

Swearing and gender dynamics in urban Surabaya: Understanding Gen Z's swearing in Surabaya's arek culture

Pisuhan dan gender di perkotaan Surabaya: Memahami pisuhan Gen Z dalam budaya arek Surabaya

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Abstract

Swearing in society is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced. The purpose of this research is to understand the context of swearing among Generation Z in Surabaya and the differences in swearing between male and female Gen Z individuals in Surabaya. This research uses qualitative research methods involving 45 Generation Z informants from Surabaya. The results of the research show that the decision by Gen Z Surabaya is influenced by emotional context, social norms, culture, and group bonding to strengthen social ties, express emotions, and maintain their unique identity. Male Gen Z in Surabaya use the swear word “jancuk” with a higher pitch and rarely modify it, while female Gen Z use it with a lower pitch and frequently modify it. The conclusions of this research are first, the context of swearing among Generation Z in Surabaya occurs in informal situations among close friends for joking, easing the atmosphere, and insulting to demean the conversation partner, all influenced by Arek culture. Secondly, the difference in swearing between male and female Gen Z in Surabaya is that male Gen Z often use a higher pitch and rarely use modified swear words, while female Gen Z do not always use a high pitch and often use modified swear words to maintain their image. The use of swearing by both male and female Gen Z within the Arek Surabaya culture demonstrates intimacy, openness, egalitarianism, and the absence of social distance.

Keywords: arek culture; gender dynamics; Generation Z swearing; urban Surabaya

Abstrak

Pisuhan di masyarakat merupakan fenomena yang dipengaruhi banyak hal. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui konteks pisuhan Generasi Z Surabaya dan perbedaan pisuhan Gen Z laki-laki dan perempuan Surabaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan melibatkan 45 informan Generasi Z Surabaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pisuhan oleh Gen Z Surabaya dipengaruhi konteks emosi, norma sosial, budaya, dan penguatan ikatan kelompok untuk memperkuat ikatan sosial, mengekspresikan emosi, dan mempertahankan identitas unik mereka. Gen Z laki-laki Surabaya menggunakan “jancuk” berintonasi tinggi dan jarang modifikasi, sementara Gen Z perempuan berintonasi lebih rendah dan sering memodifikasi. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah pertama, konteks pisuhan Generasi Z Surabaya dalam situasi nonformal sesama teman dekat untuk bercanda mencairkan suasana dan menghina untuk merendahkan lawan bicara, yang dilatarbelakangi budaya Arek. Kedua, perbedaan pisuhan antara gen Z laki-laki dan gen Z perempuan Surabaya yaitu Generasi Z laki-laki Surabaya intonasinya sering tinggi dan jarang menggunakan pisuhan plesetan, dan Generasi Z perempuan Surabaya intonasinya tidak selalu tinggi dan sering menggunakan pisuhan plesetan untuk jaga image. Penggunaan pisuhan oleh Gen Z laki-laki dan gen Z perempuan dalam budaya Arek Surabaya menunjukkan keintiman, keterbukaan, egaliter, dan tidak ada jarak.

Kata kunci: budaya arek; dinamika gender; pisuhan Generasi Z; perkotaan Surabaya

Introduction

Swearing in society is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by neurological, psychological, social, and cultural factors. The swearing model provides a comprehensive framework explaining the conditions under which swearing occurs based on the speaker's neurological state, psychological status, and social

sensitivity (Jay 2009). Swearing serves various social functions, including affirming identity, surprising, being humorous, insulting, and marking social distance or solidarity. Although not recommended in many formal situations and generally considered offensive, swearing has become commonplace in modern society (Widyanti et al. 2023).

The use of swear words in society is influenced by cultural variations and contextual factors, highlighting the need for further research in this field (Kapoor 2014). Gender differences emerge in the use of swearing language, serving as behavioral fulfillments within certain societies (Akhter 2023). Swearing behavior is also influenced by individuals' linguistic attitudes, social status, and the context in which the words are used (Khalil & Saleem 2021). Swearing in society is a complex phenomenon with various influences and functions, reflecting societal values, gender differences, and evolving with social norms.

Swearing behavior becomes an intriguing research topic, particularly based on gender differences. Studies have shown that men and women tend to swear more frequently in single-gender contexts (among men or among women) compared to mixed-gender contexts (men and women) (Jay 2009). Additionally, research indicates that men generally produce more swear words than women (Herring 2003). Literature suggests that swearing is more characteristic of men's language, while women often avoid swearing (Love 2021). However, some studies suggest that the relationship between gender and swearing is more complex, with swearing contributing to the construction of certain versions of femininity in specific contexts (Coats 2021).

Furthermore, research has highlighted that men tend to use swear words more frequently than women (Sazzed 2021). Other research reports that women use fewer swear words than men, and speakers who swear are often perceived as male (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh 2018). Swearing has been identified as an increasing trend among both men and women globally (Husain et al. 2023). Research also explores how different genders use swear words from various categories, showing differences in swearing patterns (Wong et al. 2020).

Swearing, particularly the use of the word "jancuk," is a common and culturally ingrained practice among the Arek community in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia (Sriyanto & Fauzie 2017, Hanggraito 2021). This form of communication is deeply rooted in local identity and is used to express both positive and negative emotions (Sholihatin 2013, Sriyanto & Fauzie 2017). The Arek Surabaya culture is characterized by values of egalitarianism, tolerance, openness, and friendliness, which are reflected in various aspects of community life, including its communication style (Tinarso et al. 2018, Lesmana et al. 2021). The heroism and bravery of the Arek-arek Suroboyo have historical significance that further shapes the cultural identity of the community (Wulan et al. 2022).

The research findings presented above lack focus on the dynamics of swearing use by Generation Z in the urban environment of Surabaya, particularly within the unique context of the Arek culture. Most previous studies tend to be more general in discussing gender differences in the use of foul language and overlook the specific influence of strong local cultural identities like the Arek culture in Surabaya. For example, while research shows that men tend to swear more frequently than women (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh 2018, Husain et al. 2023), few studies explore how the values of egalitarianism and bravery in the Arek culture influence swearing patterns among Generation Z. This study aims to understand (1) the context in which swearing is used by Generation Z within the Arek culture in Surabaya, and (2) the differences in swearing usage between male and female Generation Z individuals within the Arek culture in Surabaya. This research will make a significant contribution by specifically exploring gender differences and the context of swearing use by Generation Z within the Arek culture, as well as understanding how local values influence their linguistic behavior. The novelty of this research lies in its unique and specific focus on Generation Z in Surabaya and the influence of Arek culture on the use of foul language. Therefore, this study will provide new insights into gender dynamics within a specific local context that has previously received little attention in the literature.

Swearing, characterized by the use of taboo or offensive language, has garnered attention in various fields such as psychology, social psychology, and linguistics. Swearing in everyday life is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by numerous factors. It is not merely an individual's speech habit but also a widespread social practice shaped by norms and social practices (Kwon & Gruzd 2017a). Swearing is often associated with the expression of strong emotions like anger and frustration (Chun et al. 2015) and can serve various social motives such as identity building, emphasizing points, and signaling affiliation or distance (Song & Wu 2018). It is a form of verbal behavior (Tomash & Reed 2013) and sometimes used as a means of self-expression rather than intending to insult others (Rosenberg et al. 2016). Additionally, swearing is not confined to a specific demographic but is part of everyday language across different cultures and age groups worldwide (Afrilya 2021). While swearing can be associated with undesirable traits and behaviors, it does not necessarily indicate verbal limitations or unpleasant personalities (Reiman & Earleywine 2022). Swearing can also be a way to assert oneself socially and maintain relationships through interaction (Amelia et al. 2022).

Swearing, as a form of taboo language, serves various functions in communication. Such words can convey emotions like anger, frustration, and excitement more effectively than non-taboo words (Jay 2009). Swearing can act as a form of linguistic creativity, allowing individuals to express feelings or attitudes using offensive language (Hua 2020). Moreover, swearing is considered an explicit way to display emotions that evoke high arousal (Kwon & Gruzd 2017b). The use of swear words in communication can also enhance the effectiveness and persuasiveness of a message, particularly in expressing positive surprise (Pamungkas et al. 2022).

In social interactions, swearing can function as a signal of solidarity in certain speech acts, such as complaints and direct rejections, while playing a contrasting role in other speech acts like whining (Daly et al. 2004). Swearing can be strategic and rational, serving as a form of covert prestige to bond individuals in different contexts (Darics 2015). However, the use of offensive words, including insults, can be perceived negatively and may be associated with threatening or hate speech (Jay & Jay 2015).

Swearing is spontaneous and subjective, encompassing derogatory remarks, slander, insults, taunts, curses, praise, and expressions of frustration, anger, sadness, disappointment, surprise, worry, fear, and, uniquely, intimate relationships. These expressions serve to satisfy oneself or relieve emotional burdens (Sholihatin 2013). Additionally, the study of swearing is beneficial for gaining proper insight into its use in social communication, preventing misunderstandings. Swearing has eleven functions: expressing joy/self-esteem, bravery, greeting, self-defense, giving advice, slang, breaking the ice, emphasizing points, praising, representing identity, and unifying (Sholihatin 2013).

Research indicates that men and women are more likely to swear when interacting with their own gender than in mixed-gender contexts (Jay 2009). Another study suggests that women tend to use less intense swear words than men and that female swearing is considered less socially acceptable (Griffiths 2018). Swearing behavior in daily life is a complex behavior influenced by individual traits, social norms, emotional expression, and social interaction. Swearing is a common aspect of global language use and does not necessarily indicate negative personality traits. Understanding swearing behavior requires considering various psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence its occurrence in daily life.

The use of swearing or vulgar language is often influenced by social, cultural, and emotional factors. In some situations, swearing is used to express anger, frustration, or disappointment. However, within certain friendships or communities, swearing can be employed as a form of familiarity or humor without any intent to insult. Halliday & Hasan (1992) asserts that context is influenced by situational and cultural aspects. There are three situational context factors that affect a person's language choices: field, tenor, and mode, as illustrated in Figure 1.

In discourse analysis, the focus is on the event or topic being discussed, with language as the key element. Participants in the discourse refer to the individuals involved, including their roles and relationships, which can be permanent or temporary. The mode of discourse refers to how language is used in the text,

such as the type of interaction (dialogue or monologue), communication channel (spoken or written), and rhetorical purpose (such as persuading, explaining, or educating).

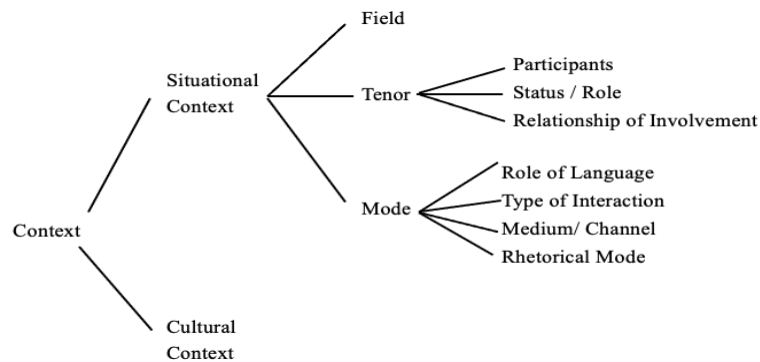


Figure 1.
Context according to Halliday and Hasan
Source: Halliday & Hasan (1992:15)

Cultural context creates various types of texts that are recognized and accepted in society because the structure and language used support the communicative purpose of the text. According to Halliday & Hasan (1992:63), people attribute meaning and value to their actions based on the cultural context. This means every communicative action, including text creation, carries specific implicit meanings, values, or purposes. Halliday & Hasan (1992:63) also emphasize that cultural context provides a broad cultural background for interpreting texts. This shows that an individual’s text production is influenced by various aspects of their personal life, such as the environment of their upbringing, childhood experiences, native language use, work environment, and other factors that significantly affect how texts are produced and the meanings they convey.

Research Method

This research employs a qualitative approach to understand the swearing behavior of Generation Z within the Arek culture in Surabaya, Indonesia. The qualitative perspective (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, Maxwell 2008, Neuman & Robson 2014, Creswell & Poth 2016) emphasizes the importance of context in social phenomena, making this method suitable for exploring how cultural identity influences language use. Adopting a case study design (Stake 2005, Yin 2006), this study aims to achieve an in-depth and specific understanding of swearing among Gen Z in Surabaya. Case studies are particularly effective for exploring complex phenomena within real-life contexts (Guba & Lincoln 2005). The focus on Gen Z is based on several arguments: Gen Z exhibits unique linguistic behaviors influenced by technology and global culture, creating new forms of expression including swearing; Surabaya, as a city with a dynamic Arek culture, provides a context where Gen Z integrates traditional norms and modern values in their linguistic expressions; and Gen Z’s more fluid views on gender lead them to use swearing as a means of expression in communication.

Data were collected through a combination of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field observations. The semi-structured interview protocol, consisting of open-ended questions, was used to gather responses from Gen Z informants in Surabaya about the context and differences in swearing between male and female Gen Z individuals.

Informants comprised 45 Gen Z individuals from Surabaya, aged 17-22 years, including 17 males and 28 females (Table 1). Informants were selected through purposive and snowball methods (Parker et al. 2019) to identify individuals who frequently swear within their peer groups. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and via telephone, ensuring a comfortable environment for participants to share their experiences. Secondary data included reference documents and research relevant to the study’s theme. Field observations were conducted in informal settings where Gen Z individuals typically interact, such as schools, cafes, and social gatherings, to observe the natural use of swear words and their contextual meanings.

Table 1.
Demographic information of informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Address
SSA	Female	19	Urban Village Wonokromo, Wonokromo, Surabaya
PGD	Female	19	Urban Village Wonokusumo, Semampir, Surabaya
HDA	Female	18	Pagesangan, Jambangan, Surabaya
MDK	Female	22	Jalan Kertajaya, Gubeng
SPF	Female	20	Kapas Madya Baru, Tambaksari, Surabaya
IPS	Female	19	Kendangsari, Surabaya
NML	Male	18	Urban Village Jambangan, Jambangan, Surabaya
NHS	Female	20	Tanjung Perak, Pabean Cantian, Surabaya
KIM	Female	21	District Gubeng, Surabaya
JAD	Female	19	Kenjeran, Sidotopo Wetan
VST	Female	19	Gading Karya 3 Urban Village Gading, Tambaksari, Surabaya
RTN	Female	19	Perum Purimas, Gununganyar, Surabaya
DPS	Female	20	Jl Sidodadi li, Surabaya
AAH	Male	19	Perak Utara, Pabean Cantikan, Surabaya
BKW	Male	18	Urban Village Kapasmadya Baru, Tambaksari, Surabaya
ADH	Female	19	Urban Village Tegalsari, Kedungdoro, Surabaya
HSW	Male	17	Gunung Anyar, Rungkut, Suranbaya
SBA	Female	19	Urban Village Dukuh Setro, Tambaksari, Surabaya
AHH	Male	21	Sidotopo Kidul 48, Surabaya
FAR	Male	20	Sawunggaling, Wonokromo, Surabaya
PPW	Male	19	Gubeng, Surabaya
SSP	Male	19	Keputih, Surabaya
FTH	Male	20	Jl. Kalianak Timur No. 123, Morokrembangan, Surabaya
KSS	Female	20	Urban Village Gununganyar, Gununganyar Tambak, Surabaya
DBS	Male	20	Jemursari Wonocolo, Wonokromo, Surabaya
RCP	Female	19	Rungkut Menanggal, Gunung Anyar, Surabaya
ALD	Male	20	Morokrembangan, Surabaya
HPY	Male	19	Gubeng, Surabaya
AAG	Female	21	Bulakbanteng, Wonokusumo, Semampir, Surabaya
GJN	Female	18	Urban Village Dukuh Menanggal, Gayungan, Surabaya
SMR	Male	21	Pantai Mentari Blok A No.18, Kenjeran, Surabaya
TBT	Female	20	Pacar Kembang, Tambaksari, Surabaya
PSB	Male	20	Urban Village Klampis Ngasem, Sukolilo, Surabaya, Jawa Timur
DAP	Female	19	Urban Village Kedungdoro, Tegalsari, Surabaya
KML	Female	20	Krembangan Utara, Pabean Cantian, Surabaya
ZKR	Male	18	Pagesangan Timur Tol.5, Pagesangan, Jambangan, Surabaya
CKR	Female	20	Medokan Ayu, Rungkut
CIT	Female	19	Jalan Kedung Klinter 5 No.29, Kedung Doro, Surabaya
PAL	Female	20	Urban Village Panjang Jiwo, Tenggilis Mejoyo, Surabaya
DMK	Female	21	Jalan Airlangga No 2, Gubeng, Surabaya
SGP	Female	20	Urban Village Perak Utara, Pabean Cantian, Surabaya
DSA	Female	21	Gubeng, Surabaya
SSW	Female	21	Urban Village Tandes, Tandes, Surabaya
IKW	Male	19	Medokan, Surabaya
HNS	Male	18	Gunung Anyar, Gunung Anyar, Surabaya

Source: Primary research in 2024

An interactive data analysis model was used, referring to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), guiding the analysis process. This model includes data reduction, data display, data condensation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involves filtering collected data to focus on relevant information related to swearing behavior. Data display organizes and summarizes the data to identify patterns and themes, while data condensation refines the data to develop a coherent narrative. Finally, conclusions are drawn and verified through cross-checking with secondary data and field observations. To maintain participant confidentiality, all interview data were anonymized during transcription, and pseudonyms were used. The research informant data is presented in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

Swearing, involving the use of taboo language or vulgar words, is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. Swearing is not only an individual speech habit but also a widespread social practice shaped by social norms and practices. Data obtained from interviews is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Swear words used by male and female Gen Z in Surabaya's arek culture

Swearing Language	Swearing Language	Swearing Language
1. Anjirr	23. Cangkeme	47. Matane
2. Alat vital laki ²	24. Cik	48. Makmu cancutan seng
3. Alat vital perempuan	25. Cuk	49. Mbahmu
4. Ancok	26. Dancuk	50. Mbokne ancok
5. Anj	27. Fak (fuck)	51. Medura
6. Anjir	28. Gapleki	52. Memek
7. Anjing	29. Gaplek i	53. Memew
8. Anjeng	30. Gatel	54. Modaro
9. Anying	31. Gateli	55. Ngentod
10. Asu	32. Gathel	56. Ngentot
11. Asbak	33. Goblok	57. Nggatel
12. Babi	34. Hancik	58. Puki
13. Bajigur	35. Hancok	59. Pukimak
14. Bajingan	36. Jamban	60. Puqi
15. Bajingok	37. Jamput	61. Raimu
16. Bangke	38. Jancik	62. Su
17. Bangsat	39. Jancuk (bersetubuh)	63. Sundel
18. Bathukmu	40. Jiasik	64. Taek
19. Biadab	41. Kirek	65. Tak antemi koen
20. Blok (goblok)	42. Kontol	66. Telo
21. Bjir	43. Kontit	67. Tempek
22. Brengsek	44. Kuli/manol	68. Tobrut (toket brutal)
	45. Lonte	69. Yatim
	46. Matamu	

Source: Primary Research, in 2024

Based on the data in Table 2, it is evident that various swear words are used in daily conversations by Generation Z in Surabaya. These words can be classified based on their types. Words referring to body organs and private parts include: "Male genitalia", "Female genitalia", "Kontol", "Kontil", "Memek". Words referring to animals or other vulgar terms include: "Ajirr", "Anjing", "Anjeng", "Anying", "Asu", "Babi", "Bangsat", "Biadab", "Blok", "Bjir", "Bregsek", "Gatel", "Gateli", "Gathel", "Goblok", "Hancik", "Hancok", "Kirek", "Yatim". Swearing with local cultural context includes: "Ancok", "Anj", "Anjir", "Bajigur", "Bajingan", "Bajingok", "Bathukmu", "Cangkeme", "Cik", "Cok", "Dancok", "Gapleki", "Gaplek i", "Jamput", "Jancik", "Jancok", "Jancuk", "Jiasik", "Matamu", "Matane", "Mbokne ancok", "Ngentod", "Ngentot", "Nggatel", "Puki", "Pukimak", "Puqi", "Raimu", "Su", "Taek", "Tempek". Words that are foreign terms or loanwords include: "Fak".

Based on these data, it can be reported that the use of swear words by Gen Z in Surabaya is influenced not only by emotions but also by prevailing social and cultural norms. Swearing functions not only as a means of emotional expression but also to strengthen group bonds. This analysis provides insight into how language and culture interact in the daily lives of Surabaya's community.

The categorization of various types of swearing by Generation Z includes 16 categories: (1) names related to demons, (2) kinship terms/family members, (3) vulgar words for obscenity, (4) exclamatory words (expressions, names for parents and relatives), (5) animal names, (6) food names, (7) human body parts (excluding those related to obscenity/vulgarity), (8) names of excrement/related to excrement, (9) curses wishing misfortune, (10) acts of cruelty, (11) personal weaknesses, (12) tools, (13) negative traits/actions, (14) occupations/professions, (15) places, (16) ethnicities/nations. These findings align with Montagu (1973) and Sholihatin (2011), indicating significant variation in the categorization of swearing in this study. Montagu (1973) identified five categories, while both Sholihatin (2011) and the current study identify 16 categories. This demonstrates a broader variety of language choices in swearing used by the Arek Surabaya community and Generation Z Surabaya compared to Montagu's results. This variation is influenced by the dynamic evolution of language across generations and the context and cultural background of the speakers.

The context of swearing in Surabaya's Generation Z

Based on the data obtained, the context of swearing among Generation Z groups in Surabaya is part of a phenomenon that reflects social dynamics within local culture. Using Halliday & Hasan's (1992) theory, the context of using swear words is examined in depth from the aspects of situational context: field, tenor, and mode, as well as the social context in their daily interactions. Table 3 presents the context of swearing usage among Generation Z in Surabaya.

Based on the data above, the use of profanity among Generation Z in Surabaya can be understood as a means to strengthen social bonds within their groups. The context and situations in which this profanity is used are detailed as follows:

Situational Context: Profanity is employed during various random conversations such as gossiping, expressing surprise, showing anger, joking, or discussing topics with friends. The participants include students, university students, and workers. The relationships between the speakers involve close friends, playmates, colleagues, partners, family members, and siblings. The choice of profanity includes terms such as "Jancuk," "ancuk," "cuk," "jancik," "ancik," "cik," "jancuk raimu," "asu," "anjing," "anjir," "gathel," "endokmu," "jembut," "jaran," "jangkrik," "matamu," "setan," "jambu," "asem," "taek," "modaro," "banci," "goblok," "sinting," "wong edan," "gendheng," "kere," "mbahmu," "mbokne ancuk," "jamban," "lonthe," "Medura," "tak soto raimu," "raimu magrib," "tak sleding endasmu," and "ember." These expressions are used in both monologues and dialogues, through verbal and written media (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, X). The purposes of using profanity include making jokes to lighten the mood and insulting others to demean them.

Table 3.
Context of swearing use among male and female Gen Z in Surabaya's arek culture

Situational Context	
1. Topic (field)	The topic can be random, such as gossiping, reacting to something surprising, expressing anger, joking around, or discussing something with friends, often incorporating swearing freely
Participants (tenor)	Students, university students, entrepreneurs
- Status of participants	Close friends, family, siblings, playmates, coworkers, partners
- Relationships among speakers	
Medium (mode)	
- Choice of swearing used:	“jancuk,” “ancuk,” “cuk,” “jancik,” “ancik,” “cik,” “jancuk raimu,” “asu,” “anjing,” “anjir,” “gathel,” “endokmu,” “jembut,” “jaran,” “jangkrik,” “matamu,” “setan,” “jambu,” “asem,” “gathel,” “taek,” “modaro,” “banci,” “goblok,” “sinting,” “wong edan,” “gendheng,” “kere,” “mbahmu,” “mbokne ancuk,” “jamban,” “lonthe,” “Medura,” “tak soto raimu,” “raimu magrib,” “tak sleding endasmu,” “ember.” “jancuk,” “ancuk,” “cuk,” “jancik,” “ancik,” “cik,” “jancuk raimu,” “asu,” “anjing,” “anjir,” “gathel,” “endokmu,” “jembut,” “jaran,” “jangkrik,” “matamu,” “setan,” “jambu,” “asem,” “gathel,” “taek,” “modaro,” “banci,” “goblok,” “sinting,” “wong edan,” “gendheng,” “kere,” “mbahmu,” “mbokne ancuk,” “jamban,” “lonthe,” “Medura,” “tak soto raimu,” “raimu magrib,” “tak sleding endasmu,” “ember.”
- Monologue/dialogue	Both dialogue and monologue
- Media	Oral and written (WhatsApp, Instagram, X)
- Purpose	Joking to lighten the mood, insulting to demean the conversation partner.
Cultural Context	
2. Cultural Context	The cultural context behind the use of swearing among Gen Z in Surabaya is rooted in the Arek culture. This generation, currently aged 17-22, was born, raised, and resides in Surabaya. Known as the city of Heroes, Surabaya has a strong sense of egalitarianism and straightforward speech, with minimal small talk. As a result, when using swearing language, Gen Z in Surabaya feels that it has become a part of their culture and daily environment. Swearing is used to showcase the unique identity of Arek Surabaya, to make conversations more relaxed and strengthen relationships with friends. It serves as an expression or response to a discussion that triggers swearing, a slang or common interjection, an expression of feelings, a way to have fun and lighten the mood, an outlet for anger or frustration, and a means to keep up with friends during jokes.

Source: Primary Research in 2024

Cultural Context: Generation Z in Surabaya, aged 17-22, were born, raised, and reside in Surabaya, a city known for its egalitarian and straightforward communication style, with little tolerance for unnecessary formalities. Consequently, when using profanity, Generation Z in Surabaya feels that it has become a part of their daily cultural and environmental habits. They use profanity to create a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere, to strengthen bonds with friends, to express reactions to certain discussions, as a form of slang or commonly used fillers, to express emotions, for fun and excitement, to ease the mood, to express anger or frustration, and to match their friends' joking behavior.

This study's findings align with previous literature that highlights the multifaceted nature of swearing in society. According to Jay (2009), swearing occurs due to neurological, psychological, social, and cultural factors, serving to assert identity, shock, entertain, insult, and mark social distance or solidarity. Widyanti et al. (2023) notes that while swearing is generally considered offensive in formal situations, it has become commonplace in modern society. However, the current research offers a unique advantage by focusing specifically on the Arek culture in Surabaya, particularly Generation Z, which has not been extensively explored in previous studies. This research provides insights into the egalitarian and straightforward communication style of Arek Surabaya, highlighting how swearing is integrated into daily interactions and serves to strengthen social relationships.

Kapoor (2014) emphasized the need for further research on cultural variations and contextual factors influencing swearing, which this study addresses by examining the specific cultural context of Generation Z in Surabaya. The findings report that in Surabaya's Arek culture, the use of swearing by Generation Z is analyzed from situational and cultural perspectives. Firstly, from a situational context, swearing is used across various topics and involves participants such as students, university students, entrepreneurs, or workers. The relationships between participants include close friends, family, siblings, colleagues, and partners. Commonly used swear words include "jancuk," "cuk," and "jancik," expressed in both dialogues and monologues through oral and written media. The purposes of using these swear words range from joking to lighten the mood to insulting to demean the interlocutor. Secondly, in a cultural context, the use of swearing is rooted in Surabaya's Arek culture, characterized by distinctive and expressive communication traits. These findings align with Khalil & Saleem (2021), who stated that swearing behavior is influenced by individuals' language attitudes and the environment in which the words are used. In Arek culture, swearing functions as a part of social interaction that strengthens group bonds and allows spontaneous emotional expression. Therefore, swearing in Surabaya's Arek culture serves not only as verbal expression but also as a tool to understand social and cultural dynamics among Generation Z.

Akhter (2023) and Khalil & Saleem (2021) also discuss the impact of gender on swearing behavior, noting that men tend to swear more frequently than women and that swearing is often associated with male language. This research enriches previous studies by revealing that in the unique cultural context of Arek Surabaya, both male and female Gen Z members equally use swearing. This can be interpreted as indicating egalitarianism in the use of swearing among Gen Z in Surabaya. These findings are significant in several aspects: scientifically, they contribute to understanding how social norms influence language use, particularly swearing, among Generation Z in urban Indonesian society. The use of swearing can strengthen social bonds and provide deeper insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics of Arek culture in Surabaya. Thus, swearing among Gen Z in Surabaya is influenced by emotional context, social norms, culture, and group solidarity, serving to reinforce social ties, express emotions, and maintain their unique identity.

Differences in the use of swear words between male and female Gen Z in arek culture, Surabaya

Both male and female members of Generation Z in Surabaya frequently use the vulgar word "jancuk." However, male members often use a higher intonation and rarely opt for altered versions of the word, as it is commonly accepted in their environment. As FTH mentioned, while hanging out and joking with friends at a coffee shop, FTH said, "*Jancuuuuukkk... what is this, cuk. This lighter doesn't work, cuk. Get one that works, man.*" This statement was made while FTH laughed as he borrowed a lighter from his friend to light his cigarette, but the lighter did not work, resulting in laughter from all his friends.

Similarly, NML supported this observation during a lively conversation with friends at a cafe, saying: *“Cuk, be reasonable, jancuuuuukkkkk... That’s not right. This is a memorable phone, jancuk.”* NML expressed this while laughing and showing his phone, responding to a friend who commented that NML’s phone was outdated and should be replaced with a new one. This statement also elicited laughter from all his friends. In contrast, female members of Generation Z in Surabaya use “jancuk” with varying intonation and often prefer less vulgar alternatives to maintain a good image and not be seen as unruly or streetwise. SPF shared: *“Cuk, let’s go. Don’t be so sluggish, jancuk. I’m all fired up.”* She said this to her friends who were still lounging under a tree, reluctant to leave the parking area, prompting laughter from them.

Subsequently, the use of “pisuhan” (swear words) among Generation Z females in Surabaya often involves playful variations, such as “jancik,” to maintain a good image and avoid being perceived as rude, delinquent, or unruly. This observation is supported by SPF, who stated: *“This guy, cik, has been waiting for a while and still hasn’t left, jancik.”* SPF’s statement was met with laughter from her friends, leading to a shared moment of humor, which indicates the close-knit communication within their friendship group.

This information is further corroborated by responses from KIM and AVY, whose answers are similar to the following:

“Men tend to use curse words explicitly and openly, like ‘jancuk.’ Women, on the other hand, also use explicit curse words with close friends in informal settings, but if they feel slightly uneasy or are being observed, they modify the word, like saying ‘jancik’ instead of ‘jancuk,’ or ‘cik’ instead of ‘cuk,’ to sound less harsh.” (Informant KIM).

“For women, the intonation is usually softer, like ‘jancuuk.’ For men, it’s more drawn out and emphatic, like ‘jancuuuuukkkkkkk.’ Additionally, when women use ‘jancuk,’ there’s often a perception among Gen X and Gen Y, or millennials, that they are rebellious, night-going, and wild.” (Informant AVY).

It’s important to note that both male and female Generation Z in Surabaya most frequently use curse words when with close friends to avoid misunderstandings. This information comes from GJN, CKR and FTH, as follows:

“I only curse with my close friends. I know there won’t be any misunderstandings, and no one will get offended because we are already close. We use curse words depending on the situation, who we’re talking to, and where we are. If we’re at a coffee shop or café with close friends, it’s relaxed and casual, so we curse openly. But at university with lecturers, or at a friend’s house with their parents, I wouldn’t dare. If I do curse, it’s quietly, not loudly, out of respect and politeness.” (Informant GJN).

“If the situation is safe, I curse to avoid being perceived as a naughty girl. I don’t curse around pious friends, older people like my siblings or parents, or anyone significantly older. I also refrain from using ‘jancuk’ around relatives from outside Surabaya, unless we’re very close. With unfamiliar friends, I avoid cursing.” (Informant CKR).

“We curse depending on the situation, who we’re talking to, and where we are. At coffee shops or cafés with close friends, it’s casual and relaxed, so we curse openly. But at university with lecturers, or at a friend’s house with their parents, I wouldn’t dare. If I curse, it’s quietly, not loudly, out of respect and politeness. I don’t use ‘jancuk’ at mosques or in class with lecturers. If I’m with friends at a mosque, I use less harsh words like ‘kampret’ or ‘gendeng.’ The intonation is also softer. With my parents at home, I might say ‘jancuk’ while gossiping because the person we’re talking about is annoying. My relationship with my parents is very close and open. At coffee shops with older strangers, if they start using ‘jancuk’ in a friendly, joking manner, I might join in too. It depends on the context.” (Informant FTH).

From these accounts, it's clear that they prioritize context, understanding when and with whom to use curse words to maintain their image and reputation. They use curse words with close and open friends to break the ice, show closeness, and eliminate distance, ensuring that their conversation partners are not strangers. An intriguing finding was obtained from informants FTH, IKW, and HNS, indicating that Generation Z males often use profanity when conversing with Generation Z females in relaxed and familiar settings.

"When I am in a familiar setting, I casually use profanity when addressing both male and female friends in my circle. This behavior actually strengthens our bond, breaks the ice, and elicits laughter, making the interaction enjoyable. For instance, when we are gathered at a café and I ask a female friend to send me a photo from her phone, but she delays, and my phone battery is running low, I might say, "Come on, *Mbut*, don't be too long. My battery is only ten percent left, it *jancuk* hahaha..." (Informant FTH).

This remark usually results in laughter from everyone, and no one gets offended because we are very close and it is all in good fun. "Earlier, my female friend was discussing her interest in a particular guy. I teased her by saying, 'Seriously, *cuk*. There is no way he would want to be with you hahaha..." (Informant IKW). This prompted laughter from the group. Among my close friends, using profanity with both male and female friends is common, as long as we share a close bond and the atmosphere is relaxed and jocular.

"There seems to be no difference when talking to male or female friends; we all use profanity because we are close, and no one gets offended or angry. For example, I told a female friend not to be late the next day, '*Cuk*, don't be late tomorrow. I need to pick up my sister from her lesson at seven. Seriously, *nggatheli Arek-iki* hahhaa....' She responded with laughter as well." (Informant HNS).

Similarly, Generation Z females also use profanity when conversing with Generation Z males in relaxed and familiar settings, as illustrated by the following excerpts.

"We frequently use profanities in our conversations, which adds to the enjoyment. For example, earlier, I told my male friend, *jancuk, raimu hahhaaa. Salah server hahhaa.....* It was humorous because his jokes were funny." (Informant HAD).

"In using profanities, there is no difference between men and women; we use them equally. For instance, after I got a haircut, my male friend commented that my hairstyle was unclear. I immediately responded, *tren baru iki, Cuk hahhaa...* We all laughed together." (Informant GJN).

"There is no distinction. I use profanities with my male friends, and they use them with me as well. It's a way to express our closeness. For instance, if my male friend says something inappropriate, I immediately comment, *yo gak ngunu, cuuuukk..... ini beda....* I also often call my male friends '*cuk*' (damn)." (Informant AVY).

Based on the above statements, within the context of the Arek culture in Surabaya, when Gen Z men and women gather and converse in mixed-gender settings, it is common for Gen Z men to use profanities towards Gen Z women and vice versa. This behavior demonstrates that Gen Z men and women in close-knit communities within the Arek Surabaya culture exhibit intimacy, openness, and a lack of social distance.

Male and female Gen Z in Surabaya both frequently use vulgar language, with "jancuk" and "cuk" being the most common terms. However, their intonation differs: males often use a higher-pitched tone and rarely use modified expletives, as this language is commonly used in their environment. Conversely, females, in addition to using "jancuk," often use modified expletives like "jancik" or "cik" and do not always use a high-pitched tone to maintain a positive image and avoid being perceived as harsh or impolite. Both genders use this vulgar language primarily with close friends, understanding the context and avoiding misunderstandings. Male and female Gen Z in Surabaya are highly aware of context and

audience to maintain their image and reputation. The main purpose of using vulgar language in close-knit friend groups is to ease the atmosphere, show closeness by indicating that the conversation partner is not a stranger, and demonstrate that there is no distance between them.

Gender differences in swearing behavior are also noteworthy. Previous studies have shown that males and females swear more frequently in single-gender groups than in mixed-gender groups (Jay 2009). However, this study presents contrary findings where, in the familiar Arek culture of Surabaya, both male and female Gen Z (in mixed-gender contexts) use expletives when gathered and conversing. This indicates that in close-knit communities, both male and female Gen Z in Surabaya's Arek culture exhibit intimacy, openness, egalitarianism, and no distance. Furthermore, males tend to swear more intensively and are socially perceived as more acceptable to use vulgar words compared to females (Herring 2003, DeFrank & Kahlbaugh 2018). However, the relationship between gender and swearing is complex, with some studies showing that swearing contributes to a certain form of femininity in specific contexts (Coats 2021). The findings of this study align with the broader literature, highlighting specific gender patterns in swearing among Gen Z in Surabaya. The emphasis on using modified words among females to maintain a positive image and the difference in intonation reflect unique cultural and social norms in Surabaya's Arek culture.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of understanding cultural nuances and gender specifics in language use among Generation Z in Surabaya. These insights are crucial for linguists, sociologists, and psychologists studying language and social behavior. They highlight how social norms shape language use, providing a comprehensive understanding of linguistic behavior within a specific cultural context. Practically, these findings have implications for education, communication strategies, and social interaction frameworks in multicultural and diverse societies. Recognizing the different ways men and women use and understand profanity can help develop gender-sensitive approaches in education, promoting respectful and effective communication. Additionally, understanding the role of context and audience in the use of profanity can aid in developing more nuanced social and behavioral interventions, creating a more inclusive environment that respects cultural and individual differences in language use.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are as follows: *First*, the context of swearing (pisuhan) used by Generation Z in the Arek culture of Surabaya can be categorized into: (a) Situational context, where the topics include all matters discussed together; participants include students, university students, entrepreneurs/workers; relationships among participants are close friends, family, siblings, coworkers, and partners; the choice of swearing words includes jancuk, cuk, and jancik; used in both dialogue and monologue; conveyed through spoken and written media; and the purposes are either to joke and lighten the mood or to insult and demean the interlocutor. (b) Cultural context, where the use of swearing is influenced by the Arek culture of Generation Z in Surabaya. *Second*, the differences in swearing usage between male and female Generation Z in the Arek culture of Surabaya include: males often use a high intonation and rarely use puns, while females do not always use a high intonation and often use puns to maintain their image. Furthermore, in the context of intimacy within the Arek culture of Surabaya, when Generation Z males and females gather and converse (mixed-gender context), it is frequently observed that males swear at females and vice versa. This behavior indicates that both male and female Generation Z in close-knit communities within the Arek culture of Surabaya exhibit intimacy, openness, egalitarianism, and a lack of distance.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of understanding how culture and social norms influence language use. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of sociolinguistic dynamics in urban Indonesia, particularly in Surabaya. Practically, the findings can assist educators and policymakers in developing more effective and gender-sensitive communication and education strategies. This study has several limitations that should be noted. *First*, the sample was limited to Generation Z in Surabaya, East Java, which may not be generalizable to other regions in Indonesia with

different cultures. *Second*, the data collected through interviews and field observations may be influenced by the informants' subjectivity. *Lastly*, this research did not thoroughly explore the psychological impact of using coarse language on individuals and their social interactions, which could be a significant area for further study. Future research is recommended to expand the sample to include various regions in Indonesia to understand broader cultural differences in the use of swearing. Additionally, future studies could explore the impact of swearing on interpersonal relationships and group dynamics in different social contexts. Further research could also focus on a more in-depth linguistic analysis of variations in coarse language and its use on social media.

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