



Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo: Linguistic Innovation and Social Identity Among Filipino Youth

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Giezhel A. Mijares¹, LPT, MA, ORCID No. [0009-0008-3762-7671](https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3762-7671)
Christian Francis C. Prado², LPT, PhD, ORCID No. [0009-0007-0129-8899](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0129-8899)
Lowell S. Manseneros³, ORCID No. [0009-0006-9542-4587](https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9542-4587)

¹Faculty Member, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Visayas, Colon Street, Cebu City, Philippines

²Faculty Member, Graduate School of Education, St. Paul University Manila, 680 Pedro Gil Street, Malate, Manila, Philippines

³Teacher I, Don Gerardo Llamera Ouano Memorial National High School, Opao Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

Abstract

Filipino youth use Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo to communicate, interact with one another and to develop identities in both physical and digital contexts. While prior research has focused on each of these language varieties separately or on language attitudes or structures, very few studies have explored how they work together to create and negotiate the social identity of youth. This research utilized a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo reflect and affect the experiences of Filipino youth as well as the meanings that are attached to these languages. The study was participated by fifteen (15) college students from Cebu City who actively use Taglish, Jejemon and Gay Lingo in their daily communication. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with and digital discourse and analyzed through thematic analysis. Based on Eckert's Community of Practice theory and Silverstein's Theory of Indexicality, the findings suggest that Taglish functions as a marker of bilingualism, education level or education background, and cosmopolitanism; Jejemon provides means by which peer solidarity, creativity, and resistance to linguistic elitism are expressed; and Gay Lingo provides a place for humor and expression of performative identity through different youth communities, including LGBTQ+. Collectively, these linguistic innovations provide Filipino youth with various interrelated resources that help them develop identity, build relationships with each other, and express themselves through current new technology concepts. This research adds to the body of work in sociolinguistics by showing that young people's use of language is not only a way of communicating but is also an evolving form of building their identities. In addition, this research will help language education, digital communication, and language policy by highlighting youth's creativity in using language as a valid and important way of performing their identities.

Keywords: youth language, Taglish, Jejemon, Gay lingo, social identity, digital communication



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INTRODUCTION

Language is much more than a tool for communication; in fact, it is a powerful social resource that allows individuals to collectively construct and negotiate their identities through language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2021; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2023). Language is an even more dynamic and vital platform for young people, where invention, creativity, and defiance of formal language rules are present in abundance (Androutsopoulos, 2020). Taking into account the Philippine context, the explosion of

Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Language reflects the active process of young people navigating and recreating language to express their sense of identification and social positioning within their social group (Tupas, 2015).

Taglish, the fusion of Tagalog and English in a fluid manner, is now one of the prominent patterns of communication used by the youths and is currently on its way to dominating interlanguage communication especially in cyber spaces. Taglish is not a deficiency of language; instead, it has emerged as a badge of

language competence, modernity, and globalization (Clemente, 2024; Low & Ao, 2018). On the other hand, Jejemon refers to a unique writing style characterized by unconventional spelling, the use of symbols, and exaggerated phonetic representations. It initially gained popularity through text messaging and later became widespread on various social networking platforms. The most contemporary research offers Jejemon as a linguistic tactic with a focus on peer solidarity and resistance to dominant language ideologies (Dumanig et al., 2020; Sawe, 2025). In contrast, Gay Lingo has its roots in the LGBTQ+ scene and has developed into an ever evolving and highly successful language register beyond its original purpose and is currently a linguistic variant of humor, solidarity, and cultural savvy amongst the young (Gregorio et al., 2023; Manalansan, 2018). Collectively, these language variants represent the means by which the Filipino youth reimagine language creatively in order to produce multiple and overlap identities.

These language varieties created by the youth are also embedded in the history, social life, and technological advancements of the Philippines. With more widespread bilingualism, extensive use of digital media, and familiarity with international cultures, the language variety of the youth has improved due to the diversity of linguistic resources at their disposal (Tupas, 2015). Unlike the standardized language used by the elders, the youth use and combine languages the way they want to identify with other people and convey social standing to display independence, as well as selfness.

Rather than perceiving Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as designated language varieties of the youth, these language varieties are symbolic media to convey the youth's expression of power and social construction of meaning (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2023). A more conceptual understanding of linguistics believes that language variety mirrors the social processes of power relations, class struggle, and social change (Bucholtz & Hall, 2021). Taglish indicates education-level and global positioning, Jejemon signifies fun and

rebellion against the standard language of the rich, and Gay Lingo indicates inclusivity and gender positioning of the Gay Community of the youth.

The most current study offers an explanation of Jejemon as a deliberately linguistic gesture that points to patterns of peer-based solidarity and resistance to major language ideologies. On the other hand, Gay Lingo was a product of the LGBTQ+ community and evolved into a robust and prominent register that greatly extended its original deployment and currently is a major linguistic indicator of "humor, solidarity, and cultural awareness" for youthful Filipinos. Taken collectively, each of these forms of language illustrates that Filipinos have managed to repurpose various language options in creative efforts to produce multiple identities for young Filipinos. The significance of such language creativity is compounded by the advent of digital culture. Social media platforms, messaging applications, online communities, and other digital spaces have become important environments where young people use language creatively. In these spaces, they develop new words and expressions while strengthening their sense of belonging and shared identity with their peers (Androutsopoulos, 2020). Through memes, captions, and commentaries, and viral trends, youths are reinventing Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo.

These language forms are not fixed but are rather emerging markers of youth identity in an ever-changing social and digital landscape (Sawe, 2025). Although Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo have become widespread in the language practices of Filipino youth, these linguistic innovations are still frequently misunderstood or criticized as signs of linguistic decline or misuse. Existing studies have largely examined these language forms from the perspectives of code-switching, language attitudes, or structural characteristics, with relatively limited attention given to how they collectively function as markers of social identity and belonging, particularly within contemporary digital

environments (Tupas, 2015). Consequently, there remains a limited understanding of how Filipino youth strategically use Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo to construct, negotiate, and express their identities across both online and offline communities.

To address this gap, the present study examines Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as interconnected forms of youth linguistic innovation through the lenses of Eckert's Community of Practice and Silverstein's Theory of Indexicality. Specifically, the study investigates how these language practices function as resources for identity construction, social positioning, and community belonging among Filipino youth in contemporary digital contexts. By doing so, the study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by providing a more integrated understanding of youth language as a dynamic social practice rather than merely a linguistic phenomenon. Furthermore, the findings offer valuable insights for educators, language researchers, and policymakers by promoting greater appreciation of youth linguistic creativity and encouraging more inclusive perspectives toward non-standard language practices in education, digital communication, and cultural discourse.

Objectives of the Study. This study examines youth linguistic innovation in the Philippines through the analysis of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as social identity markers. In particular, it aims to:

1. Determine the specific linguistic aspects of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in youth online discourse.
2. Find ways in which these linguistic practices index social identity, group membership, and social stance among Filipino youth.
3. Explore how digital platforms are helping to create, maintain, and change youth linguistic innovation.

By giving attention to youth language as potential, legitimate innovation of language, this

study adds to the body of sociolinguistic research. This study helps researchers and policymakers to understand how young people use language in naturalistic aspects, and as such can support more inclusive language teaching practices.

Furthermore, the study provides insights on how language contributes to youth culture, identity, and gender expression in digital communication, and enhances the debate surrounding identity formation in a multilingual society. This study specifically targets selected online texts produced by Filipino youth that are made up of instances of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo. It engages in the articulation of these linguistic forms in the context of the construction of social identity in digital settings. The study was not intended to judge the correctness or proficiency level of the language used, nor was it aimed to be representative of all Filipino youth or all varieties of youth language use. Findings are constrained to the chosen data and contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Taglish as a Marker of Bilingualism and Cosmopolitan Identity. According to previous research in sociolinguistics, youth language is among the trends that generate linguistic transformation and social transformation in society. For Filipino youth, the Taglish language has come to be the main vehicle used for daily communication. Research conducted on code-switching supports the notion that bilingual individuals use both the Filipino and English languages through conscious code-switching to achieve specific communicative goals, express social and cultural meaning and strengthen connections to one another within individual social contexts (Low & Ao, 2018). Thus, Taglish has transitioned from being perceived as a deficiency in language to being viewed as a strong indicator of bilingual proficiency and an indicator of urban identity, educational attainment and global perspective (Tupas, 2015; Clemente, 2024).

Expanded access to digital technology has further enabled the widespread use of Taglish within online settings. When communicating via social media, sending text messages, etc. Filipino youth intuitively switch between the Filipino and English languages when communicating using various forms of modern digital communication tools. However, prior to this study, the majority of research on Taglish had been conducted regarding bilingualism and code-switching, with limited attention given to the role Taglish plays in forming Filipino youth's social identity.

Jejemon as Digital Resistance and Peer Solidarity. An unusual and new type of writing called Jejemon uses creative symbols, unusual spellings, and lots of exaggerated phonetics (how words sound compared to how they're spelled). It was first used via text messaging and then through social networking sites, so today it is a huge youth "language style" that's easily recognized in many online communities. Even though Jejemon has received many negative critiques regarding its differences from common forms of writing, some recent studies show how it can be viewed as something other than just an unconventional written style; rather, they believe Jejemon acts as a way for youth to resist linguistic elitism and create peer solidarity or negotiate their identities, in digital spaces (Dumanig et al. 2020; Sawe 2025).

There are many studies that look at Jejemon and enhance our understanding of Jejemon (as it pertains to the negative stereotyping of Jejemon) and regular and non-regular forms of writing (non-expressive forms of writing). These studies usually focus on how people in general feel or think about Jejemon rather than looking at how Jejemon functions with all the other forms of "youth language" in digital communities today. Therefore, there is not much information on the different ways that Jejemon works with other forms of youth language in digital communities today.

Gay Lingo as Inclusivity and Performative Identity. Gay Lingo is another important

linguistic resource that Filipino youths can draw upon. Originally from LGBTQ+ communities, Gay Lingo has become part of the youth discourse in mainstream society and a regular discourse for speakers not only of LGBTQ+ but also of various genders and sexual orientations. Gay Lingo has been identified in scholarly literature as a dynamic linguistic form that encourages humour, fosters creativity, nurtures solidarity and inclusion, and challenges traditional gender and social relationship norms (Gregorio et al., 2023; Manalansan, 2018).

The increased use of Gay Lingo by non-LGBTQ+ communities demonstrates that linguistic expression can change as it is shared amongst various social groups. However, researchers have expressed concern that the large-scale use of Gay Lingo raises issues related to culture ownership of Gay Lingo, authenticity of Gay Lingo, and appropriateness of Gay Lingo. Most previous research has studied Gay Lingo's development history and communicative functions, but there are very few studies that examine the role of Gay Lingo in constructing youth identities along with other newly emerging linguistic practises.

Youth Language and Social Identity Construction in Digital Contexts. The use of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo by youth illustrates how they use language strategically to create a sense of belonging, negotiate their relationships, and construct their social identities. All three of these linguistic practices coexist in the context of many different types of interactions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2021; Androutsopoulos, 2020). The above observations are consistent with Eckert's Community of Practice framework that posits language is developed through sustained participatory engagement in social groups. Through the regular interactions of youth within online communities, they collectively shape and uphold linguistic norms distinguishing the groups' identities. Furthermore, Silverstein's Theory of Indexicality suggests that linguistic choices have meanings associated with social identity beyond their literal definitions. Thus, the use of Taglish, Jejemon and Gay Lingo indexes

identities associated with bilingualism, solidarity amongst peers, humor, inclusiveness, modernity and youth culture.

The majority of studies conducted have focused independently on Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo or on attitudes towards language use or structure. However, there has been relatively little research conducted examining how these three forms of language interact with each other as interconnected identity practices within the same youth communities, more specifically as enhanced in digital spaces. The current study will fill this gap through examining Taglish, Jejemon and Gay Lingo as three linguistic innovations using a Community of Practice and Indexicality frameworks to illustrate their collective contributions to the social identity construction and negotiations of Filipino youth in contemporary digital contexts.

Conceptual Definitions. To connect with one another and communicate who they are socially, young people use hybrid (aka unusual) techniques (like unusual, playful ways to talk, use of slang and/or non-standard English/writing) to accomplish many of the above through language. Through the use of Taglish (Tagalog+English), it demonstrates a person's language proficiency in both (Filipino, English) respectively, along with their level of education, and signifies someone is of a world community. The use of Jejemon provides users with very creative, non-standard spelling; personalized representations of the same sounds through the use of letters and/or numbers; peer loyalty amongst each other; and a disregard for formal/standardized written grammatical laws or structures. For instance, Gay Lingo exemplifies an ever-changing language form that has developed primarily through usage among LGBTQ+ communities to provide non-judgmental humour; belonging; creative solving; and sense of community.

This study takes an approach to understand young people's use of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as a result of continual interaction within shared social contexts with other young people where young people have developed and shape their own collective linguistic norms.

Additionally, within the framework of Silverstein's Theory of Indexicality, each of these linguistic choices is also understood to be a social index which communicates some aspect of the identity, values, and social group affiliation represented by the speaker. In this way, Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo are conceptualized as interrelated forms of linguistic resource that Filipino youth deliberately use to build, assert, and display their identities both online and offline.

Theoretical Framework. The current research relies on Eckert's framework of Community of Practice and the Indexicality framework by Silverstein since both offer an ideal foundation for the study of linguistic creativity among youth from the perspective of social identity construction. Those frameworks combined offer the potential for the study of language to move from an inspection of structural systems to social practice as an instrument for meaning and identity reconstruction.

Eckert's Community of Practice. Eckert's framework for identity (Eckert, 1998, 2000, 2023) is a critical framework for assessing identity as something that is neither fixed nor predefined but that is actively constructed as a result of engaging in social groups who experience and participate in shared activities, values, and practices. Unlike more superficial demographic categories like age, gender, or social class, a community of practice is one that is more interested in the social practices of everyday interaction, where linguistic forms acquire meaning through repeated social use.

Hence language choices cannot be divorced from social engagement and group membership. Among Filipino youth, both offline and online, peer groups act as communities of practice in which linguistic innovations such as Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo are rich resources. Youth strategically use language within these communities to signal belonging, alignment, or distinction from others (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2023). Recent research on youth discourse underlines the fact that such linguistic practices do not occur accidentally.

Rather, they arise out of societal motivations to share norms with peers in digital contexts and to express shared values in general (Androutsopoulos, 2020; Bucholtz & Hall, 2021). Through this lens, language itself emerges as action, through which youth enact identity, build solidarity, and work to negotiate social power relations within their communities.

Silverstein's Theory of Indexicality.

Furthermore, in line with the Community of Practice framework is Silverstein's theory of Indexicality in which linguistic forms point to (or "index") wider social meanings that go beyond their literal or referential content (Silverstein, 2003). Indexicality emphasizes how varieties of language become tied to specific identities, ideologies, and social locations through repeated social use. Taglish may index modernity, bilingual competence, and urban or educated identity; Jejemon may index playfulness, resistance to linguistic elitism or marginalization; Gay Lingo may index expressiveness, inclusivity, and performative gender identity. Because these meanings do not exist within the linguistic forms but emerge in social interaction and through shared interpretation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2021).

In general, indexical meanings are contextually bound, changing from audiences and platform to platform and goal to goal. We have this in mind, considering that linguistic forms do not merely mirror identity but construct and negotiate identity in a young, digitalised world. Collectively Community of Practice and Indexicality, enable this study to consider youth linguistic innovation not as random, deficient, or informal language use, but as socially relevant, identity-oriented, and contextually sensitive activities inherent in youth communities. These theories are particularly appropriate to consider when exploring online discourse such as the discourse generation of young people who constantly attempt linguistics and perform identity (Androutsopoulos, 2020).

METHODS

Research Design. This study employed a phenomenological design to explore how Filipino youth experience and interpret Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in shaping social identities. A phenomenological approach was appropriate because the research sought to understand lived experiences, meanings, and interpretations attached to these language varieties in everyday interactions. Rather than treating them as mere linguistic forms, the study examined how participants use them for self-expression, relationships, cultural negotiation, and belonging.

The perspective enabled focus on participants' descriptions while identifying essential structures underlying the phenomenon. Attention was given to contexts where language varieties were chosen, shifted, or modified, including family, peers, classmates, and online communities. This approach also examined how language practices contribute to identity construction across social and digital spaces.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and selected digital discourse samples, such as social media posts and voluntarily provided online communications. Interviews captured conscious reflections, while digital discourse offered contextualized examples of natural language use. To maintain rigor, researchers applied phenomenological reduction through bracketing and reflexive journaling, documenting prior assumptions. Significant statements were organized into thematic categories, interpreted in relation to language choice, identity, self-expression, belongingness, and digital communication.

Participants of the Study. The study involved fifteen Filipino youth aged 15 to 24 who regularly used Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in everyday communication across school, home, peer groups, and social media. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure direct and meaningful experience with the phenomenon, consistent with phenomenological inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Inclusion criteria required that they be within the age range, self-identify as regular

users of the language varieties, have experience in at least one face-to-face or digital context, be willing to participate in individual interviews, and provide informed consent; for minors, parental consent and participant assent were secured. The sample size was deemed adequate as it provided sufficient experiential variation and depth to address the research questions. In qualitative research, adequacy depends not on numbers alone but on the richness of information, specificity of the sample, quality of interviews, and depth of analysis (Malterud et al., 2016). The inclusion of participants with diverse experiences across family, school, peer, and digital environments further strengthened the dataset's capacity to capture the phenomenon comprehensively.

Research Locale. The study was conducted in Cebu City, where college students frequently use Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in daily conversations. Cebu City was chosen as it represents a multilingual and digital environment suitable for exploring youth linguistic practices. Contemporary literature emphasizes that language use among youth is shaped not only by face-to-face interactions but increasingly by digital media, where identity construction, interpersonal relations, and social belonging are continuously negotiated (Monteza et al., 2025; Jones et al., 2024). Digital spaces also foster new practices such as language switching, creative spelling, internet slang, and hybrid forms (Rafael, 1995; Jones et al., 2024). Recognizing the significance of digital communication in youth culture, the study considered both social and virtual contexts, including platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Messenger, and group chats. These online environments function not merely as communication tools but as sociolinguistic spaces where identity, relationships, and cultural membership are enacted through language (Jones et al., 2024; Monteza et al., 2025). Thus, the research site encompassed both physical and digital domains, allowing Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo to be examined in their natural and lived contexts.

Research Instrument. A semi-structured interview guide was used to facilitate the individual interviews. The interview guide was developed based on the research questions, relevant literature on language variation, youth identity, code-switching, digital communication, social belonging, and linguistic identity, as well as the conceptual orientation of the study. The questions were intentionally open-ended and non-leading to minimize the imposition of predetermined interpretations on the participants' experiences. Before the actual data collection, the interview guide was subjected to expert review to assess the relevance, clarity, appropriateness, and alignment of the questions with the research objectives.

Thematic Analysis of Linguistic Identity Expressions. The qualitative data were examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis, a flexible method for identifying patterns of meaning. The process began with familiarization, where transcripts were read closely and reflections noted to build understanding. Next, data were coded around identity expressions, communication practices, language selection, and meanings. Codes were then clustered into broader themes such as linguistic hybridity, identity formation, belongingness, and digital self-expression. These themes were reviewed to ensure coherence and distinctiveness, then refined and named to capture their core organizing concepts. Finally, the themes were interpreted alongside participants' narratives and related literature, resulting in a contextual explanation of how Filipino college students use Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo to express identity, negotiate belonging, and communicate across social and digital environments.

Evaluative Criteria. In order to ensure the credibility of the research, the researchers applied the criteria for establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The credibility of the research was provided by the prolonged involvement of the participants into the research process, member checking for the

accurate validation of the findings and peer debriefing to improve consistency in data interpretation. In this way, the researchers ensured that the findings presented in the study correctly reflected the use of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo by the participants. The transferability of the study was reached through the provision of rich descriptions of the participants, the context of research and communication. It allowed readers to determine whether or not the findings can be transferred into similar settings. The dependability of the study was secured through a structured and clear research process, including the use of consistent data collection procedures and the use of the thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Confirmability was provided through the establishment of the audit trail, which consisted of the interview transcript, coding record, thematic development and reflective memos.

The researchers analyzed the interview narratives to identify significant statements, meaning units, and emerging themes. Digital data were then examined using the same broad analytical framework, particularly in relation to language choice, identity expression, belongingness, self-presentation, and digital communication. Meanings identified in the interviews were compared with the linguistic practices evident in the digital materials.

Reflexibility. The researchers recognized that their personal experiences, linguistic background, professional or academic orientation, familiarity with Filipino youth culture, and prior assumptions concerning Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo could influence the research process. The researchers remained attentive to their positionality in relation to the participants. Where applicable, the researchers considered whether their age, educational background, linguistic repertoire, social position, or familiarity with the participants' communities could influence participants' willingness to disclose experiences or could shape the interpretation of their responses. The researchers minimized such influence by using open-ended questions,

allowing participants to define the meanings of their own linguistic practices, avoiding judgmental reactions, and using participants' own descriptions as the primary basis for interpretation.

Data Management. The data gathered were systematically organized and securely managed throughout the research process. All research data were stored on a password-protected electronic drive accessible only to the authorized researchers.

Ethical Considerations. his study adhered to the ethical guidelines of Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) to protect participants' rights, dignity, privacy, and welfare. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including permission for audio recording, transcription, and use of interview excerpts, with parental consent and participant assent secured for those under 18. Given the study's focus on Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in digital contexts, researchers respected digital boundaries by analyzing only publicly accessible materials or private content voluntarily provided with explicit permission. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by removing identifying information such as names, usernames, photos, and location data. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all data were securely stored for academic purposes only, ensuring ethical compliance throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Theme 1. Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as Expressions of Personal Identity. The findings revealed that Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo functioned as linguistic resources through which participants expressed and negotiated their personal identities. Rather than viewing these varieties simply as alternative ways of speaking, participants described them as forms of communication that allowed them to convey personality, emotions, humor, confidence, and individuality across different social situations. One participant stated, *"Taglish, Jejemon and Gay Lingo gave me the ability to express my personality, connect two cultures, and mingle*

with my friends. It is one of the ways through which I perform life and communication as a young Filipino." Another participant explained, *"Taglish allows me to be myself... it is the reflection of who I am as a confident and modern Filipino."* These accounts indicate that participants attached meanings to their language choices that extended beyond the literal content of their messages. Taglish was associated with authenticity and the ability to navigate Filipino and English linguistic resources, while Jejemon was associated with humor, creativity, and playfulness. Gay Lingo, meanwhile, was described as a means of expressing emotions, confidence, and personality.

The clustering of these significant statements suggests that language choice was experienced as a form of identity performance. Participants did not merely select linguistic forms because they were available to them; rather, they used particular forms to communicate aspects of who they were and how they wished to be perceived by others. One participant remarked, *"Gay Lingo allows me to express myself confidently and playfully."* The statement illustrates how a linguistic variety may become personally meaningful when it provides a communicative style through which an individual can enact a preferred identity. At the same time, the findings indicate that identity expression was contextual rather than fixed. Participants did not necessarily use the same linguistic variety with every person or in every situation. Instead, their language choices were influenced by audience, relationship, setting, and communicative purpose. This suggests that linguistic identity among the participants was fluid and continuously negotiated rather than represented by a single, stable way of speaking.

Theme 2. Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as Languages of Social Belonging. The second theme concerned the role of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo in creating interpersonal connection and a sense of belonging. Participants described these language varieties as resources for establishing rapport, strengthening friendships, and demonstrating

membership in particular peer groups. This finding is consistent with sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualize language as a social practice through which identities and relationships are constructed (Bucholtz & Hall, 2021). One participant stated that Taglish *"helps me belong since everyone uses it, especially in chats and group messages,"* while another noted that *"it builds connection."* These statements demonstrate that the meaning of a language variety was partly derived from its shared use within a social group. The participants' experiences suggest that familiarity with particular expressions, styles, and forms of communication allowed them to participate more comfortably in peer interactions.

Jejemon was similarly associated with playfulness and shared Internet experiences. Participants described its use as a way of creating humor and maintaining a relaxed atmosphere within friendships. Gay Lingo was likewise viewed as a resource for developing solidarity and interpersonal connection. One participant explained, *"When I use Gay Lingo, it makes the conversation fun and allows me to build connection with my friends."* The findings therefore indicate that belonging was not experienced simply as being physically present within a group. It was also experienced through the ability to participate in the group's shared linguistic practices. Language varieties became social resources that allowed participants to recognize commonality, demonstrate familiarity, and negotiate their position within peer relationships. In this sense, the participants' experiences support the view that youth language practices are embedded in collective processes of meaning-making and identity formation (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2023). However, the findings also showed that linguistic belonging was conditional on context. Not all participants indicated that they would use these varieties with all audiences. Some participants were more selective and adjusted their language when communicating with family members, teachers, older individuals, or people unfamiliar with particular expressions. This variation suggests that the same linguistic

practice that creates belonging in one setting may be inappropriate, misunderstood, or avoided in another. Thus, belonging was negotiated through participants' awareness of audience and social context.

Theme 3. Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as Practical Communication Strategies. The third theme revealed that participants used Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo not only for identity expression and social bonding but also because these varieties were perceived as practical and effective for everyday communication. Participants described their language choices in terms of convenience, familiarity, clarity, flexibility, and communicative ease.

One participant stated, *"I choose Taglish because it allows me to speak better."* Another explained that *"pure language is hard to understand."* These statements indicate that participants experienced language mixing as a practical strategy for overcoming perceived limitations associated with using only one language. Taglish allowed participants to draw upon both Filipino and English linguistic resources to communicate ideas that they might find difficult to express using a single language. Similarly, Jejemon was described as convenient and entertaining in online communication, whereas Gay Lingo was associated with expressive and emotionally nuanced interaction. These accounts demonstrate that participants' language choices were influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by the communicative function that a particular variety served.

The analysis of significant statements and their subsequent clustering further revealed that participants adapted their language according to audience, purpose, and setting. This finding supports the interpretation that multilingual and hybrid language use among the participants represented communicative flexibility rather than linguistic deficiency. Consistent with Tupas (2015), the use of Taglish may be understood as an expression of bilingual linguistic resources rather than evidence of inadequate proficiency in either Filipino or English. Importantly, the participants did not uniformly perceive these

language varieties as necessary in every situation. Some were more likely to use them with close friends and online peers but preferred more conventional forms of language in formal academic or interpersonal settings. This divergence demonstrates that the participants possessed an awareness of linguistic appropriateness and actively adjusted their communication according to the demands of a particular situation.

Theme 4. Digital Communication as a Space for Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo Use. The fourth theme showed that digital communication was a prominent environment in which participants used, reinforced, and modified Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo. Participants reported using these varieties in social media posts, memes, private or group chats, messaging applications, and other online interactions because they considered them casual, entertaining, expressive, and appropriate for communicating with peers. One participant explained that Taglish was used in *"memes, posts, chats, and group messages"* because it was *"casual, fun, and it helps me connect with my friends online."* Another participant described Jejemon as particularly suitable for humorous online interactions, while Gay Lingo was associated with creativity and entertainment.

The digital communication data complemented these interview accounts by providing concrete examples of how participants enacted the language practices they described. The researchers examined the online communication materials using the same broad analytical categories applied to the interview narratives, particularly language choice, identity expression, belongingness, self-presentation, and communicative purpose. The comparison between interview narratives and digital communication data showed areas of convergence. Participants who described online language use as casual and playful also demonstrated these characteristics in their digital communication. In other cases, differences between what participants reported and how they communicated online were observed. These differences were interpreted in

relation to audience, platform, purpose, and situational context rather than automatically treated as contradictions. The findings therefore indicate that digital spaces provided participants with opportunities to experiment with linguistic forms, abbreviations, creative spellings, humor, and hybrid expressions. Online communication was not merely another location in which language was used; it constituted an environment where participants could actively modify linguistic resources to suit particular audiences and communicative intentions. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of digital environments in youth identity construction and sociolinguistic experimentation (Clemente, 2024).

Theme 5. Taglish, Jeje-mon, and Gay Lingo as Reflections of Contemporary Filipino Youth Identity. The fifth theme synthesized participants' perceptions of Taglish, Jeje-mon, and Gay Lingo as reflections of contemporary Filipino youth identity. Participants associated these language practices with being adaptable, expressive, technologically connected, creative, and socially responsive. One participant described Taglish as *"a reflection of today's culture—practical, expressive and connected,"* while another stated, *"It reflects my identity as one of the current generation of Filipinos—connected, adaptable, and expressive."* These accounts suggest that participants understood their language practices as connected to broader changes in Filipino society, particularly multilingualism, globalization, peer culture, and digital communication.

Participants' descriptions of Jeje-mon emphasized creativity and humor, while Gay Lingo was associated with expressiveness, confidence, and inclusion. These meanings demonstrate that the social significance of a linguistic variety was not fixed but emerged through its use within particular communities and interactions. The findings therefore support the concept of indexicality, wherein linguistic forms acquire social meanings beyond their literal meanings through their association with

particular identities, relationships, and social contexts (Silverstein, 2003).

The thematic clustering also demonstrated that the meanings assigned to the three language varieties were interconnected. Taglish was associated with linguistic hybridity and adaptability; Jeje-mon with creativity, humor, and digital culture; and Gay Lingo with expressiveness, confidence, and social connection. Taken together, these meanings positioned the participants' linguistic practices as resources through which they negotiated what it means to be young and Filipino in a multilingual and digitally mediated society. Nevertheless, the findings do not suggest that all Filipino youth attach identical meanings to these varieties. Participants differed in the extent to which they identified with or preferred each form. Some participants expressed greater comfort with Taglish but used Jeje-mon or Gay Lingo only in specific peer or online contexts. Such variation demonstrates that contemporary youth identity is heterogeneous and cannot be reduced to a single linguistic profile.

Theme 6. Negotiating Social Attitudes toward Taglish, Jeje-mon, and Gay Lingo. The sixth theme revealed that participants' experiences involved not only acceptance and positive identification but also awareness of negative social attitudes toward Taglish, Jeje-mon, and Gay Lingo. Some participants reported that these varieties carried negative stereotypes in certain social contexts. One participant described these language varieties as having a *"negative"* image. Participants also reported that Jeje-mon could be stereotypically associated with being used by individuals perceived as uneducated, while Gay Lingo could be subjected to discrimination because of its association with LGBTQ+ communities. These experiences reveal an important tension within the participants' linguistic identities. Although participants used these varieties as resources for confidence, belongingness, and self-expression, they were simultaneously aware that others might judge them negatively because of their language choices. Consequently, language use sometimes

required participants to negotiate between personal authenticity and perceived social expectations.

Some participants responded to these attitudes by limiting their use of particular varieties in formal or unfamiliar settings. Others continued to use them within trusted peer groups where they felt accepted. This variation is significant because it demonstrates that linguistic identity was not experienced solely as freedom of expression; it also involved awareness of social judgment and the potential consequences of particular linguistic choices. Despite these negative perceptions, several participants continued to associate their language practices with their personal identity. One participant stated, *"Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo enabled me to freely express myself, mix cultures and hang out with my peers. This is how I am today as a young Filipino."* Another described Taglish as *"a combination of native language and English"* and explained that it *"enables us to make sense of the words other people do not understand."* The contrasting accounts strengthen the credibility of the findings because they demonstrate that participants did not experience these language varieties uniformly. The same linguistic form could simultaneously function as a resource for identity and belonging and as a potential source of social judgment. Thus, the participants' experiences involved continuous negotiation between self-expression, group membership, communicative effectiveness, and social expectations.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Conceptual Framework. Using Communities of Practice (CoP) as discussed by Eckert and Indexicality as explained by Silverstein (2003), the theoretical framework provides an explanation of how linguistic creativity arises among young Filipinos through social interactions, identity formation, and digital communication practices. The theory suggests that the use of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo is not just a linguistic process but a

socially constructed practice because of one's participation in particular communities.

The Communities of Practice, the first element, refers to the social contexts where Filipino youth participate and where interaction occurs through peer groups, classroom settings, social media sites, instant messaging applications, and other online forums. These contexts provide opportunities for youth to create shared norms, values, and identities through everyday interactions within their communities of practice. In line with the results of the study, participants mentioned that Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo were adopted because these language forms facilitated connection and bonding with their peers. This finding corresponds particularly with Theme 2, which identified these language varieties as resources for social belonging.

The second feature, Linguistic Innovation, highlights the communicative strategy of innovatively using Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo. Contrary to the view that such phenomena indicate linguistic impairment, the results reveal that the use of these language forms is socially productive in that they can express individual identity, foster peer relations, ensure successful communication, and tailor language to diverse social and digital environments. The language practices were characterized by participants as natural, expressive, functional, and culturally significant. Hence, linguistic innovation is part of the communicative competence of multilingual youth. This finding is reflected in Themes 1 and 3, which emphasize identity expression and practical communication.

Thirdly, Indexicality is used to show how linguistic expressions take on social meaning beyond their literal meaning. According to Silverstein (2003), language indexicalizes identity, relations, ideologies, and social positioning. It has been shown that Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo represent youthfulness, creativity, inclusiveness, modernity, and cultural mixing. However, it is also important to note that some negative

stereotypes are linked with language variations, such as stereotypes concerning inadequate language knowledge, lack of education, and certain social identities. Thus, different perspectives demonstrate how language acquires its social meaning through continuous negotiation and the influence of culture and language ideology. This finding is particularly reflected in Themes 5 and 6 concerning contemporary Filipino youth identity and social attitudes toward these language varieties.



Figure 1
Linguistics Innovation Model

Figure 1 shows the Linguistic Innovation Model that depicts the interplay between the three components. Communities of Practice form the social context through which linguistic innovations arise, develop, and disseminate. It is in the course of their interactions that Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo become valuable linguistic tools used by Filipino adolescents to construct their identities, create social affiliations, and communicate in a multilingual setting. With time, such linguistic innovations get indexed to signify social identities and cultural values, thus affecting language choices made in the future.

The proposed framework highlights the importance of digital environments in enhancing this phenomenon through providing more opportunities for interaction, experimentation, and fast spreading of innovative language forms. Social media networks, messaging apps, and other online forums help in generating new language forms and enhancing peer interaction and group identity. Therefore, the use of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo cannot be seen as signs of linguistic deterioration; instead, they represent important sociolinguistic features that highlight changing identities, creativity, and language

competence of the young generation of Filipinos.

Phenomenological Synthesis. Consistent with the phenomenological design of the study, the findings may be synthesized into an overarching essence of the participants' lived experience: Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo are experienced as flexible linguistic resources through which Filipino youth express identity, establish belonging, communicate effectively, and negotiate their social position across face-to-face and digital environments. The participants' experiences demonstrate that language use is not fixed but continuously shaped by relationships, audiences, contexts, and social expectations. Thus, the phenomenon is characterized by identity expression, belonging, adaptability, and negotiation, with digital environments providing additional spaces for linguistic experimentation and interaction.

Implications. Considering Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo as one concept gives us a broader comprehension of the way linguistic creativity works as a social resource for Filipino youth. The use of Communities of Practice by Eckert and Indexicality by Silverstein in the new framework helps explain the development of youth language through social interaction, identity negotiation, and interactivity offline as well as online. Instead of considering these languages as linguistic innovations separated from each other, the framework helps us see how they are related to each other and how these languages provide young people with opportunities to construct and negotiate their identities.

The results also have practical implications for several fields. In language teaching in educational institutions, understanding the communicative and sociocultural role of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo would help in the development of pedagogy that recognizes the multilingual nature of students and promotes linguistic inclusivity rather than viewing non-standard linguistic varieties as a problem. This may be operationalized through

classroom activities that compare informal and formal language use, teacher training on linguistic variation, and lessons on register and audience awareness.

In digital communication and media research, the importance of developing platforms and content that take into account the communicative value of hybridized linguistic forms used by young people should be emphasized. Digital literacy programs may likewise address how language choices influence identity, inclusion, and interpersonal communication in online spaces.

With regard to language policy and planning, therefore, it is suggested that youth linguistic creativity be acknowledged as a valid sociolinguistic practice and not as an anomaly of the standard language form. The use of Communities of Practice and Indexicality as theories provides an approach through which to examine how language constructs identity and social ties within communities. The framework presented here not only explains how linguistic creativity arises but also shows that it is systematic and socially motivated rather than simply a result of poor language skills. Apart from the Philippines, the framework can be utilized in research on bilingualism, digital communication, youth languages, and minority languages.

Limitation of the Study. This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study involved only fifteen (15) participants; therefore, the findings are not intended to be statistically representative of all Filipino youth. Second, the study was conducted in Cebu City, and linguistic practices may vary across different regions and sociocultural contexts in the Philippines. Third, the study relied substantially on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by individual perceptions and recall. Finally, the digital communication component was limited to the online materials that were accessible and ethically appropriate to analyze. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted within the specific

phenomenological and contextual scope of the study.

Conclusion. This study highlights the significance of language creativity as an important component of the social identity of Filipino youth, as exemplified in Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo. The language varieties demonstrate creativity, agency, and belonging, thus helping the youth to navigate their identity in their peer groups through both physical and technological spaces. This study, grounded in Communities of Practice framework by Eckert and Indexicality by Silverstein, proves the point that language goes beyond being a means of communication; it becomes a resource used by Filipino youth for construction and negotiation of multiple identities.

Through the review of existing literature and the results of the study conducted, it can be shown that Taglish is an index of bilingualism and cultural hybridity, Jejemon is an index of creativity and playfulness while Gay Lingo is an index of inclusiveness and identity performance. Altogether, these examples of linguistic practices reveal how Filipino youth assign social meaning to language use through context and purpose.

It is a contribution to sociolinguistics because it suggests a unified theoretical model explaining the language of young people not in terms of deficiencies of non-standard language use but in terms of the sociocultural role played by their language practices. In addition, it suggests that hybrid languages should be viewed as linguistic resources enabling communication, construction of identity, and community membership. The suggested theoretical model will also have important applications in the areas of education, language policy, and digital communication in that it highlights the sociocultural importance of young people's language creativity.

Finally, it is clear from the study that the linguistic practices of Filipinos' youth are flexible, adaptive, and socially significant. The existence of Taglish, Jejemon, and Gay Lingo is

not only an indication of new speech styles but of the identity, sense of belongingness and cultural affiliation as well. Acknowledging and appreciating such linguistic innovations will not only benefit sociolinguistic studies but provide insight into the different ways how youth communicate and relate in today's world, which is multilingual, multicultural and technologically advanced.

Recommendations. From the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Empirically validate the suggested theoretical framework using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research to analyze the relationships between Communities of Practice, linguistic innovation, and indexicality in online and offline interactions.
2. Carry out comparative and cross-cultural studies in order to reveal how Taglish, Jejemon, Gay Lingo and other youth languages operate as social identity markers for multilingual and multicultural communities both inside and outside the Philippines.
3. Conduct longitudinal phenomenological studies to examine how the lived experiences and meanings associated with youth language change over time in relation to new digital technologies and sociocultural norms.
4. Explore the interconnections between language, gender and sexuality, especially how Gay Lingo contributes to performance of identity and inclusion for Filipino youth online and offline.
5. Analyze the educational potential of youth languages varieties in terms of their incorporation into language teaching practice to increase learners' engagement, multilingualism, identity, inclusivity while retaining standard Filipino and English.

6. Encourage teachers and policy makers of language education to accept youth linguistic innovation as legitimate sociolinguistic resource of Filipino youth rather than just deviant behavior in terms of standard language use.

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