

**Talk Style Patterns and Use of Slang as Non-Standard Variety among MPBA Students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang****\*Taftinatul Ilmiyah<sup>1</sup>, Sri Handayani<sup>2</sup>, Fahma Hurrosatud Diyanah<sup>3</sup>, Djoko Susanto<sup>4</sup>**Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia<sup>1234</sup>**\*Correspondence Address : [tintaftin@gmail.com](mailto:tintaftin@gmail.com)****Citation**Chicago Manual of Style 17<sup>th</sup> EditionTaftinatul Ilmiyah et al., "Talk Style Patterns and Use of Slang as Non-Standard Variety among MPBA Students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang". *Al-Jawhar*, 3(1), 43-58.**Abstract**

This study examines talk style patterns and the use of slang as a non-standard variety among students in the Master's Program in Arabic Language Education (MPBA) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. This topic is important to study because the use of slang among students continues to evolve alongside the influence of digital media, while the MPBA community possesses unique characteristics as an academic group with high linguistic competence yet remains active in using non-standard varieties in daily communication. This study aims to describe the characteristics of MPBA students' talk style, identify the forms of slang used, and analyze the relationship between talk style patterns and the use of slang in various communication contexts. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using data collection techniques such as observation, semi-structured interviews, and conversation documentation. Research informants were purposively selected from active MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The research findings indicate that MPBA students possess strong style-shifting abilities, adapting their speech style based on the situation, communication goals, and conversation partner. In formal contexts, students tend to use standard language, whereas in informal contexts, they use a more relaxed and expressive style. The forms of slang identified include Indonesian slang, Arabic-Indonesian slang, and English-Indonesian slang. The use of slang is more dominant in informal interactions and serves as a means of building closeness, solidarity, and group identity. The research findings confirm that the use of slang does not diminish students' academic abilities but rather demonstrates sociolinguistic competence in selecting language varieties appropriate to the communicative context.

**Keywords :** Talk Style, Slang, Non-Standard Variety

# Talk Style Patterns and Use of Slang as Non-Standard Variety among MPBA Students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

## A. Introduction

The phenomenon of slang usage among Indonesian college students continues to grow rapidly alongside the increasing prevalence of social media, popular culture, and digital communication.<sup>1</sup> Terms such as *gabut*, *mager*, and *baper*, as well as new loanwords emerging from TikTok and Instagram, have become part of students' everyday language practices.<sup>2</sup> Slang is no longer viewed merely as a marginal variation but has become an integral part of the linguistic repertoire used in daily interactions, both in person and in virtual spaces. Several studies indicate that slang now dominates many informal student conversations, particularly in WhatsApp groups, class forums, and casual campus conversations.

The use of this non-standard variety cannot always be reduced to a "deterioration of language quality." On the contrary, many researchers assert that the use of slang serves as a mechanism of social identity that signifies group membership, emotional closeness, and solidarity among members of the student community.<sup>3</sup> This variation emerges situationally, depending on the communicative purpose, the participants, and the context of the interaction.<sup>4</sup> Findings from several studies indicate that students are able to shift their language style (style shifting) from formal to informal quickly when transitioning from a presentation context to casual conversation.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, students' language variety selection can be explained through the concept of talk style, which refers to the speaker's strategy in choosing speech forms appropriate to the interlocutor, social status, interaction context, and communicative purpose.<sup>5</sup> Students do not use a single language style statically but dynamically adjust their speech choices between formal and informal varieties. Non-standard varieties or slang often appear in casual interactions with peers, while standard varieties are used in formal academic contexts such as class presentations or communication with professors. This phenomenon can be viewed as a form of contextual and functional language variation, not merely a linguistic error.<sup>6</sup> Sociolinguistic research on students' use of slang indicates that this variety reflects the dynamics of social relationships

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<sup>1</sup> Azrariil Azizah et al., "Variasi Bahasa Dalam Bahasa Gaul Di Media Sosial," *MATEANDRAU: Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Budaya* 4, no. 2 (2025): 163–80, <https://doi.org/10.32665/annas.v8i2.2945>.

<sup>2</sup> Adinda Salsabila et al., "Students' Perceptions of Using Social Media as a Tool for Learning Arabic at UINSI Samarinda," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 3, no. 2 SE-Articles (May 20, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v3i2.8728>; Annida Jayanti et al., "Opportunities and Challenges for Students in Learning Arabic Vocabulary in the Arabic Language Education Program at UINSI Samarinda," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 2, no. 1 SE-Articles (July 31, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v2i1.8626>.

<sup>3</sup> Fidyaa Amalia, Fatmah Umar, and Ulfa Zakaria, "Penggunaan Slang Dalam Komunikasi Virtual Pada Media Sosial Oleh Generasi Z," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 9, no. 1 (2025): 5242–54.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Mubarak et al., "Lecturers' Strategies to Enhance Students' Motivation in Learning Arabic at UINSI Samarinda," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 3, no. 1 SE-Articles (May 13, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v3i1.8621>.

<sup>5</sup> Amalia Nur Sabbila and Agus Salim Mansyur, "Penggunaan Bahasa Slang Oleh Remaja," *Textura Journal* 2, no. 2 (2021): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Muhamad Rantisi et al., "Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Speaking Arabic in the Kalam Course," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 2, no. 2 SE-Articles (May 18, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v2i2.8591>.

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and group identity within the academic community, while also demonstrating students' linguistic creativity in signalling closeness among group members.

The Master of Arabic Language Education (MPBA) community at UIN Malang, as a student linguistic community, has distinct characteristics compared to general campus communities. Students in this program consist of individuals with relatively high language proficiency and theoretical awareness of language variation. Nevertheless, the use of slang is still evident in daily interactions, particularly in informal settings such as study group discussions, class WhatsApp groups, and conversations among students after class. It is this uniqueness that makes MPBA a student community with linguistically interesting characteristics to study, as their linguistic sensitivity allows for the emergence of more varied mixed language forms.

It is important to analyze students' speech styles and non-standard varieties because they are closely linked to the process of forming both academic identity and generational social identity. Non-standard varieties emerge not only as expressions of informal speech styles but also as pragmatic strategies for building emotional closeness and solidarity within student groups that interact intensively. These varieties, which include the use of slang, abbreviations, and code-mixing, demonstrate that students possess flexible linguistic adaptability across various speech situations.<sup>7</sup> Through these speech styles, students can maintain egalitarian social relationships in casual interactions while still mastering standard varieties when required in formal contexts.

In addition to face-to-face contexts, digital media such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and other platforms play a significant role in spreading and modernizing non-standard varieties among students.<sup>8</sup> Language that evolves in digital spaces tends to be rapidly changing and can incorporate various forms of code, including the integration of foreign vocabulary, word shortening, and other creative variations that are subsequently adapted in offline communication. Research on language varieties in social media indicates that digital communication forms a new, dynamic speech community, where students are not merely users but also agents of adaptation and dissemination of these varieties into broader social contexts.<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon is increasingly evident in academic communities actively engaging in discussions through both online and offline media, indicating that digital media reinforces language variation practices while expanding the scope of non-standard speech styles.

There are several research gaps that have not been extensively addressed. First, few studies explicitly link talk style to the use of slang in academic communities at Islamic universities, particularly UINs. Second, the majority of studies focus on undergraduate students or high school students, whereas the phenomenon among graduate students particularly within language-related communities has been relatively under-explored. Third, no study has yet mapped how MPBA students balance the use of standard academic language with non-standard varieties in formal and informal interactions.

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<sup>7</sup> Sabbila and Mansyur, "Penggunaan Bahasa Slang Oleh Remaja."

<sup>8</sup> Cecep Muttaqin et al., "Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT as a Learning Aid in Arabic Language Education at Universitas Islam KH. Ruhiat Cipasung," *Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 5, no. 2 (July 2025): 269–86, <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v5i2.11183>.

<sup>9</sup> Azhari, Sitti Aminah, and Anggia Chairani Oktaviary, "RAGAM BAHASA DI MEDIA SOSIAL MAHASISWA UNIVERSITAS BUMI PERSADA LHOKSEUMAWE," *Kande* 6, no. 1 (2025): 167–86.

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Based on various findings from previous research, it can be concluded that students possess pragmatic competence that allows them to determine when to use informal varieties and when to use standard varieties. Researchers also found that the use of slang does not pose a threat to academic ability, as long as the speaker possesses good metalinguistic awareness. Thus, what is more important is not eliminating non-standard varieties, but developing register awareness that is, the ability to choose the appropriate language style according to the professional context.

Therefore, research on talk style patterns and non-standard varieties within the MPBA program at UIN Malang is not only theoretically relevant but also has important pedagogical implications. The findings of this study can help instructors design more realistic academic communication courses based on students' actual language use, while maintaining a balance between the use of standard language and the social functions of informal language. By integrating talk style theory, the concept of audience design, and findings regarding the dynamics of slang terms, this study is expected to contribute to the Indonesian sociolinguistic literature, enrich the study of language variation in Islamic higher education, and fill a gap in research regarding variety selection within the graduate-level academic community.

In line with these various phenomena and empirical findings, this study is then directed toward answering several fundamental questions arising from the dynamics of language use within the MPBA UIN Malang environment. First, it is necessary to identify the characteristics of MPBA students' talk style, given that talk style is a factor that plays a role in shaping language choices and communication strategies among members of a linguistic community. Second, this study also examines the forms of slang that emerge as non-standard varieties in students' daily interactions, as well as how these forms are constructed, maintained, and negotiated. Third, it is important to examine how patterns of talk style and slang usage, particularly in the context of academic and social interactions, shape group identity. This problem formulation serves as the foundation for mapping the linguistic phenomena occurring and understanding the relationship between talk style and non-standard language varieties within the MPBA student community at UIN Malang.

### B. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing patterns of talk style and the use of slang as a non-standard variety in the interactions of MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on a deep understanding of linguistic phenomena based on the social context in which the language is used.<sup>10</sup> Research data were obtained from MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang who were selected purposively, namely active students involved in academic and social interactions on campus. The informants consisted of students from several cohorts who were considered capable of providing data relevant to the research focus. Data collection techniques included observation of student interactions, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of

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<sup>10</sup> Sapto Haryoko, Bahartiar, and Fajar Arwadi, *Analisis Data Penelitian Kualitatif (Konsep, Teknik, & Prosedur Analisis)* (Makassar: Badan Penerbit UNM, 2020).

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conversations, both in person and via online platforms. Observations were conducted to examine the use of speech styles and slang in natural contexts, while interviews were used to explore students' perspectives regarding the language choices they employ. Data analysis was conducted descriptively, following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The collected data was classified based on the context of interaction and the type of speech style, then analyzed to identify patterns in the use of speech styles and slang in student interactions.<sup>11</sup>

### C. Findings and Discussion

#### Description of MPBA Students' Talk Style

In formal academic contexts, such as lectures and communication with instructors, students tend to use a more formal language variety characterized by standard vocabulary, well-structured sentences, and expressions that convey academic politeness. Conversely, in interactions among students, particularly outside of class activities, the talk style becomes more relaxed and expressive. Based on the results of observations and interviews, MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang demonstrate a flexible and contextual use of talk style. The variations in speech style employed adapt to the communication situation, the purpose of the interaction, and the interlocutors involved.

These findings indicate that MPBA students possess the ability to adapt their language choices to the demands of the communication situation. Differences in speech style are influenced not only by the form of interaction but also by the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. The more formal the communication situation, the greater the tendency for students to use formal language. Conversely, in egalitarian and familiar interactions, students are more free to use casual language. This finding aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that state that talk style refers to the way speakers organize and select language varieties based on social context, audience, and communicative purpose. The language variations used by students not only reflect differences in linguistic forms but are also influenced by the underlying context of language use.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to formal style, this study also found the use of semi-formal speech style in certain academic situations, such as group discussions, assignment consultations, and academic communication that is not entirely formal. In these situations, students still use relatively standard language, but it is delivered in a more relaxed tone and accompanied by interpersonal expressions.

This finding aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives stating that talk style is the way speakers organize and select language varieties based on social context, audience, and communicative purpose. The language variations used by students not only reflect linguistic form differences but are also influenced by the underlying context of language use.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sugiyono, *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R & D*, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Anisa Anggraini Putri, "Language Variation in College Students: Sociolinguistics Perspective," *PRAGMATICA: Journal of Linguistics and Literature* 2, no. 2 (2024): 72–76, <https://doi.org/10.60153/pragmatica.v2i2.92>.

<sup>13</sup> Anisa Anggraini Putri; Luluk Nazilah, Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, and Syaifullah Syaifullah, "Pengaruh Gamifikasi Berbasis Media Monopoli Terhadap Pemahaman Gramatika Bahasa Arab,"

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In addition to the formal style, this study also found the use of a semi-formal style in certain academic situations, such as group discussions, assignment consultations, and academic communication that is not entirely formal. In these situations, students still use relatively standard language but convey it in a more relaxed tone accompanied by interpersonal expressions.

The existence of the semi-formal style indicates that students do not always place academic communication within a rigid formal framework. The semi-formal style functions as a communication strategy that allows for the effective conveyance of academic information without eliminating elements of interpersonal closeness. In other words, this style serves as a bridge between formal and casual communication. This is consistent with the findings of Sari and Irlina, who explain that the semi-formal style is a form of meaning negotiation between the speaker and the addressee that maintains the logical structure of academic communication but with a more fluid and communicative atmosphere.<sup>14</sup>

Outside of formal academic contexts, MPBA students predominantly use a casual and expressive style of speech. The use of idioms, non-standard expressions, and various forms of slang is widespread in everyday conversations, both in person and through digital media. Students also show a tendency to shift their speech style rapidly when moving from an academic context to a social one. This phenomenon indicates a fairly high level of style-shifting ability among MPBA students. The shift in speech style serves as an adaptation to changes in the communication situation. Students do not adhere to a single, fixed language style but rather adjust it to the needs of the ongoing communication.

### Slang as a Non-Standard Variety

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the use of slang is a fairly dominant form of language variation in the informal interactions of MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Slang is used primarily when students communicate with their peers, both in face-to-face conversations and through digital media. Research data indicates that the forms of slang used by students can be grouped into three main categories: Indonesian slang, Arabic-Indonesian (Arab-Indo) slang, and English-Indonesian (English-Indo) slang.

These findings suggest that the use of slang has become an integral part of students' daily communication practices. The diversity of slang forms used demonstrates that students not only utilize language as a communication tool but also as a means to express their social identity, group cohesion, and linguistic experiences. This phenomenon aligns with theoretical concepts stating that slang is a non-standard variety of language used by specific social groups for internal communication. As an informal language variety specific to certain groups, slang functions not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of social identity and a builder of solidarity among group members.<sup>15</sup>

The most prevalent form of slang identified in this study is Indonesian slang. Based on observational data, students use various forms of slang such as

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*Borneo Journal of Language and Education* 5, no. 1 SE-Articles (March 28, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.21093/benjole.v5i1.10239>.

<sup>14</sup> Wirda Sari and Andi Irlina, "Register Variation Among Islamic Students: A Study of Language Use in High and Low Level," *Tefla Journal (Teaching English as Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics Journal)* 7 (2025): 32-37.

<sup>15</sup> Sabbila and Mansyur, "Penggunaan Bahasa Slang Oleh Remaja."

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“gaskeun,” “santuy,” and “goks parah” in casual conversations among peers. These forms emerge spontaneously in everyday communication and are used to create a more relaxed conversational atmosphere.

The use of these forms demonstrates students’ linguistic creativity in modifying existing language forms into new, more expressive forms that resonate with the lives of the younger generation. Indonesian slang functions not only as a means of communication but also as a marker of group membership within a social group that shares similar communication experiences.

This finding aligns with the view of Sianturi et al., who state that slang develops as a social variation used to strengthen relationships among group members. Additionally, Kridalaksana explains that the formation of Indonesian slang often occurs through processes of phonetic distortion, word shortening, or creative affixation, resulting in new linguistic forms.

In addition to Indonesian slang, this study also identified the use of Arab-Indo slang. This form emerges through the use of Arabic vocabulary combined with Indonesian communication patterns. Some examples found in the research data include expressions such as “Ana capek banget, cuy, matkul full seharian” and “Antum fix dah paling rajin hari ini.” The words “ana” and “antum,” which are Arabic pronouns, are used flexibly in students’ informal conversations.

These findings indicate that the academic environment of MPBA students, which is closely tied to the Arabic language, influences their daily language practices. The use of Arabic vocabulary serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a symbol of the students’ academic and religious identity. Arabic vocabulary, originally used in formal learning contexts, has expanded its function into informal interactions. This phenomenon can be understood as a result of students’ intensive linguistic exposure to Arabic. Students do not rigidly separate the use of Arabic and Indonesian but combine them flexibly according to communication needs.

This phenomenon aligns with the concept of code-mixing, which arises as a result of language contact in bilingual or multilingual communities. Code-mixing occurs when elements of one language are inserted into the structure of another language, such as through insertion the incorporation of Arabic lexical elements into the framework of Indonesian sentences. In this context, the use of the words ana and antum within Indonesian speech indicates the mixing of Arabic language elements that serve not only a linguistic function but also act as markers of the speakers’ social and religious identity.<sup>16</sup>

English-Indonesian slang is also found in various student conversations, particularly when discussing coursework, technology, and digital academic activities. Research data reveals the use of expressions such as “I’m really struggling with this journal,” “Let’s just Zoom tomorrow so it’s faster,” and “I’m totally done, I swear.” This data indicates that English has become a fairly productive source of vocabulary in the formation of student slang. The use of English elements is not always intended to demonstrate foreign language proficiency, but is often used because it is considered more concise, popular, and in line with the current evolving culture of digital communication.

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<sup>16</sup> Siti Maesaroh, Tatang Tatang, and Yunadi Yunadi, “Analisis Sociolinguistik Dalam Campur Kode Bahasa Arab: Studi Konten Terhadap Penggunaan Campur Kode Bahasa Arab Dalam Media Sosial (Grup WhatsApp),” *AL-QIBLAH: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 6 (2025): 771, <https://doi.org/10.36701/al-qiblah.v4i6.1913>.

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Furthermore, the use of English-Indo slang demonstrates students' connection to various digital media, most of which use English as their primary language. English elements are more easily absorbed and used in everyday communication. This finding aligns with the notion that globalization and the development of social media have encouraged the spread of English vocabulary into Indonesian youth slang. Through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, various English terms are adopted, adapted, and used in everyday conversation, becoming part of the younger generation's linguistic identity. The use of expressions such as "struggling," "zoom," and "I feel done" in students' speech demonstrates the influence of global digital communication on their language practices.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to demonstrating the diversity of forms, this study also indicates that slang has a strong social function in students' lives. Based on interviews, students use slang to create a more relaxed atmosphere, reduce social distance, and strengthen group solidarity. Slang makes interactions feel more intimate and allows students to express themselves more freely than when using formal language.

The findings indicate that the use of slang by MPBA students serves not only as a means of communication but also as a social practice that represents group identity. Through the use of Indonesian, Arab-Indo, and English-Indo slang, students express their hybrid identities as members of academic, religious, and digital communities while strengthening social bonds among group members. Slang not only reflects linguistic creativity but also serves as a symbol of social identity that continues to evolve alongside cultural, educational, and technological dynamics.

This aligns with the findings of Sianturi et al., who state that slang functions as a marker of identity and social solidarity within student groups. These findings also align with Eckert's view that linguistic style is one of the means of constructing social identity. Furthermore, Coleman's idea regarding the function of slang as a bond of group solidarity reinforces the interpretation that the use of slang within the MPBA environment cannot be separated from students' social need to build a sense of togetherness and collective identity.<sup>18</sup>

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Based on the interview results, MPBA students showed a tendency to adjust their speech style based on the conversation partner they were facing. This is evident from the following informant's statement:

*"I usually adjust my speech style depending on who I'm talking to. When speaking with a professor or in an academic setting, I feel the need to use more polite and formal language to show respect for the professor's position. But when talking with friends, I'm not too stiff and speak more casually."*

This data indicates that students possess linguistic awareness regarding differences in social status and the communicative roles of their conversation

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<sup>17</sup> Milatul Zulfa, Ninda Nurul Fadhilah, and Muhammad Budi Harjono, "Globalisasi Dan Hibridisasi Bahasa: Studi Pada Penggunaan 'Bahasa Gaul Jaksel' Oleh Remaja Di Media Sosial," *TAMADDUN Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Seni, Dan Humaniora* 3, no. 3 (2026): 124–130.

<sup>18</sup> Jovita Gracia Sianturi et al., "Analisis Penggunaan Bahasa Gaul Pada Kalangan Mahasiswa," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora Dan Seni* 2, no. 5 (2024): 448–52, <https://doi.org/10.62379/jishs.v2i5.1734>.

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partners. In an academic context, professors are positioned as figures of authority, so students tend to use a more formal language variety as a form of respect. Conversely, when interacting with peers, language use becomes more relaxed due to the more egalitarian nature of the social relationship.

These findings align with Audience Design theory, which states that speakers adapt their language style based on the identity, status, and level of closeness of their conversation partner. Mauludiyah et al. explain that individuals tend to use more casual language when speaking with peers, whereas more formal and polite language is used when interacting with those who hold authority or have higher social status. Such adjustments indicate that language choice is influenced not only by the purpose of communication but also by social considerations aimed at maintaining politeness, respect, and the harmony of interpersonal relationships.<sup>19</sup>

Interview results indicate that MPBA students actively adjust their speech style according to the communication situation they face. This is illustrated in the following statement:

*“When speaking with close friends, I usually don’t pay much attention to standard language rules. My speaking style becomes more relaxed and natural. But if the situation is formal or the topic is serious, my speaking style automatically shifts to a more formal one.”*

This statement indicates that students are able to shift their speech style from formal to informal and vice versa, depending on the communication needs. This shift occurs spontaneously and is part of the students’ communicative competence in various interaction contexts. This indicates that students do not consistently use a single language variety across all communication situations. Instead, they adjust the level of language formality based on the communication goal, the topic of conversation, and the prevailing atmosphere of the interaction.

This finding aligns with the concepts of style-shifting and register variation, which explain that speakers can alter their language style according to the audience, situation, and communicative purpose. Baxtyorova states that register variation refers to the use of different language varieties based on social context, whereas style-shifting is the process of adjusting speech style from formal to informal or vice versa according to the needs of the interaction and the speaker’s social identity. Thus, the shifts in speech style exhibited by MPBA students reflect their ability to adjust the level of language formality to suit the ongoing communication context.<sup>20</sup>

Interview data show that slang is used more frequently in informal interactions among students. One informant stated:

*“When chatting with friends, I often use slang because it feels more comfortable and less stiff. With slang, conversations become more relaxed and feel closer, especially when we’re joking around or talking about lighthearted topics.”*

This data indicates that slang is used as a means to create a more relaxed and intimate communication atmosphere. Students view slang as part of their

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<sup>19</sup> Rizki Mauludiyah et al., “Language Styles Variation in an Islamic Boarding School: Sociolinguistic Study and EFL Implications,” *English Learning Innovation* 6 (August 2025): 469–86, <https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v6i2.41724>.

<sup>20</sup> Baxtyorova Lola Otabekovna, “Register Variation and Style Shifting in Sociolinguistics,” *Wire Insights: Journal of Innovation Insights* 3, no. 2 (2025): 5–7.

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daily language habits that helps them express themselves more freely compared to using formal language. This finding shows that the use of slang is closely related to the need to build interpersonal closeness. In the context of communication among peers, the use of slang serves to reduce social distance and create a more fluid atmosphere of interaction.

This phenomenon aligns with the theoretical view that slang serves a social function in fostering familiarity, strengthening social bonds, and creating emotional closeness among group members. The use of slang vocabulary in informal communication allows speakers to interact in a more relaxed and familiar manner, thereby strengthening a sense of solidarity and attachment within a specific social group.<sup>21</sup>

Although slang is quite dominant in informal communication, interview results indicate that students limit its use in formal academic contexts. This is evident from the following statement:

*"In class or when speaking directly with a professor, I rarely use slang because I'm afraid of being seen as rude. But once I'm outside of class or chatting with friends, I'm more free and sometimes still use slang."*

The data indicate that students are aware of the linguistic norms that apply in academic settings. The use of slang is considered inappropriate when interacting with professors or when participating in formal academic activities that require more standard and polite language. This suggests that students are able to distinguish between communication contexts that allow for the use of non-standard varieties and those that require formal language. This ability reflects linguistic control in selecting language forms deemed appropriate for specific situations.

These findings align with the concept of sociolinguistic competence, which emphasizes a speaker's ability to select and use language appropriately (appropriateness) in accordance with social, cultural, and communicative contexts. Sociolinguistic competence encompasses the ability to understand language variation, shifts in speech style, and to adapt language choices based on prevailing social norms. Speakers with strong sociolinguistic competence can determine when informal language varieties, such as slang, can be used and when to switch to a more formal variety to ensure communication remains polite and meets social expectations.<sup>22</sup>

The interview results show that the use of slang serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of building group identity. One informant stated: *"In my opinion, using slang makes the sense of togetherness stronger. It feels like we're closer to our friends and it's easier to blend in, because the language is mutually understood within the group."*

These findings indicate that the use of slang plays a role in fostering a sense of togetherness among student group members. Slang serves as a symbol that reflects social closeness while simultaneously marking an individual's membership in a specific community. This suggests that the function of slang

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<sup>21</sup> Widi Budiarmoko, "Analisis Pemakaian Bahasa Slang Di Jejaring Sosial Twitter: Kajian Sociolinguistik," *Jurnal Ilmiah Saraswati* 5, no. 2 (2023): 171–172.

<sup>22</sup> Fatima El Zahraa, "Kompetensi Dan Kesesuaian Sociolinguistik Dalam Konteks Bahasa Arab Berdasarkan Skala Common European Framework of Reference For Languages," *Al-Ittihad: Jurnal Keilmuan Dan Kependidikan Bahasa Arab* 16, no. 2 (2024): 14–19, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alittihad.v16i2.10882>.

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extends beyond purely linguistic aspects. The use of slang becomes part of the process of social identity formation, enabling students to build closer interpersonal relationships with their group members.

This finding aligns with theoretical concepts stating that slang functions as a group identity marker that facilitates social solidarity and indicates membership in a community of practice. Through the shared use of slang, group members can express a collective identity, strengthen group cohesion, and foster a sense of togetherness that distinguishes them from other social groups.<sup>23</sup>

The interview results indicate a close relationship between talk style patterns and the use of slang in student interactions. This is reflected in the following statement:

*"I usually use slang when the atmosphere is relaxed and I'm talking to a close friend. In formal situations, I automatically tone it down or avoid using slang altogether."*

This statement indicates that the use of slang is heavily influenced by the talk style currently employed by students. When the communication situation shifts toward the informal, the use of slang becomes more accepted and used freely. Conversely, when communication takes place in a formal context, students tend to avoid using non-standard language forms. This demonstrates that talk style and slang are not two separate phenomena but are interrelated in students' communication practices. Shifts in the level of language formality directly influence the linguistic choices made in everyday interactions.

This finding aligns with the theoretical view that register is a linguistic choice adapted to the communicative situation, whereas slang is a linguistic variation characteristic of informal speech within specific social groups. When speakers use a relaxed and informal style of speech, they tend to choose slang as a form of language variation appropriate to the context of the interaction. In other words, the use of slang can be understood as a manifestation of the adaptation of language style to the level of formality of the ongoing communicative situation.<sup>24</sup>

In general, the research results indicate that the more informal the speech style used by students, the greater the likelihood of slang appearing in communication. Conversely, the more formal the communication situation, the lower the intensity of slang use. Thus, the use of slang can be understood as one manifestation of changes in talk style occurring across various social and academic contexts.

### Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang possess a high degree of sociolinguistic awareness in selecting speech styles according to communicative context. The tendency to use formal language in academic settings, semi-formal language in academic peer interactions, and casual language in informal conversations demonstrates that students do not use language randomly, but strategically. This finding confirms Bell's Audience Design theory, which argues that speakers adjust their language

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<sup>23</sup> Dina Chatrina and Magdalena Rottie, "CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THROUGH SLANG OF THE YOUNG GENERATION OF JAPAN AND MANADO : A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE STUDY," *Sosioedukasi* 15, no. 1 (2026): 1746–1748.

<sup>24</sup> Jumharia Djamereng and Muhammad Ali Emir Abdullah, "Register and Slang: Distinct Forms of Language Variation in Communities," *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature* 12, no. 2 (2025): 3200–3201, <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v12i2.5940>.

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style in response to the audience, social relationship, setting, and communicative purpose.<sup>25</sup> In this study, the interlocutor's status becomes a crucial factor: students use more standard and polite forms when communicating with lecturers, but shift to relaxed and expressive forms when interacting with peers. Thus, the first proposition—that MPBA students' talk style is shaped by context, interlocutor, and communicative purpose—is confirmed. This result is significant because it shows that language variation in an academic community is not a sign of linguistic inconsistency, but evidence of communicative competence and sensitivity to social norms.

The use of slang among MPBA students also confirms that non-standard varieties function as important tools for constructing solidarity and group identity. Indonesian slang such as *gaskeun*, *santuy*, and *goks parah* reflects students' participation in contemporary youth language practices, while Arabic-Indonesian slang such as *ana* and *antum* reveals the influence of their academic and religious linguistic environment. English-Indonesian slang, particularly in expressions related to digital learning and academic activities, reflects students' exposure to global and digital communication. This finding is consistent with Eckert's view that linguistic variation is a form of social practice through which speakers construct identity,<sup>26</sup> and with Coleman's argument that slang often operates as a marker of group belonging, intimacy, and social alignment.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the second proposition—that slang serves not only as informal vocabulary but also as a marker of social identity—is confirmed. In the broader context of sociolinguistics, the findings demonstrate that MPBA students' language practices represent hybrid identities: they are academic language users, Arabic-language learners, religious-community members, and digitally connected young adults.

The relationship between talk style and slang use is particularly important because the data show that slang appears more frequently when students shift into informal or peer-based communication. This supports the concept of style-shifting, which explains that speakers modify their linguistic choices according to levels of formality, social distance, topic, and interactional goals.<sup>28</sup> In the MPBA context, slang is not dominant in formal academic communication; rather, it is selectively used in contexts where intimacy, humor, emotional expression, and peer solidarity are expected. This finding rejects the assumption that frequent slang use necessarily weakens students' mastery of standard or academic language. On the contrary, the students' ability to avoid slang in formal situations and use it appropriately in informal contexts indicates sociolinguistic competence, as described by Hymes and Canale and Swain,<sup>29</sup> namely the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural expectations. Thus,

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<sup>25</sup> Allan Bell, "Language Style as Audience Design," *Language in Society* 13, no. 2 (1984): 145–204.

<sup>26</sup> Penelope Eckert, "Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity in Belten High," (*No Title*), 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Julie Coleman, *The Life of Slang* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Dell Hymes, "On Communicative Competence in Pride," *JB-J. Holmes (Ur.)*, 1972, 269–393; Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," 1980.

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the study confirms that non-standard varieties can coexist with standard academic language when speakers possess adequate awareness of context.

Several factors may explain the emergence of these findings. First, the academic background of MPBA students exposes them to multiple linguistic resources, especially Indonesian, Arabic, and English, enabling flexible code choice and creative language mixing. Second, peer-group interaction encourages the use of relaxed and expressive forms because students need linguistic resources that reduce social distance and strengthen interpersonal closeness. Third, digital media contributes to the rapid circulation of slang forms, especially English-based and Indonesian youth slang, making them more familiar and acceptable in daily communication. Previous studies on Indonesian youth language and social media also indicate that digital platforms accelerate slang innovation and normalize code-switching as part of youth identity construction.<sup>30</sup> However, some findings may appear contrary to the expectation that postgraduate students in Arabic language education would consistently prefer standard or formal language. The data show that high academic competence does not eliminate the use of non-standard varieties; instead, it allows students to manage different registers more effectively. This strengthens the argument that language competence should not be measured only by adherence to standard forms, but also by the ability to select appropriate varieties across contexts.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study contributes to sociolinguistic research by showing how talk style, slang, code-mixing, and identity construction intersect within a postgraduate Arabic education community in Indonesia. It expands the understanding of slang beyond youth culture in general by locating it in a multilingual academic environment where Indonesian, Arabic, and English interact. Practically, the findings suggest that lecturers and language educators should not view slang merely as linguistic deviation, but as a meaningful social phenomenon that can be discussed critically in language learning, especially in courses related to sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. Nevertheless, this study has limitations. The data are limited to MPBA students at one institution, so the findings cannot be generalized to all postgraduate students or all Arabic education programs in Indonesia. The study also relies on qualitative observation, interviews, and conversation documentation, so it does not measure the frequency of slang use quantitatively. Future research may involve a larger number of participants from different universities, compare male and female students' slang practices, analyze digital conversations more systematically, or combine qualitative and corpus-based methods to identify broader patterns of slang development in academic communities.

### D. Conclusion

Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that MPBA students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang exhibit a high level of sociolinguistic competence by effectively adapting their speech style to different communication contexts, using formal, structured language in academic interactions and more casual,

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<sup>30</sup> Aprilia Bernike Kandiawan, "Code-Switching and Slang Used by Gen Z Indonesians on Social Media," *ELTR Journal* 7, no. 1 (2022): 48-56; Dedi Saputra et al., "Expressions of the Use of Slang among Millennial Youth on Social Media and Its Impact of the Extension of Indonesia in Society," *BAHASTRA* 43, no. 1 (2023): 21-40.

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expressive language with peers; the strategic use of Indonesian, Arabic-Indonesian, and English-Indonesian slang reflects both their linguistic creativity and dual identity as members of academic-religious and digital communities, with slang deployment serving to establish rapport and group solidarity without undermining formal language proficiency. These findings confirm the anticipated outcomes outlined in the introduction, demonstrating that students can appropriately navigate register variation based on context, interlocutor, and social norms, and suggest that educational strategies should emphasize linguistic awareness rather than restriction of slang use. Future research could extend these insights by examining language variation across other student populations and institutional settings, providing a broader understanding of how context-specific communication skills develop and can be fostered in higher education.

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