CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but also an important part of human social life. Through language, a person can express their identity, cultural values, and social position in society. In today's digital and globalized era, language is undergoing significant changes. The use of language in daily life is not only influenced by communication needs but also by various social and cultural factors that underlie its speakers. In social interactions, the language choices a person makes not only serve as a means of communication, but also reflect social values such as solidarity, group identity, and lifestyle. One form of language choice that often arises, especially in digital spaces, is the use of English.[1]

As an international language, English is now widely used in various fields from education, business, technology, to social media. In Indonesia, English is not only used in formal contexts, but also in informal communication, especially among the younger generation[2]. English has become one of the most important international language to master in today's era of globalization.[3] Language is an effective tool for building relationship and working together,[4] the use of English on social media also reflects various motivations, such as wanting to appear modern,

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[1] Crystal, D.(2003). English as a global language (2nd) Cambridge University Press.
[2] Lauder, A.(2008) The status and function of English in Indonesia: A review of key factors.
[3] Masniati, A. (2024). Peran Media Sosial Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Ingris Kalangan Mahasiswa
[4] Sopamena, N. (2016). Teaching English through outdoor experiental learning in islamic state university in Ambon. Al-Iltizam: Jurnal Pendidikan agama islam

confident, and globally connected. Therefore, this phenomenon is interesting to study through a sociolinguistic approach.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society.[5] The main focus of sociolinguistics is how language is used in social contexts and how social factors such as age, gender, social class, educational background, and group identity influence language choice.[6] Sociolinguistic studies language variations that arise due to social differences, and views language as means of communication and social interaction in society. In everyday life, sociolinguistic shows that the language choices we make depend on who we are talking to and the social context. For example, in a family setting, a child will use a different language style when speaking to their parents compared to when interacting with peers. This also occurs in school, where students will adjust their language variety when speaking to classmates, teachers, older students, or younger students. Additionally, the language used also adapts to the location or situation, such as at a market, place of worship, or n social media. The main benefit of studying sociolinguistic is to understand the rules and customs of language in various social contexts so that communication can take place effectively and in accordance with prevailing norms. This understanding also helps us to appreciate linguistic diversity and use language appropriately according to the situation and interlocutor.

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[5]Wardaugh, R. (2010).An introduction to sociolinguistic
[6] Holmes, Janet. (2013). An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. New York: Routledge.

Sociolinguistics is the study of socially relevant language variation. "Who speaks, what language, to whom, when, and for what purpose" indicates that sociolinguistics must encompass everything.[7]

Sociolinguistics examines how language is used by native and non-native speakers to develop theories about the styles of language they use and how language changes over time. Language style can be summarized as the words used when speaking. In other words, people will use language differently depending on the situation and context in which they find themselves. Style is not only related to word choice, it also includes the manner of delivery, as well as the use of dialects or specific language variations that are appropriate for the social situation and communication objectives. For example, when speaking to a teacher, a person tends to use more formal and polite language, such as, "Good morning sir/ma'am, I have completed the assignment". Conversely, in conversations with peers, the language used usually more casual or even mixed with slang, such as "hey, have you done your assignment yet, bro?" This shows that sociolinguistic views language as something dynamic and changeable, depending on the social context and interpersonal relationship.

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In the digital era, sociolinguistic is highly relevant because language is now used in virtual spaces that reflect complex social dynamics. Social media provides a space for individuals to express their identity through their choice of language, demonstrating the importance of analyzing language variety in the context of digital society. This phenomenon is clearly evident among Generation Z, known as digital

[7] Wardhaugh, Ronald. (2010). An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Sixth Edition). USA: WilleyBlackwell. G

natives, who often use innovative forms of language in their online communication in response to the unique characteristic of the digital world.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, are a generation that grew up amid rapid technological advancements and globalization.[8] They have been accustomed to accessing English-language information from a young age, whether through entertainment, education, or social media. As a result, many of them use English in their daily communication, including when writing captions on Instagram.

Instagram is one of the social media platforms used to share photos and videos, and allows users to comment, like, and share content they enjoy. Since its launch in 2010 and acquisition by Facebook in 2012, it has become one of the favorite social media platforms for gen z in Indonesia. This platform allows users to express themselves through a combination of visuals and text, especially through the caption feature. Captions are often used to convey thoughts, feelings, or messages in a concise and expressive format. Many Indonesian users choose to write caption in English, either entirely or mixed with Indonesia. This may reflects a modern lifestyle, a desire to reach a wider audience, or a desire to follow global trends.[9]

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This study uses a case study approach to explore the use of English in Instagram captions by Indonesian Generation Z. This approach allows researchers to understand the phenomenon in depth within a real and complex context. This

[8] Seemiller, C., & Grace, M (2016) Generation Z goes to college. Jossey Bass.
[9] Lee, C. (2016). Multilingual practices in social media. In s. s. Mufwene *et al*, The Cambridge handbook of language and digital communication

study aligns with research by Telaumbanua, T., Harefa, D., & Telaumbanua, D. (2024), **Analyzing the Language Style of Generation Z Teenagers in Their Instagram Posts. JELITA: Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature**, which identified variations in language styles used by Generation Z teenagers in Instagram captions. Their findings indicate that Gen Z tends to use casual language, slang, abbreviations, and other informal language influenced by technology, social factors, and global linguistic trends.

The use of English in Instagram captions by Generation Z reflects changes in linguistic practices and patterns of language variation in the digital age. This phenomenon is important to study because it shows how social media has become a space for social innteraction that influences language choices and creates diverse forms of language variation. Through sociolinguistic analysis, this study seeks to uncover the types of language variation that emerge in English langauge use and the social factors behind these variations a a style of digital communication.

Based on the explanation above, it appears that English language used by Generation Z on Instagram demonstrates various forms of language variation that are not merely a means of conveying messages, but also a reflection of their social context, communicative purposes, and linguistic creativity. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to study this phenomenon in greater depth, particularly focusing on the patterns of language variation that emerge. Thus, the researcher decided to choose **"Sociolinguistic Analysis of English Language Use in Instagram Captions by Gen Z"** as the tittle of the research, with emphasis on analyzing language variation patterns in English language use.

B. Research Scope

This study focuses on sociolinguistic analysis of the use of English in Instagram captions written by Gen Z. The study is limited to captions shared publicy through personal accounts of participants aged between 19 and 24 years. This research primarily analyzes written language found in Instagram captions, including those accompaying posts, reels, and stories. Hiwever, spoken language appearing in video content such as reels and stories is only considered as suporting context and is not he main focus of analysis. This study not cover comment section, hashtags, emojis, or private messages. In addition, this study does not analyze code mixing or code switching, but rather focuses on language variation and the social factors influencing the use of English. The scope of this research involves analyzing the types of language variation used in Instagram captions and the social factors that influence the use of English by students in social media communication.

C. Research Questions

Based on the background, the formulations of the problem in this study are:

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1. What are the social factors that influence the choice of language variation in the English language use in Instagram caption by Generation Z?
2. What types of language variation are found in the English language use in Instagram caption by Generation Z?

D. Research Purposes

This study has two main objectives designed to broaden understanding of English language use, particularly language variation patterns, by Generatio Z by in UIN A.M Sangadji Ambon on the Instagram platform.

1. To analyze the social factors that influence the selection of language variation in English language use in Instagram captions by Generatin Z.
2. To identify and classify the types of language variaion in English language use by Generation Z.

E. Research Benefits

There are some benefits of this research are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits

This research will contribute to the development of sociolinguistic studies by providing new insights into language use in digital and contemporary contexts. The results of this study enrich our understanding of linguistic variation and the process of social identity formation through social media.

2. Practical Benefits

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The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators, linguists, and digital content creators in understanding the language usage patterns of Generation Z. Additionally, this research may foster critical awareness of the role of the English language in shaping social identity and how young people present themselves in digital spaces.

3. Academic Benefits

This research has the potential to serve as a foundation or reference source for future studies related to digital communication, sociolinguistic studies, and the use of English by young people in Indonesia.

F. Research Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, here are some key terms used in this study:

1. Sociolinguistic

Sociolinguistic is a branch of science that examines the relationship between language and society. Sociolinguistics studies how language is used in social context, including variations, changes and language choices according to communication situations.[10] Sociolinguistic examines who speaks what language to whom, when, and for what purpose. In this study, the concept of sociolinguistic is used to analyze the reasons and ways Generation Z uses English in Instagram captions, as well as the social meanings reflected in them.

2. English

English is a global language that is widely used in international communication. English is a global language because of its dominant role in education, technology, media, and cross-cultural relations.[11] In this study, English is seen as means of communication and self-expression used by Generation Z on social media. The use of English is often influenced by

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[10] Holmes, J. A. (1972). An introduction to sociolinguistic (4th ed). Routledge
[11] Crystal, D. 2003). English as a global language (2nd ed). Cambridge University Press

globalization trends, the need to show a modern identity, and as a symbol of social status or intelegence.[12]

3. Instagram Caption

Instagram captions are texts that accompany photo or video uploads on the Instagram platform. They provide context, express emotion, convey a message or engage audiences through likes and comments.[13] In this study, captions are the main focus to explore how Generation Z utilizes English as part of their digital communication style. Captions also reflect the way they express themselves and build their identity on social media.

4. Generation Z

Generation Z is a group generally born between 1997 and 2012. Generation Z are digital native because they have been familiar with the internet, social media, and digital technology since childhood.[14] They are known to be adaptive, creative and active in building identity through digital media. This research chose Generation Z as the object of study because they are the largest Instagram users in Indonesia and the group that uses English the most in their daily online activities.

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5. Language variation

Language variation refers to the sytematic differences in language use that occur across different socia groups, contexts, and situations. It encompasses different styles, registers, code-mixing, code switching and other

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[12] Baker, W. 92018) English as a lingua franca and intercultural communication. ELT Journal, 72(1),1-10
[13] Lee, J. E., Lee, S. A., & Choi, J. (2015). Social media and consumer engagement: How do consumers engage with brands on Instagram? Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science, 25(4), 254–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2015.1043690
[14] Dimock, M. (2019, January 17). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org

linguistic variations that speakers employ based on social and contextual factors. In this study, language variation is analyzed in the context of english language use on nstagram, examining how Generation Z students vary their English according to topic, audience, purpose, and other social factors understanding language variaton helps reval the relationship between language choices and social meanings in digital communicatio

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