aged 13–18, while the other fourteen fell within the 19–30 age group.

4.1. Factors Influencing the Use of Colloquial Language Variations

This study identified several key factors that trigger the use of colloquial language among students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat:

a. Interlocutor (Who They Are Speaking To)

The choice to use colloquial language is significantly influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the listener. All respondents reported using colloquial forms when speaking with close friends or long-time acquaintances, as well as with family members. The interviews revealed that the specific type of colloquialism used varied depending on whether the friend was from the same region or not. For example, a student from Padang who speaks Minangkabau said, "*Kama ang Bi?*" (Where are you going, Bi?) to a fellow Minangkabau speaker, while switching to "*Yok jalan aja kita perginya.*" (Let's just go out.) when speaking with someone who doesn't speak the local dialect. This shows how students adapt their colloquial usage depending on shared regional linguistic knowledge.

b. Time (When the Conversation Occurs)

The context of time, or when the interaction takes place, also affects the use of colloquial language. Interviews show that students typically use colloquial expressions in relaxed, non-formal settings, such as during leisure time or while joking with friends.

c. Place (Where the Conversation Takes Place)

Location is another determining factor. Students reported that they commonly use colloquial language in public places such as on campus, in dormitories, and in classrooms—particularly before lectures begin.

The forms of colloquial language variation used by the student community at Universitas Negeri Padang are as follows:

- a. "*Kama wak kini?*" meaning "Where are we going now?" — used when going out with friends or family.
- b. "*Kama ang Bi?*" meaning "Where are you going, Bi?" — said to a friend who appears to be heading out.
- c. "*Pai wak lah?*" meaning "Let's go!" — used when inviting a friend to go out.
- d. "*Jo apo wak pai, kawan?*" meaning "What are we going with, friend?" — said when planning to go somewhere with a friend.
- e. "*Jan lah mengganggu!*" meaning "Don't disturb me!" — said when annoyed.
- f. "*Pek lah!*" meaning "Hurry up!" — said when agreeing to go somewhere with a friend.
- g. "*Ka pai shalat lu.*" meaning "I'm going to pray first." — said when asked where the speaker is heading.
- h. "*Dah nge-print tugas?*" meaning "Have you printed the assignment?" — asked to a friend before class begins.
- i. "*Lah tu, talambek beko.*" meaning "Let's go now, or we'll be late." — said when urging a friend to leave.
- j. "*Tem*" meaning "Friend" — used to address a friend.
- k. "*Sia tu?*" meaning "Who is that?" — said when seeing a stranger.
- l. "*Dak ado samo Nadya do.*" meaning "Not with Nadya." — said when answering a question about someone's whereabouts.
- m. "*Yok*" meaning "Let's go." — used to invite someone to go somewhere.
- n. "*Tunggu lu mut.*" meaning "Wait a moment, Mut." — said when asked to go somewhere.
- o. "*Tak mau aku.*" meaning "I don't want to." — used when rejecting something.

2. Shortening of Single Words

Through interviews with fifteen respondents, it was found that fourteen of them shortened single words when using colloquial language. The shortened forms found include:

- a. *Wak* — a shortened form of *awak*, meaning “we” or “us” in Minangkabau.
- b. *Jan* — a shortened form of *jangan*, meaning “don’t.”
- c. *Pek* — a shortened form of *capek* or *cepat*, used to mean “hurry.”
- d. *Lu* — a shortened form of *dulu*, meaning “first.”
- e. *Dah* — a shortened form of *sudah*, meaning “already.”
- f. *Lah* — a shortened form of *alah*, meaning “already” in Minangkabau.
- g. *Tem* — a shortened form of *teman*, meaning “friend.”
- h. *Sia* — a shortened form of *siapa*, meaning “who.”
- i. *Dak* — a shortened form of *indak*, meaning “no” or “not.”
- j. *Yok* — a shortened form of *ayok*, meaning “let’s go.”
- k. *Tak* — a shortened form of *tidak*, also meaning “no” or “not.”

3. Shortening of Two Words into One

During the course of the study, the researcher also discovered the use of colloquial language variations that involve the shortening of two words into a single word. Out of the fifteen respondents who participated in the study, two were found to use this type of word shortening. One example of this is the word “*kama*”, which is a shortened form of the original phrase “*ke mana*” or “*ke mano*” (meaning “where to”).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the use of colloquial language variations is a prevalent characteristic in the daily communication of students at Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat, especially among female students. This trend is influenced by the naturally expressive nature of women, who often use colloquial expressions to create a relaxed and friendly conversational atmosphere. The participants, all of whom are university students with adequate academic backgrounds, demonstrated an ability to choose appropriately when, with whom, and where to use colloquial forms. This indicates a strong awareness of social and linguistic context. The factors that influence the use of colloquial language include the conversation partner, time, and place. The study also found that a common linguistic feature of colloquial language is the shortening of words, including both single words and the merging of two words into one. These shortened forms enhance communication efficiency in informal settings. Furthermore, the data reveal that students adapt their language based on social proximity and regional background, reflecting their flexibility in navigating multiple linguistic codes. Colloquial language, in this context, not only serves as a practical mode of communication but also plays a role in shaping social relationships and reinforcing group identity. This study, therefore, provides valuable insights into sociolinguistic patterns within academic communities and highlights the significance of context in language variation.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

There is no conflict of interest regarding the article publication

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