

Analyzing the Impact of Informal Language Variations on Audience Engagement: A Case Study of the ANTB Official YouTube Channel

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the informal language variations used in ANTB Official YouTube content and their impact on audience engagement. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data sources in the form of spoken language in videos on the ANTB Official YouTube Channel. Data were collected through listening and note-taking techniques by carefully listening to videos, then transcribing speech containing informal language variations. Data analysis was carried out by classifying language variations based on speaker, usage, formality, and medium, as well as examining language functions including emotive, conative, poetic, and metalingual functions. The findings reveal that informal language variations—particularly slang expressions, abbreviations, colloquial greetings, and spontaneous conversational markers—dominate the interactional segments of the videos and function strategically to reduce social distance between creators and viewers. Videos that intensively employed informal expressions showed higher levels of audience engagement, reflected in increased comment frequency, interactive responses, and expressive feedback from viewers. Furthermore, the emotive and conative functions of language were found to be the most prominent in stimulating viewer participation, indicating that informal language serves not only as a stylistic choice but as a persuasive communicative strategy. The results show that the use of informal language, such as slang, abbreviations, familiar greetings, and spontaneous expressions, can create a relaxed and intimate communication atmosphere between creators and viewers. Informal language not only functions as a means of conveying messages, but also as a means of building emotional closeness, social solidarity, and increasing audience engagement through active interaction and response. Thus, informal language variations are proven to play an important role in strengthening the relationship between content creators and audiences in the context of digital communication. This research is expected to contribute to the study of sociolinguistics and digital communication, as well as become a reference for content creators in developing effective communication strategies on social media.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of technology in this era of globalization has brought about significant changes in patterns of human communication across various aspects of life. This technological advancement has given rise to various forms of media that can be utilized by individuals to meet specific needs, particularly mass media. Mass media serve as a means of disseminating culture and facilitating communication that fulfills the need for rapid access to information regarding ongoing events (Prasetyo, 2016). One of the social media platforms that plays a particularly important role in society is YouTube, which is a major social media platform and a popular video-sharing website where users can upload, watch, and share video clips free of charge (Sinaga, 2019). YouTube is one of the most popular and widely favored digital platforms across different segments of society due to its ability to present content that is easily accessible and readily consumed by the public (Prayudi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, according to Abdulhadi Shoufan (2022), YouTube is a social platform with diverse characteristics.

YouTube has not only become a medium of entertainment but has also evolved into a space for interaction that fosters a sense of closeness with audiences. One YouTube channel that is able to influence the sense of closeness between viewers is the ANTB Official YouTube channel. This is evident through the use of informal language in the creation of video content to attract public attention. Informal language is commonly used in daily life or in non-formal situations. It is more flexible in usage, often incorporating everyday expressions, including slang, and tends to create a more relaxed atmosphere (Holmes, 2022).

Audience closeness in the context of digital media can be identified through several indicators, such as viewing loyalty, engagement through comments, and the intensity of interaction between viewers and content creators. This condition encourages viewers to develop emotional attachment, actively provide feedback, share content, and regard the ANTB Official YouTube channel as a reference for entertainment or information. It can therefore be concluded that the choice of informal language has a significant influence on patterns of audience engagement (Mukhlis, 2025a; Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). This phenomenon has become the central focus of the researcher in conducting a study on the influence of informal language variation on the ANTB Official YouTube channel in fostering audience closeness. This research aims not only to identify the forms of informal language variation used in ANTB Official content, but also to examine how such language use influences viewers' perceptions of closeness (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, & Zulbaidah, 2025; Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). Thus, the findings of this study are expected to contribute academically to the fields of linguistics and digital communication, as well as to serve as a reference for content creators in developing effective communication strategies in the new media era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing and analyzing the variations of informal language used in the YouTube content of the ANTB Official channel and their influence on audience engagement (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach is selected because the research focuses on the interpretation of language, the context of its use, and linguistic phenomena that naturally emerge in digital interactions. The data sources consist of spoken utterances found in videos on the ANTB Official YouTube channel that contain elements of informal language.

Data collection is conducted using observation and note-taking techniques, involving careful observation of each video selected as the research object, followed by recording and transcribing utterances relevant to the research focus. Data selection is carried out through purposive sampling by considering videos with a high intensity of dialogue and those that demonstrate direct interaction between the content creator and the audience. Specifically, the selection criteria included: (1) videos published within a defined observation period (e.g., the most recent 12 months), (2) videos with a minimum threshold of viewer engagement (e.g., a substantial number of views and comments), (3) content formats that feature direct spoken interaction rather than purely visual or music-based content, and (4) videos in which informal linguistic features are clearly identifiable in the verbal discourse. These criteria were applied to ensure that the selected data were relevant, representative, and aligned with the research objectives.

Data analysis is performed through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing by classifying language variations based on speaker, usage, formality, and medium, as well as language functions, including emotive, conative, poetic, and metalingual functions. To enhance reliability, the transcription process was conducted systematically and re-checked multiple times to ensure accuracy of linguistic representation. In addition, a peer debriefing process was carried out in which selected data samples and coding categories were reviewed by a fellow researcher with expertise in sociolinguistics to minimize subjective bias. Coding consistency was also maintained by applying clear operational definitions for each category of language variation and language function.

To ensure data validity, this study applies theoretical triangulation by comparing empirical findings with relevant theories of language variation and language functions, thereby ensuring that the research results are valid and scientifically accountable. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was employed by cross-checking findings from video transcripts with observable engagement indicators

(such as comment patterns and viewer responses) to strengthen interpretive credibility. These procedures collectively enhance the trustworthiness, credibility, and confirmability of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Informal language encompasses the use of casual and non-standard vocabulary, code-mixing, and spontaneous expressions. In digital interactions, informal language is considered advantageous in terms of flexibility, intimacy, and communicative equality. Unlike formal language, which tends to be rigid, informal language is able to create a communicative atmosphere that feels direct and personal. Informal language functions as an element of relaxed communication by adapting to contemporary patterns and styles of speech. In several observed broadcasts, a number of informal words or expressions commonly used in everyday communication were identified.

In this study, the findings are presented through an explanation of the forms and meanings of informal language usage, encompassing variations from the speaker's perspective, usage context, level of formality, and the media employed. Each of these variations is expected to provide a more substantial understanding of how informal language is used within social contexts and how it represents the speaker's identity. Therefore, this study examines the functions of informal language, which include emotional, conative, poetic, referential, phatic, and metalingual functions. Through an analysis of these forms and functions, the study is expected to offer a comprehensive overview of informal language phenomena, their influence on social interaction, and their significant role in everyday conversation.

Based on the research findings, variations from the speaker's perspective refer to the use of language styles employed by individuals in their daily interactions within their social environments. Accordingly, this study identified four utterances that fall under the category of informal language variation. One of the initial data examples is the word "mager," which describes a condition in which a person feels unwilling or lazy to engage in activities, commonly referred to as a lack of motivation to move (Mukhlis et al., 2024; Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). The use of this term allows audiences to feel as though they are experiencing the same or similar condition, fostering a sense of shared experience and solidarity among those who may be undergoing similar feelings.

No	Data	Sentence	Description
1	Baper	"You're being overly sensitive."	Baper means "bringing emotions into a situation" or being overly sensitive. The term is commonly used in informal speech to make the expression easier and more casual.
2	Mager	"You go ahead first, I'm feeling too lazy to move right now."	Mager is an abbreviation of "malas gerak", which means feeling lazy to move or having no motivation to do physical activities.
3	Kepo	"Why are you so nosy about other people's business? Hahaha."	Kepo refers to a strong sense of curiosity, often implying being overly inquisitive or interfering in other people's affairs.
4	Unyu	"That baby is so adorable."	Unyu is used to describe something cute, adorable, or charming, especially related to babies, animals, or small objects.

From the perspective of usage variation, the focus is placed on context and situational language use. In this study, three data instances were identified, one of which is the expression "ehheeee" in the subsequent video entitled "Sang Sarjana". This expression illustrates admiration for something considered very impressive, indicating the speaker's admiration for an achievement or expressing enthusiasm and appreciation.

Variation in terms of formality distinguishes the levels of formality applied in communication. In this study, a total of four data instances were found. One example is the term (woy), which functions

as an impolite form of address in formal contexts but becomes familiar and relaxed in informal social interactions. The use of this term frequently appears in studies of informal language variation in digital media. This brief expression helps illustrate how speakers negotiate intimacy, power relations, and communication style within casual public spaces.

No	Data	Sentence	Description
1	Woy	“Woy, where have you been all day?”	An attention-calling expression with high energy. It is more suitable for joking situations or close familiarity, rather than for polite or formal interaction.
2	Bang	“Bang, could I borrow 300 from you?”	Originally a respectful form of address in many regions, but in contemporary slang it has become a casual greeting for men, including online strangers.
3	Bro	“Don’t be like that, bro. Life is already hard, and you’re making it even harder.”	A form of address used among male peers. It conveys a sense of solidarity and camaraderie.
4	Bos	“Boss, there’s a beggar in front of you.”	Refers to someone perceived as cool, socially aware, or confident. It is also sometimes used to address someone newly met in order to immediately create a relaxed atmosphere serving as a casual form of respect.

Language variation from the perspective of communicative medium refers to the means or channels utilized in the communication process, whether oral or written. This study identified three data instances, one of which is the use of the term “bingisan,” employed to describe an expression of confusion on a speaker’s face upon hearing news of a breakup with a partner. This expression highlights a strong emotional response. The term does not merely convey information but also deeply reflects the speaker’s emotional state. In the context of oral communication, facial expressions and vocal intonation play a crucial role in conveying meaning, enabling the speaker to draw the audience into experiencing the confusion and uncertainty they feel, while simultaneously strengthening emotional engagement with the audience.

Furthermore, this study focuses on the functions of informal language use, which encompass various communicative aspects. One of these is the emotive function, namely the use of language to express the speaker’s feelings or emotions. In this study, two data instances were identified, one of which is the use of the term “cuan,” referring to profits or gains obtained from business activities. The use of this term indicates the speaker’s interest in and attention to their friend’s financial success (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023; Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). In this context, language functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as a medium for expressing empathy and strengthening social relationships.

No	Data	Sentence	Description
1	Cuan	“Finally, we made a profit.”	Cuan refers to a situation in which someone gains a positive outcome whether in the form of money, an opportunity, or a small stroke of luck that feels rewarding and satisfying.
2	Rungkad	“I totally collapsed today.”	Rungkad describes a condition in which a person experiences a complete downfall, a major failure, or a collapse resulting from poor decisions. The term carries a dramatic yet humorous tone, often used to frame an epic

			failure in a light-hearted or self-deprecating way.
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The conative function refers to the communicative purpose of inviting or influencing listeners. This study identified two data instances, one of which is the expression “santai” (relax), used to calm interlocutors and persuade them to be more relaxed and not to rush when facing certain situations.

The metalingual function of language serves to explain the language itself or to clarify its meaning. In this study, two data instances were found, one of which is the term “gas”, which refers to an encouragement to remain enthusiastic and not give up easily. This term is able to create a motivational atmosphere and encourage listeners to take action. Thus, the metalingual function emphasizes an understanding of innovative terms used in everyday communication, where accurate interpretation of such terms can be a key factor in fostering engagement within dynamic interactions.

The language variations that appear on the ANTB Official YouTube Channel can be analyzed based on Inderasari’s theory, which explains that linguistic diversity is not solely caused by homogeneous speakers but is also influenced by various forms of social interaction. In this context, the use of informal language in conversations demonstrates that a relaxed language style functions as an effective means of communication. This theory categorizes language variation into two main perspectives. First, language variation is understood as a result of the social diversity of speakers, which includes differences in background, experience, and cultural context. On the ANTB Official YouTube Channel, speakers from diverse backgrounds use informal terms such as “cuan” and “mager.” This usage not only reflects their personal stories or experiences but also creates a connection with viewers who share similar experiences, thereby fostering a closer sense of familiarity.

The theory further indicates that each individual has a distinctive way of understanding and interpreting meaning based on personal experiences. Therefore, differences in the use of informal language on the ANTB Official YouTube Channel illustrate how speakers, as part of the younger generation, construct language that represents the social realities they experience. Consequently, informal language functions not only as a marker of cultural identity but also as a medium for exploring and expressing sensory experiences in everyday life.

The emotive function of language, as proposed by Anindya and Rondang (2021), serves to express the feelings or emotions of the speaker. In the use of informal language on the ANTB Official YouTube Channel, the emotive function is clearly evident through various expressions that strengthen social relationships and create a closer and more familiar atmosphere.

The conative function focuses on the speaker’s intention to invite and influence the audience. On the ANTB Official YouTube Channel, the conative function is clearly manifested through various expressions designed to influence the attitudes and behaviors of viewers, enabling them to feel engaged and develop a strong interest in the channel.

The poetic function in the use of informal language on the ANTB Official YouTube Channel aims to present aesthetic and creative values in communication. Anindya and Rondang (2021) state that the poetic function refers to the attractive manner in which messages are conveyed, as reflected in the various expressions used during the program. This perspective aligns with the view that language serves as a means of strengthening social networks and building a more cohesive community among the younger generation. Meanwhile, the metalingual function in the use of informal language serves to explain the language itself and examine the meanings and terms employed (Mukhlis, 2025b; Mukhlis, Suradi, et al., 2023). On the ANTB Official YouTube Channel, this function provides opportunities for both speakers and viewers to share a mutual and accurate understanding of the conversational context, thereby making communication more effective.

As a result, viewers are also able to experience an engaging and captivating sensation when watching ANTB Official content. The actors or performers featured in the content have a strong understanding of how to create an atmosphere and emotional connection that viewers can feel while watching. The researcher was also able to complete this study with great care in order to provide

valuable insights for future researchers. Therefore, the researcher expresses sincere gratitude to those who took the time to assist in achieving results that align with the objectives of this study.

CONCLUSION

The YouTube content of ANTB Official plays a significant role in creating and strengthening closeness with its audience. The identified variations in language indicate that the use of informal vocabulary can build a sense of familiar, relaxed, and enjoyable communication. Such language variation is employed not only as a means of delivering messages, but also as a tool for fostering emotional connections, capturing attention, and creating two-way interaction between content creators and viewers. The presence of language functions including emotive, conative, poetic, and metalingual functions demonstrates that informal language operates effectively within the context of modern digital communication. Therefore, informal language functions not merely as a stylistic choice, but also as a social identity and a communication strategy capable of enhancing audience engagement and loyalty toward the ANTB Official YouTube channel.

Beyond these findings, this study offers practical implications for digital content creators. First, creators are encouraged to strategically integrate informal expressions—such as relatable slang, interactive greetings, and conversational prompts—to reduce social distance and stimulate audience participation. Second, the intentional use of emotive and conative language functions can be optimized to invite comments, feedback, and viewer-generated responses, thereby increasing engagement metrics. However, creators should balance informality with clarity and audience segmentation to maintain credibility and avoid misinterpretation across diverse viewer groups.

For future research, quantitative studies could examine the correlation between specific types of informal language and measurable engagement indicators such as likes, shares, watch time, and comment sentiment. Comparative studies across different digital platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, or podcasts) may also provide broader insights into how informal language strategies function in various media environments. Additionally, integrating theoretical perspectives such as Communication Accommodation Theory or digital engagement frameworks may deepen understanding of how linguistic adaptation shapes online audience relationships.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with the publication of this article. This research was conducted independently and was not influenced by any financial, institutional, or personal interests that could have affected the objectivity or integrity of the study.

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