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Linguistics Innovations And Semantic Shifts In Gen-Z Language In Makassar Society

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Abstract: Studies on Generation Z (Gen-Z) slang have largely focused on word-formation processes, code-switching, and slang use on social media at the national level, whereas little attention has been paid to how English words are semantically adapted within specific local cultures such as Makassar. This study aims to analyze the use of the words "Lending" and "Weh" in the daily life of Makassarese people, especially the younger generation, as well as to understand the context, the origin of the new meaning, and its impact on language creativity. An interview was conducted with one of the residents of Tanrara village, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, who had used both words. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the data were collected through a semi-structured interview with this purposively selected Gen-Z informant and analyzed thematically across eight aspects of word usage. The results show that "Lending" is used as a local term to describe dating activities, while "Weh" is used as an informal greeting between friends. These terms developed through local cultural adaptation and are often used in informal situations. Makassarese culture and social media play a major role in the spread of these terms, reflecting the language creativity of young people who blend English with local cultural elements. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to document the semantic evolution of "Lending" and "Weh" in the Makassar context. This research highlights how language can evolve through social, cultural and technological influences, and demonstrates the flexibility of language in creating new meanings according to people's communication needs. Practically, the findings can inform English language teaching by raising learners' awareness of semantic change, register, and the difference between standard and localized meanings of English words, and they enrich sociolinguistic research on local identity construction. As the findings are derived from a single key informant, they are exploratory and not generalizable; future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples.

Keywords language creativity; makassarese culture; language adaptation

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INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential tool for communication, allowing people to share information and interact effectively. It plays a significant role in human life by enabling easy communication (Rezeki & Sagala, 2019). Language shift refers to the process where a community gradually replaces one language with another due to factors like migration, colonization, globalization, or social and economic pressures (Feltgen, 2024). As new words emerge, they are often introduced through informal language rather than formal usage, as informal language is more relaxed and spontaneous. People commonly use informal language, like slang, when talking with friends and

family. Slang is a type of language unique to specific groups or communities. Its meaning may not always be clear to those outside the group. In addition to being a tool for communication, slang serves as an identity marker for group members. In the past, slang was often associated with uneducated people or criminals, but today it has become trendy and fashionable, evolving alongside modern societal trends.

As a trend-driven language, slang continues to change to meet the needs of its users. Today, much of the new slang is used by teenagers who belong to Generation Z (Gen Z). Gen Z refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2010, an era shaped by digital advancements (Bejtkovský, 2026; Gaidhani, S., et, al. 2019). Slang is typically outside the boundaries of standard language and includes newly created words, phrases, or extended meanings for existing terms (Zhou & Fan, 2013). It is an informal way of speaking that may take the form of single words, phrases, or sentences. Slang reflects the history and culture of the communities or countries that develop it, giving it unique characteristics and purposes (Amir & Azisah, 2017).

Nowadays, slang is widely used on social media, becoming a trend among teenagers, particularly in Indonesia's Gen Z. Slang is often created by specific social groups to communicate internally, making it less accessible to outsiders (Budiasa, 2021). According to Finegan, (2015), slang can convey rebellion or signify a group's effort to distance itself from mainstream norms. While some slang terms quickly fade, others persist and are documented in slang dictionaries. Examples of slang terms include bells and whistles, emoticon, kick-ass, pocket pool, puzzle palace, whatever!, and spam (Finegan, 2015). The meaning and effectiveness of slang often depend on the social context in which it is used, as it is generally not understood by those outside the group (Trimastuti, 2017).

Although millennials and Gen Z share some similarities in their use of slang, the differences in meaning between the generations raise intriguing questions about how slang evolves. Semantic analysis, which examines the meaning of words and phrases in their cultural and social contexts, provides a valuable framework for exploring these generational shifts in slang. Globally, research on Gen-Z language has documented a rapid expansion of new lexical items and meanings driven by digital communication. Grieve et al., (2018) showed that new words on social media emerge and diffuse following identifiable regional patterns, while George, (2024) compiled modern dating terms used by Gen Z and millennials, indicating that romance and relationships are among the most productive domains of slang creation. Similar tendencies have been reported beyond English: Alwusaidy & Alwasidi, (2024) identified new terminologies in the colloquial Arabic used by Gen Z through a semantic and pragmatic analysis, and Jeresano, (2022) linked Gen-Z social media slang to the wider digital culture.

In Indonesia, Kandiawan, (2022) described code-switching and slang used by Gen-Z Indonesians on social media, Djohan et al., (2024) examined compounding as a word-formation process in Gen-Z slang on TikTok, Conny et al., (2024) observed linguistic shifts in Instagram-based computer-mediated communication, and Ana et al., (2024) compared the slang of millennials and Gen Z through a semantic analysis in the context of linguistic learning. Taken together, these studies confirm that Gen-Z slang is a productive site of linguistic innovation. However, they predominantly address word-formation processes, code-switching, or national-level social media usage, and they rarely trace how a specific English word acquires a new meaning within a particular regional speech community. As a result, the role of local culture in reshaping borrowed English vocabulary remains insufficiently explained.

Semantic analysis, which is a linguistic approach that pays attention to the meaning of words and phrase structures in cultural and social contexts, becomes a very useful tool in understanding this phenomenon in depth. Language is a dynamic phenomenon that continuously evolves, shaped by cultural and social contexts. In recent years, Generation Z in Makassar has demonstrated a unique linguistic creativity, particularly in the way they adapt and transform the meanings of certain English words into their local vernacular.

Two notable examples are the words "lending" and "weh". While "lending" traditionally refers to "loaning" in English, in the Makassar Gen-Z context, it has acquired a new meaning, referring to "dating" or going out with someone. Similarly, "weh" is commonly used as an informal term of address or a way to call someone, diverging from its standard English usage as a first-person plural pronoun.This phenomenon highlights the intersection between global linguistic influences and local cultural practices. The adoption and recontextualization of these terms reflect the innovative ways in which Makassar youth navigate their identities and social interactions in a globalized world. Through a semantic analysis of "lending" and "weh", this study aims to explore how these words have undergone semantic shifts and how they are used in everyday communication within the Gen-Z community in Makassar.

Despite this growing body of literature, studies that analyze the semantic shifts of English terms within local Makassarese culture remain scarce. Previous Indonesian studies have mostly treated Gen-Z slang as a national phenomenon, and issues such as the impact of slang on the existence of the Indonesian language Zulkhaeriyah et al., (2023) or the politeness behavior of Gen Z, Pandang et al., (2024) have received more attention than the local semantic reinterpretation of English words. Addressing this gap is urgent for two reasons. First, locally reinterpreted English words circulate rapidly through social media and may be misunderstood by speakers from other regions, as well as by English learners who encounter the same forms with their standard meanings. Second, such lexical innovations are often short-lived and difficult to trace once they fade or change, whereas the study of word meaning evolution increasingly emphasizes capturing semantic change as it unfolds (Periti et al., 2025).

The novelty of this study, therefore, lies in its focus on two English-derived items, "lending" and "weh", whose meanings have been locally reshaped by Gen-Z speakers in Makassar; to the best of the authors' knowledge, their semantic evolution has not been examined in previous research. By foregrounding local cultural adaptation rather than word formation alone, this study offers a sociolinguistic perspective on how global English is reinterpreted at the community level. Therefore, this study aims to explore how these words have undergone semantic shifts and how they are used in everyday communication within the Gen-Z community in Makassar, and to identify the implications of the findings in the context of linguistic learning. Specifically, this study examines (1) the usage contexts and situations of "lending" and "weh", (2) the perceived origin of their new meanings, (3) their informality and contextual appropriateness, and (4) the roles of Makassar culture and social media in their spread.

Theoretically, the study contributes to sociolinguistic and semantic research on how borrowed words acquire local meanings and index group identity (Eckert, 2012), particularly among young speakers, who are widely recognized as leaders of linguistic innovation (Tagliamonte, 2016). Practically, it offers English teachers and learners concrete examples for discussing semantic change, register, and the difference between standard and localized meanings of English words. Through this research, it is hoped that we can gain a better

understanding of the evolution of slang and its role in the communication of younger generations, as well as contribute valuable insights to education and research in linguistics and other related disciplines.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach. According to Bogdan and Tylor, qualitative research is a method that produces descriptive data, such as written or spoken words from people or observed behaviors (Moleong, 2021). The descriptive qualitative method involves interviews to align the perspectives of researchers and informants. An interview is a conversation with a specific purpose, conducted between two parties: the interviewer, who asks the questions, and the interviewee, who provides the answers. A key feature of interviews is the direct face-to-face interaction between the person seeking information and the source of that information. In this research, interviews were used to explore the use of the terms “Lending” and “Weh”. The interviews were conducted with a resident of Tanrara Village in Gowa Regency. The technique employed was a semi-structured interview, meaning that while there were prepared questions, they could be adjusted, deepened, or expanded depending on the situation and conditions in the field.

This research is a descriptive qualitative study with a single key-informant design. It does not test hypotheses; rather, it describes and interprets the meanings that speakers attach to the words "Lending" and "Weh" in their natural social context. The data are primary data in the form of the informant's spoken responses. The research procedure consisted of four stages: (1) preparing the interview guideline based on the aspects presented in Table 1, (2) conducting the interview, (3) transcribing and processing the data, and (4) analyzing and interpreting the data. The research was conducted in Tanrara Village, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, an area within the Makassarese cultural sphere where both words are commonly used by young people.

The informant was selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) belonging to Generation Z, (b) being a resident of Tanrara Village, and (c) having used both "Lending" and "Weh" since school age and still using them actively in face-to-face and online communication. One informant who met all the criteria was interviewed. Because this study is exploratory and focuses on two narrowly defined lexical items, a single information-rich informant was considered adequate to provide an initial in-depth description; in qualitative interview studies, the adequacy of a sample depends on the information power of the data rather than merely on the number of participants. Nevertheless, the use of one informant limits the representativeness of the findings, and this limitation is addressed in the Discussion.

The main instrument was the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guideline. The guideline was developed from eight aspects, namely usage and context, origin of new meanings, usage situation, informality and contextual appropriateness, Makassar cultural influence, language creativity, differences in meaning outside Makassar, and popularity on social media, each of which was operationalized into indicators, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Lattice of Interview Guideline Instrument

	Aspects	Indicators
1.	The Usage and Context	Frequency of use of the words "Weh" and "Lending" by respondent and their friends. Situations or activities where the words are used.
2.	The Origin of New Meanings	Respondent perception of the origin of the use of the word "Lending" with the meaning of "dating." Respondent explanation of why the new meaning of these words emerged.
3.	The Usage Situation	The social relationships in which these words are used more frequently (close friends, family, or others).
4.	Informality and Contextual Appropriateness	Respondent perception of the formality and politeness of using these words in conversation. The appropriateness of these words in various contexts (formal or informal).
5.	Makassar Cultural Influence	The relationship of Makassar culture to the spread and use of these words. The influence of the habit of mixing English and local language to create a modern impression.
6.	Language Creativity	Consider these words as a form of language innovation.
7.	Differences in Meaning in Contexts Outside Makassar	Potential changes in meaning if these words are used outside Makassar. Respondent perception of the evolution of the meaning of the words since they first heard them.
8.	Popularity on Social Media	The response of friends, family or the surrounding community to the use of these words.

Source: Data Processed

The data were collected through a face-to-face, semi-structured interview conducted in Indonesian, the language habitually used by the informant. The prepared questions were asked sequentially, and follow-up probes were added when the informant's answers required clarification. The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim, including hesitation markers (e.g., "ee"), so that the original expressions of the informant were preserved, as shown in Tables 2–9.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through the following steps: (1) familiarization with the data by repeatedly reading the transcript; (2) coding the informant's statements deductively according to the eight aspects in Table 1, while remaining open to inductive codes emerging from the data (e.g., "sounds cool and unique" and "simpler as an informal call"); (3) grouping the codes into themes concerning the usage, meaning change, and social functions of the two words; (4) reviewing the themes against the transcript; and (5)

interpreting the themes semantically by comparing the standard English meaning of each word with its local meaning and relating the interpretation to previous studies.

The results are displayed as summaries of questions and answers (Tables 2–9), followed by descriptive interpretation. To enhance transparency, verbatim excerpts of the informant's answers are reported alongside the researcher's interpretation (Tables 2–9), allowing readers to audit the analysis. Formal member checking and data triangulation were not conducted in this study; therefore, future studies are recommended to apply member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation with authentic social media texts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Language is a dynamic phenomenon that continues to evolve according to the communication needs of society. In local contexts, the use of foreign words with new meanings is often part of language adaptation that reflects social and cultural changes. This research focuses on two words, "Lending" and "Weh", which have shifted in meaning among the people of Tanrara Village, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The word "Lending," which in English means "to lend," is now used by the younger generation to describe "ngedate" or dating activities. Meanwhile, the word "Weh" is used as a greeting between friends in daily interactions.

An interview with one of the Gen-Z residents of Tanrara Village revealed that this phenomenon has become a common habit, especially among young people. The words are used in various informal situations, such as joking, hanging out, or sending messages through social media. This research also looks at how local culture, Generation Z trends, and the shifting meanings of these words reflect the language creativity of local people who are able to create new terms that are relevant to their lives. This analysis is expected to provide insight into the relationship between language, culture and local identity in the modern era.

The Usage and Context

The words "Weh" and "Lending" are quite common among the people of Tanrara Village, especially among young people. The word "Weh" is often used in various situations, both when having a conversation in person and when communicating through social media or messaging applications such as WhatsApp when chatting. It is a familiar greeting and indicates an informal relationship between friends.

Meanwhile, the word "Lending" is used to describe a couple on a date or "dating". The use of this word has been known since school days until now, showing that this meaning has long been adopted and become part of everyday vocabulary. When seeing a couple somewhere, lending is used to describe the situation. This word is used in informal contexts, especially among peers. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on Word Usage and Contexts

Questions	Interview Result Description
Baik kak langsung saja ke pertanyaan yang pertama, Apakah Anda sering mendengar teman atau orang lain menggunakan kata "Weh" dan "Lending"?	*"Ee iya, karena kata Weh sering saya ee gunakan dan teman-teman saya bahkan saat ee saat chatingan kita lebih sering menggunakan kata itu. Kalo lending sering kami dengar ee sejak kita masi dibangku sekolah bahkan sampai sekarang jika melihat e orang berduaan sepasang kekasih kami pasti menyebutnya "ih ada orang lending di sana."*

Source: Data Processed

The Usage Situation

The interviewee results show that the words "Lending" and "Weh" have different usage contexts, but both are generally used in informal situations. The word "Lending" often appears when one sees a couple on a date or spending time together in a public place. It is used to casually describe romantic situations among peers. On the other hand, "Weh" is more commonly used in everyday interactions, especially in casual settings such as joking, small talk, or sharing interesting news. It also appears frequently in digital communication, such as when chatting in groups or on social media. The interviewee revealed that she often uses both words, especially with close friends, both when hanging out and when communicating through short messages. This use reflects the function of the word as an informal communication tool that reinforces closeness and a sense of community in social groups. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers about the Situation of Using the Word

No	Questions	Interview Result Description
1.	Selanjutnya, Apakah Anda sering menggunakan kata-kata ini? Jika ya, kepada siapa dan dalam situasi apa?	*"Ee Ya, saya sering menggunakannya. Biasanya kepada teman-teman dekat, terutama dalam suasana santai seperti lagi nongkrong ataupun chat di grup."*
2.	Pertanyaan yang selanjutnya Dalam situasi apa Anda biasanya mendengar atau menggunakan kata tersebut?	*"Biasanya, kata Lending itu digunakan saat melihat orang-orang yang sedang pacaran di sebuah tempat. Sementara Weh itu lebih sering kami pakai saat bersama teman-teman ee misalnya saat bercanda mengobrol santai maupun e ada berita exited yang sering kami gunakan bahkan saat chatingan kami juga sering menggunakan kata tersebut."*

Source: Data Processed

The Origin of New Meanings

The use of the words "Lending" with the meaning of "dating" and "Weh" as a familiar greeting has no definite origin among local users. Interviewee explained that the use of both words emerged naturally in daily social interactions, especially among peers. This suggests that the adoption of the words is based more on shared habits rather than a conscious decision to change the original meaning.

"Lending" may have been accepted as a term for "dating" because of its unique and distinct impression, while "Weh" was used because of its simplicity and suitability for informal greetings. The main factor influencing this change in meaning is the appeal of these words, which are perceived as cooler and more modern, thus becoming part of the social identity of the younger generation in the area. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on the Origin of New Meanings

Questions	Interview Result Description
Pertanyaan yang selanjutnya, Menurut Anda, bagaimana kata "Lending" mulai digunakan dengan makna "ngedate" dan "Weh" digunakan untuk menyapa?	*"Saya juga tidak tahu bagaimana pastinya mengapa seperti itu saya hanya ikutan ee dengan teman-teman saya karena hal itu kata itu sudah menjadi e hal biasa di tempat kami mungkin karena terdengar terdengar keren dan unik. Jadi Kata Weh mungkin digunakan karena lebih simpel sebagai panggilan informal."*

Source: Data Processed

Informality and Contextual Appropriateness

The use of the words "Lending" and "Weh" is highly dependent on the context of the situation. Interviewee emphasized that these two words are more suitable to be used in informal communication, such as interactions with peers in a relaxed atmosphere. This is because the context of meaning and tone conveyed by these words are light and informal, thus suiting more intimate daily conversations. In contrast, in formal situations, these words are considered inappropriate or impolite. This is because their use tends not to conform to the expected norms of communication in formal contexts, such as in the world of work, education, or official interactions. Therefore, the application of "Lending" and "Weh" is generally limited to informal settings that reflect the language habits of the younger generation. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on Informality and Contextual Appropriateness of Words.

Questions	Interview Result Description
Selanjutnya, Apakah menurut Anda kata-kata ini cocok digunakan dalam situasi formal, atau lebih untuk komunikasi informal saja? Mengapa**?**	*"Kata-kata ini lebih cocok untuk komunikasi informal karena konteksnya itu lebih santai lebih cocok digunakan dengan teman sebaya. Dalam situasi formal, kata-kata ini dianggap tidak sopan."*

Source: Data Processed

Makassar Cultural Influence

The local culture of Makassar has a significant influence on the spread of the words "Lending" and "Weh". Interviewee explains that the social habits of Makassarese youth, including the tendency to mix English with everyday language, play an important role in the adoption and use of these words. This trend is often associated with an attempt to look more modern, slang, and keep up with the times. Examples given, such as the phrase "Weh Otw", illustrate how the word "Weh" is inserted in conversations to give a familiar and contemporary feel. This reflects the influence of popular culture on the communication patterns of the younger generation in

Makassar, where the adaptation of foreign words becomes part of their social identity. This integration also shows how local culture can blend with global elements to create a unique and distinctive language dynamic. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on the Influence of Makassar Culture on these words.

Questions	Interview Result Description
Baik selanjutnya, Apakah Anda merasa budaya Makassar, seperti kebiasaan sosial atau penggunaan bahasa sehari-hari, memengaruhi penyebaran kata-kata ini? Jika ya, bagaimana?	*"Iya, budaya Makassar sangat memengaruhi, terutama dalam cara anak muda berkomunikasi yang sering mencampur bahasa Inggris dan bahasa sehari-hari untuk terlihat lebih gaul dan modern. Seperti e contohnya itu Weh Otw."*

Source: Data Processed

Language Creativity

The use of the words "Lending" and "Weh" by Makassar youth reflects a high level of language creativity. The interviewee emphasized that this innovation is a way for the younger generation to create new terms from existing words, giving them unique local meanings. This phenomenon shows how language not only functions as a means of communication but also as a means of social identity expression. Through meaning modification, young people demonstrate the ability to adapt to their culture while remaining relevant to global influences. This creativity also confirms the flexibility of language as a dynamic entity that is constantly evolving, reflecting the values, trends and worldviews of the generations that use it. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on Language Creativity

Questions	Interview Result Description
Selanjutnya, Menurut Anda, apakah penggunaan kata "Lending" dan "Weh" menunjukkan kreativitas bahasa? Mengapa?	*Iya. Kata-kata ini ee menunjukkan bagaimana anak muda bisa berinovasi dalam dengan bahasa, menciptakan istilah baru dari kata yang sudah ada dan mencerminkan identitas mereka.*

Source: Data Processed

Differences in Meaning in Contexts Outside Makassar

Interviewee explained that if words like "Lending" and "Weh" are used outside of Makassar, there is a high chance that the meaning and context of use will change. This is due to differences in culture, social customs, and the way each region expresses language. In Makassar, the local meanings of these words have developed into part of the young generation's communication identity. However, when these words are moved to a different context, people outside Makassar may feel confused or interpret the meaning literally according to standard English. In addition, meaning adaptation can also occur, but the new context that emerges outside Makassar is likely to be different from the original meaning formed from local social interactions. Changes in Meaning from Initial Use

The meaning of the words "Lending" and "Weh" has changed since she first heard them. Initially, the word "Lending" was understood as an English term meaning "to lend", but now it is often used to describe "dating" activities. Similarly, "Weh", which in English is a pronoun, has evolved into a familiar term used to call friends in Makassar. These changes show the dynamics of language as a response to local culture and the communication needs of the younger generation. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on Differences in Meaning in Contexts Outside Makassar

No	Questions	Interview Result Description
1.	Selanjutnya, apakah e Apa pendapat Anda jika kata-kata ini mulai digunakan oleh orang di luar Makassar? Apakah itu akan mengubah makna atau konteksnya?	*"Mungkin saja maknanya akan berubah karena setiap daerah punya itu cara sendiri e dalam mengekspresikan e kata-kata mereka. Penggunaan di luar Makassar mungkin akan membuat mereka bingung ya , sepertinya."*
2.	Menurut Anda, ee apakah makna kata-kata ini telah berubah sejak pertama kali Anda mendengarnya? Jika ya, bagaimana perubahan tersebut terjadi?	*"Awalnya saya pikir Lending itu kata bahasa inggris yang artinya meminjamkan tapi saya tidak tahu kenapa bisa jadi ngedate. Sedangkan e we kata Weh itu kata ganti dalam bahasa Inggris, sekarang lebih sering digunakan sebagai panggilan akrab."*

Source: Data Processed

Popularity on Social Media

The terms "Lending" and "Weh" have gained ground on social media, especially on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The word "Weh" often appears in captions, comments, and group chats. This usage reflects how social media has become the main medium for the spread and adoption of new terms. The popularity of the term on social media has also accelerated its spread to a wider audience, especially among Generation Z. Questions and summary of answers interview results can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Questions and Summary of Interview Answers on Popularity on Social Media.

Questions	Interview Result Description
Apakah Anda pernah menemukan kata-kata ini populer di media sosial? Jika ya, sebutkan contohnya.	*"Ya, sering sekali. Seperti, di TikTok ataupun Instagram, ee termasuk juga WhatsApp yang banyak menggunakan kata "Weh" dalam caption, chatingan e juga sering muncul dan di komen banyak si"*

Source: Data Processed

Discussions

The use of the terms "Lending" and "Weh" shows the unique adaptation of English into the daily communication of young people in Makassar. Based on the interview results, the term "Lending" is used to describe a couple on a date, while "Weh" is used as a friendly greeting between friends. Both terms reflect how English is integrated into the local context to create a modern and casual impression. In its usage situation, "Lending" is often said when one sees a

couple in a public place, while "Weh" is more common in casual settings, whether hanging out with friends or in group chats on messaging apps.

The use of these terms is limited to informal communication and is considered less suitable in formal contexts, as it is too casual and does not fit the norms of formal conversation. The creation of new words also serves a social function, as it helps Gen-Z to establish their presence and identity within their digital communities. This process of linguistic innovation highlights the dynamic nature of language and its ability to adapt to new cultural and technological contexts (Ningsih & Rosa, 2013).

The origins of the new meanings of "Lending" and "Weh" are not entirely clear. However, this change seems to have been influenced by young people's need to create terms that sound cool and unique. The word "Weh" is an informal greeting, while "Lending" was given a local meaning unrelated to its original meaning. Historically, English has adhered to specific patterns in word development, notably the use of Latin or Greek origins for scientific or technical terminology (Bauer, 1983). Makassar's local culture plays an important role in the spread of these terms. Young people often mix English with local or Indonesian language to look more modern and slangy. Phrases like "Weh Otw" exemplify how local culture blends foreign language elements to create a new style of communication.

According to McCulloch (2019), these semantic modifications are frequently associated with particular digital environments and social interactions, mirroring the wider cultural and social experiences of the generation. The practice of redefining established terms facilitates a more adaptable and innovative application of language, swiftly responding to the evolving dynamics of online existence. Moreover, the use of these terms showcases the linguistic creativity of the younger generation. It highlights their ability to innovate and create new meanings that align with their social needs. This illustrates the adaptability of language and its role in reinforcing social identity.

The rise of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram has significantly contributed to a new wave of linguistic innovation, particularly in slang. According to John McWhorter (as cited in Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023), slang is a form of linguistic creativity that mirrors social dynamics and cultural evolution. Social media has played a crucial role in the spread of these terms. It serves as a "second home" or virtual world, offering entertainment and a break from the stresses of real life (Baía Reis & Ashmore, 2022; Kurniasanti et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2019). The term *"Weh"* frequently appears in captions, comments, and group chats, which has accelerated its popularity among young people. However, when used outside of Makassar, the term may face changes in meaning or cause confusion, as each region has its own unique cultural context.

From a semantic perspective, the two words illustrate different mechanisms of meaning change. In the case of "Lending", the English form is retained, but its meaning is reassigned from "lending something" to "dating"; the borrowed form is detached from its source meaning and filled with a new local meaning, as indicated by the informant's statement that she did not know why the word came to mean "ngedate" (Table 8). The word "Weh", as perceived by the informant, has shifted from a pronoun to a vocative greeting and attention-getter, reflecting a shift from a referential to an interpersonal function. In both cases, the shift is motivated less by communicative necessity than by social attractiveness, since the informant associated the words with sounding "cool", "unique", and "simple" (Table 4).

This finding is consistent with George, (2024), who showed that dating is a highly productive domain for new Gen-Z terms, and with Alwusaidy & Alwasidi, (2024), who found that the meanings of new Gen-Z terminologies depend on shared social and pragmatic contexts. It also corresponds to Conny et al., (2024); Kandiawan, (2022), who reported that Indonesian Gen Z blend English into their communication on social media; the present study adds that such blending may involve not only switching codes but also reassigning the meaning of the English word itself. These findings have implications for sociolinguistic theory. They support the view that linguistic forms acquire social meanings that index group membership and stance (Eckert, 2012) and that young speakers are at the forefront of lexical innovation (Tagliamonte, 2016).

The perception that the local meanings of "Lending" and "Weh" are appropriate only in informal peer interaction (Table 5) also echoes Pandang et al., (2024), who emphasized that the language politeness behavior of Gen Z is shaped by social factors and situations. For English language education, the findings point to a potential source of semantic interference: learners who are familiar with "lending" as "dating" may misinterpret or misuse the word in standard English contexts. Teachers can therefore turn such locally reinterpreted words into learning materials for discussing semantic change, polysemy, register, and the contrast between standard and localized meanings, in line with Ana et al., (2024), who highlighted the relevance of slang analysis for linguistic learning.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the data were obtained from a single informant in one village; therefore, the findings represent an in-depth exploratory description rather than a generalizable account of Gen-Z language use in Makassar. Second, the popularity of the terms on social media was based on the informant's perceptions and was not verified through an analysis of actual social media posts. Third, the origin of the new meanings could not be traced historically because the informant reported no definite origin. Hence, the findings should be interpreted with caution and confirmed by studies involving more informants, social media corpus data, and comparisons across regions. Overall, the adaptation of the terms "Lending" and "Weh" shows how global and local influences can come together to form new communication patterns. This reflects the ever-evolving dynamics of language, especially among the younger generation who are creative in utilizing language for their social and cultural needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of "Lending" and "Weh" reflects linguistic creativity and semantic shifts among Gen-Z in Makassar. The word "Lending," originally meaning "to lend," is used to describe dating activities, while "Weh" serves as an informal greeting between friends. These terms demonstrate how young people adapt English into local communication to express social and cultural identities. Makassar culture and social media influence their use and spread, particularly in casual interactions among peers. However, their meanings may differ outside the Makassarese cultural context. These findings highlight the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and social identity, offering insights into semantic change and linguistic learning. Since the research involved only one informant, the findings remain exploratory. Further research involving more informants and diverse contexts is needed to examine these linguistic developments more comprehensively.

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