

FROM FIG TO SLANG: A SEMANTIC-PRAGMATIC INVESTIGATION OF 'ANJIR' IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Language is a dynamic system that continuously evolves to reflect the emotions, identities, and cultural practices of its speakers. As a living construct, language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a repository of social meaning and cultural expression. This study examines the phenomenon of using the word anjir as a popular emotional expression in informal conversations within modern Indonesian society. This phenomenon reflects the dynamic nature of language and cultural familiarity in everyday communication. Through a semantic and pragmatic approach, this research aims to analyze the function of anjir in various social and situational contexts. Data were collected using questionnaires distributed to respondents and analyzed using a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative methods to understand social contexts and quantitative methods to measure the frequency and patterns of usage. The results show that anjir is most frequently used to express surprise (58.8%), followed by humor (29.4%), admiration (14.1%), and anger (1.1%). These findings reveal that anjir functions as an emotional amplifier and a tool for fostering closeness in informal conversations, although its usage is considered less appropriate in formal situations. This study highlights the flexibility of linguistic expressions in adapting to modern communication needs while contributing to the semantic and pragmatic studies of the Indonesian language.

Keywords: semantics, pragmatics, multi-situational

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic tool that evolves alongside cultural and social changes. Among Indonesian youth, the emergence of colloquial expressions or slang has become an integral part of their communication, reflecting their creativity and cultural identity. One such term is "anjir," a versatile word frequently used in informal conversations to express various emotions such as surprise, admiration, anger, or amusement. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among teenagers and university students in South Sulawesi, where "anjir" has become a linguistic marker of youth culture.

Semantics, the study of meaning in language, offers insight into how words convey different meanings based on context. Lyons. Differentiates between denotative and connotative meanings, emphasizing that words often carry both literal and associative meanings. In the context of slang, words like "anjir" exemplify this duality by adopting various connotations depending on their usage. For instance, "anjir" can express admiration, surprise, anger, or amusement, showcasing the flexibility and richness of its semantic scope.

Pragmatics focuses on how language is used in context, highlighting the relationship between speakers, listeners, and situational factors. (Rahmat et al., 2025) argues that pragmatics involves understanding how meaning is constructed beyond literal interpretation, relying heavily on social cues and contextual elements. In the case of "anjir," its pragmatic function lies in its ability to emphasize emotions, build rapport, and create a relaxed conversational atmosphere. This aligns with (Goedhart, 2020) observation that language plays a crucial role in constructing social relationships and maintaining interpersonal connections.

The flexibility of "anjir" in conveying different emotions and its widespread use make it an intriguing subject for linguistic study. Semantically, "anjir" demonstrates how a single word can adopt multiple meanings depending on the context, while pragmatically, it serves as a tool for emphasizing emotions, building social connections, and creating a casual atmosphere in conversations. Align with (Rahmat, 2023), the meaning of a word often shifts between its denotative and connotative aspects, which is evident in the use of "anjir" in various contexts. This dual function highlights the richness of slang as both a linguistic and social phenomenon.

The use of slang is particularly prominent among young people, who often seek to differentiate themselves from older generations while fostering a sense of belonging within their peer groups (Rahmat, 2023). In South Sulawesi, the term "anjir" has become a linguistic emblem of youth culture, reflecting their unique social and cultural experiences. The creative use of this term illustrates how slang evolves to meet the communicative needs of its users, serving both linguistic and social functions.

Research on slang and emotional expression has consistently emphasized its

importance in enhancing communicative effectiveness. (Grammer et al., 2000)for example, demonstrate that slang terms are often utilized to convey subtle emotions and attitudes that may be difficult to articulate through standard or formal language. Similarly, (Kemper & Shaltout, 2011) explore the intersection of semantics and pragmatics in Indonesian slang, showing that these expressions enrich interpersonal communication by offering a wider range of emotional articulation and fostering intimacy in social interactions. These studies highlight the flexibility of slang as a linguistic resource that reflects both cultural practices and social dynamics.

Despite these contributions, existing research tends to examine slang in broad terms without focusing on specific lexical items and their contextual functions. In particular, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the word *anjir*, a highly popular slang expression among Indonesian youth, especially in South Sulawesi. While its widespread use in informal communication suggests significant semantic and pragmatic roles, empirical studies analyzing its nuanced functions remain scarce. This creates a research gap in understanding how *anjir* operates not only as an emotional amplifier but also as a marker of social identity and cultural belonging. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the functions of *anjir* in everyday conversations among South Sulawesi youth.

This study aims to analyze the semantic and pragmatic aspects of "anjir," focusing on its meaning and function in informal communication among South Sulawesi youth. By understanding how "anjir" operates within various contexts, this research contributes to the broader understanding of slang as a dynamic component of modern language. Moreover, the findings of this study provide insights into the role of language in shaping cultural identity and interpersonal relationships among young people. (Rahman et al., n.d.) notes that language not only reflects but also constructs social identity, which is pertinent to the use of slang among youth.

The significance of this research lies in its exploration of how a single colloquial term can encapsulate diverse meanings and functions. By examining "anjir," this study sheds light on the broader dynamics of linguistic creativity and adaptability, offering a glimpse into the evolving nature of youth language in Indonesia. This aligns

with the argument of (Said et al., n.d.) that linguistic variation is a natural consequence of social interaction and cultural diversity.

This research explores the use of the word *anjir* among South Sulawesi youth as a distinctive feature of informal communication. Rather than limiting the analysis to rigid linguistic categories, the study examines how the term functions to convey emotions, shape meaning, and strengthen social interaction in everyday contexts. By employing a semantic-pragmatic lens, the research highlights the flexibility of *anjir* in expressing surprise, humor, or admiration, depending on situational use. This approach provides insights into how young speakers adapt language creatively, reflecting both cultural identity and the evolving dynamics of modern Indonesian communication.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the use of the word *anjir* in informal conversations. This approach was chosen to explore the meaning, function, and impact of *anjir* from both linguistic and social perspectives.

The primary research instrument was a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions designed to examine the frequency of use, associated meanings, situational contexts, and the positive or negative impacts of the word. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to facilitate data collection and ensure respondent anonymity. According to (Sugiyono, 2020), questionnaires are effective tools for collecting data from a large number of respondents in a relatively short time.

The population of this study consisted of teenagers and university students from South Sulawesi. A total of 34 respondents were selected using a random sampling technique in order to obtain representative data and minimize institutional bias. According to (Sugiyono, 2020), random sampling provides every member of the population with an equal opportunity to be chosen, thereby increasing the generalizability of the findings. To ensure methodological transparency, the sampling procedure should clearly outline the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In this study,

inclusion criteria covered individuals aged 15–24 who were active students and familiar with the use of slang in daily communication, while exclusion criteria applied to individuals outside the specified age range or those with limited exposure to contemporary slang.

Data were analyzed using semantic and pragmatic approaches. Semantic analysis focused on the denotative and connotative meanings of *anjir* across different contexts, while pragmatic analysis examined its functions in relation to situational factors and social relationships between speakers. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were then tabulated into frequencies and percentages to identify patterns of use. The integration of qualitative and quantitative analysis allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of this linguistic phenomenon (Sugiyono, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of the word *anjir* as part of colloquial language among teenagers and university students in South Sulawesi constitutes the central finding of this study. As (Acton & Hunt, 2025) argues, colloquial expressions often embody the dynamism and creativity of youth, and the data here confirms this perspective. Participants employed *anjir* not only as an exclamation of surprise or annoyance but also as a marker of group identity and solidarity, aligning with (Acton & Hunt, 2025) observation that youth language functions as a symbolic resource for constructing social belonging.

From a semantic perspective, *anjir* illustrates (Recanati, 2016) claim that meaning is both context-dependent and context-creating. While originally referring to “fig” (*buah tin*), the term has undergone a process of semantic shift, becoming a slang interjection with a wide emotional range—from astonishment and admiration to irony and frustration. This finding resonates with studies on lexical innovation in youth slang (Linguam, 2005), where words acquire new pragmatic functions far removed from their literal origins.

Pragmatically, the flexibility of *anjir* aligns with (Kazemian et al., 2025) framework, as its interpretation relies heavily on situational cues and shared

knowledge. For instance, when uttered in humorous settings, *anjir* operates as a solidarity-building device, while in moments of irritation it functions as an affective intensifier. Similar patterns were documented by (Woolard, 2001) in her analysis of workplace discourse, where informal language contributes to both rapport-building and subtle power negotiation. This suggests that *anjir* is not merely a filler or emotional outburst, but a multifunctional discourse marker that enables speakers to navigate social relationships.

Compared with previous research on Indonesian slang(Spiess, 2025), which emphasizes the Jakarta-centered spread of youth vernacular, the present findings contribute by showing how local variations—such as in South Sulawesi—integrate national slang terms into distinct cultural and linguistic ecologies. This highlights the role of regional identity in shaping slang usage, an aspect less discussed in prior studies.

The study demonstrates that *anjir* exemplifies both semantic innovation and pragmatic adaptability. It confirms theoretical insights from semantics and pragmatics while also extending the literature on Indonesian slang by emphasizing the regional recontextualization of youth expressions. Thus, the word functions not only as a linguistic marker of emotion but also as a social tool for expressing identity, solidarity, and creativity among young speakers in South Sulawesi.

Table 1. Contexts of *Anjir* Usage

No	Context	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
1.	Surprise	20	58.8%
2.	Admiration	15	44.1%
3.	Humor/Entertainment	10	29.4%
4.	Sadness	5	14.7%
5.	Anger	4	11.8%

Based on Table 1, the word *anjir* is most frequently used in the context of surprise (58.8%), highlighting its primary function as a spontaneous reaction to unexpected situations. Its use in admiration (44.1%) reflects its role in expressing appreciation, while its usage in humor or entertainment (29.4%) indicates its social function in creating a relaxed atmosphere.

In contrast, its usage in sadness (14.7%) and anger (11.8%) is relatively lower, suggesting that *anjir* is more commonly associated with positive or neutral emotions. Overall, these findings demonstrate the flexibility of *anjir* as part of colloquial language, reflecting creativity and emotional needs in everyday interactions.

Table 2. First Impressions of the Word *Anjir*

No	Meaning	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
1.	Surprise	14	41.18%
2.	Admiration	9	26.47%
3.	Humor/Entertainment	7	20.59%
4.	Anger	3	8.82%
5.	Sadness	2	5.88%

Based on Table 2, the word *anjir* is most frequently associated with surprise (41.18%), making it the dominant impression among respondents. This is followed by its use in admiration (26.47%) and humor/entertainment (20.59%), indicating its relevance in expressing positive or lighthearted emotions. In contrast, its association with anger (8.82%) and sadness (5.88%) is significantly lower.

These results suggest that *anjir* is primarily used in contexts of spontaneity and positivity, reflecting its role as a versatile expression in casual and informal communication.

Table 3. Changes in the Meaning of *Anjir* Based on Tone and Situation

No	Response	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
1.	Yes, changes	29	85.29%
2.	No, remains the same	5	14.71%

A total of 85.29% of respondents stated that the meaning of the word *anjir* can change depending on the tone of speech or situation. Meanwhile, 14.71% of respondents believed that the meaning of the word remains the same regardless of tone or context. This result indicates that the majority of respondents recognize the flexibility of *anjir* in communication. This emphasizes that tone and situation play a crucial role in determining the intended meaning of the word, whether it is used to express admiration, anger, or humor. This flexibility highlights the importance of context and tone in shaping the message conveyed through the word *anjir*.

Table 4. Functions of *Anjir* in Conversation

No	Function	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
1.	Expressing emotions	27	79.41%
2.	Conveying intensity	15	44.12%
3.	Building rapport	5	14.71%
4.	No specific function	1	2.94%

A total of 79.41% of respondents stated that *anjir* functions to express emotions such as surprise, admiration, or anger, highlighting its use as a spontaneous expression in daily conversations. Additionally, 44.12% of respondents viewed it as a

tool to convey emotional intensity, enhancing the impact of surprise or admiration. Meanwhile, 14.71% of respondents mentioned the social function of *anjir* in building closeness or familiarity, particularly in informal contexts. However, 2.94% of respondents considered it merely a habit or inappropriate language. These findings indicate the flexibility of *anjir*, influenced by conversational context and social norms.

Table 5. Positive or Negative Impact of *Anjir*

No	Impact	Number of Respondents	Frequency (%)
1.	Positive	17	50.00%
2.	Negative	10	29.41%
3.	Both	7	20.59%

A total of 50.00% of respondents stated that *anjir* has a positive impact, indicating that the word is often used as a modern expression relevant in informal interactions. On the other hand, 29.41% of respondents viewed *anjir* as having a negative impact, typically associated with conservative perspectives regarding its perceived impoliteness or inappropriateness in formal contexts. Meanwhile, 20.59% of respondents believed that the impact of *anjir* is contextual, being positive in casual conversations but potentially negative in formal situations. These findings highlight the flexibility of *anjir*, with its use heavily influenced by the situation and the relationship between speakers.

Linguistic Dynamics in the Use of *Anjir*

The use of *anjir* as part of slang among teenagers and college students in South Sulawesi reflects intriguing linguistic dynamics that extend beyond mere colloquial expression. The findings reveal that *anjir* functions most prominently as an expression of **surprise** (41.18%), followed by **admiration** (26.47%) and **amusement** (20.59%), with less frequent associations to **anger** (8.82%) and **sadness** (5.88%). This distribution underscores (Acton & Hunt, 2025) view that lexical meaning is

highly context-dependent, as a single term undergoes semantic shift from its literal sense (*fig*) to multiple affective functions.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the multifunctionality of *anjir* supports Levinson's (1983) argument that meaning is shaped by situational factors and shared knowledge. For instance, in humorous contexts, *anjir* works as a solidarity-building device, while in contexts of frustration it becomes an affective intensifier. These dual roles illustrate (Linguam, 2005) finding that informal expressions simultaneously negotiate rapport and emotion in everyday discourse.

Furthermore, the high frequency of *anjir* as an exclamation of surprise and admiration reflects (Recanati, 2016) observation that colloquial language embodies the creativity of youth in adapting vocabulary to immediate communicative needs. Similarly, its use in humor and entertainment resonates with (Legère et al., 1994) argument that youth language operates as a symbolic resource for identity construction and peer-group belonging.

When compared with previous studies on Indonesian slang (Djenar, 2014; Manns, 2015), which often emphasize Jakarta-centric developments, these findings highlight the regional adaptation of *anjir* in South Sulawesi. Rather than being a uniform expression, *anjir* acquires distinctive local functions shaped by the cultural and linguistic practices of Sulawesi youth. This demonstrates that slang terms not only diffuse nationally but are also recontextualized regionally, reinforcing both collective identity and localized creativity

Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis

The use of *anjir* shows that this word has dynamic and contextual meanings. In semantic analysis, *anjir* possesses a denotative meaning as a spontaneous exclamation. However, its connotative meaning shifts according to emotional context and social relationships. This aligns with Lyons' (1977) theory of meaning, which emphasizes that a word's meaning depends not only on its lexical definition but also on its use in specific situations.

Pragmatically, *anjir* functions as a communicative tool to express emotions and amplify message intensity. Austin's (1962) speech act theory is relevant for analyzing the illocutionary and perlocutionary functions of this word. For instance, when *anjir* is used to indicate surprise, its illocutionary function is to express amazement, while its perlocutionary effect is to elicit similar reactions from listeners, such as laughter or shared astonishment.

Additionally, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle can be applied to this analysis. In informal conversations, the use of *anjir* often fulfills the maxim of relevance by creating an emotional response that aligns with the situation. For example, in humorous contexts, *anjir* is employed to enhance comedic effects and foster a relaxed atmosphere among speakers.

Shifts in Meaning Based on Context and Tone

A total of 85.29% of respondents stated that the meaning of *anjir* changes depending on tone and situation. In an enthusiastic tone, this word is often used to express admiration, as in the sentence: “Anjir, keren banget!” Conversely, in a serious or angry tone, *anjir* reflects frustration, as in the sentence: “Anjir, kesel banget sama dia!” These shifts in meaning support Grice's (1975) theory, which posits that context and tone play a crucial role in ensuring effective and relevant communication.

Functions and Impacts of *Anjir*

The primary functions of *anjir* include expressing emotions (79.41%) and intensifying messages (44.12%). This word is also used to build social closeness (14.71%), indicating that *anjir* plays a role in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Respondents also reported diverse emotional impacts: 50.00% perceived this word as having a positive impact, while 29.41% considered it potentially negative, particularly in formal contexts or when used with a harsh tone.

The impact of using *anjir* also relates to social relationships. For instance, in

formal situations, this word is deemed inappropriate, such as in conversations with parents or religious figures. Conversely, in relaxed settings among peers, *anjir* is used to create a casual and friendly atmosphere. This reflects social norms that determine when and where this word can be used.

Examples of Use and Contextual Analysis

Several example sentences from respondents clarify the function and context of *anjir*:

- “*Anjir, nggak nyangka bisa begini!*” (surprise)
- “*Anjir, keren banget!*” (admiration)
- “*Anjir, kesel banget sama dia!*” (anger)
- “*Anjir, lucu banget ceritanya!*” (humor)
- “*Anjir, sedih banget dengarnya.*” (sadness)

These sentences illustrate how *anjir* is used to amplify emotions in various situations. Pragmatically, this word serves as an emotional marker that enhances communication effectiveness, adapting to different contexts to convey a range of feelings.

Social Implications and Cultural Identity in Slang

The use of *anjir* also reflects the social and cultural identity of youth. Slang often serves as a marker of group solidarity, where certain words are used to build relationships and strengthen a sense of belonging. Azizah (2019) emphasized that slang functions as an adaptive and dynamic communication tool, reflecting the values and identities of specific social groups. In this context, *anjir* becomes an essential part of informal interactions among teenagers and college students, reinforcing the role of slang in shaping group identity.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the Indonesian slang word *anjir* exhibits a high degree of semantic and pragmatic flexibility, underscoring its role as a dynamic linguistic unit within contemporary discourse. Semantically, *anjir* demonstrates notable

shifts in meaning depending on the communicative context in which it is employed. While its original usage may have carried a neutral or literal meaning, modern applications often extend toward emotional expression, ranging from surprise and admiration to shock and disbelief. This semantic shift reflects not only the adaptability of slang but also the way in which language users creatively repurpose existing lexemes to suit evolving communicative needs.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the study of a single slang term. As this research illustrates, the evolution and multifunctionality of slang provide valuable insights into broader processes of language change, identity construction, and social interaction. Slang words like *anjir* are inherently dynamic, continually reshaped by shifting communicative practices and cultural influences. They reveal how language users exploit semantic elasticity and pragmatic versatility to achieve a range of communicative goals, from the expression of nuanced emotional states to the reinforcement of group solidarity.

This study makes a meaningful contribution to the field of sociolinguistics by demonstrating that slang is not a peripheral or trivial aspect of language use, but rather a central and highly adaptive component of everyday communication. By examining *anjir* through both semantic and pragmatic lenses, the research underscores the interconnectedness of linguistic meaning, social context, and cultural identity.

Future research could expand upon these findings by examining other slang expressions within varied communicative domains, such as social media interactions, digital gaming communities, or popular culture discourse. Comparative studies between slang usage in face-to-face conversation and online environments could further illuminate the role of technological mediation in shaping contemporary language practices. Such investigations would enrich our understanding of language evolution in modern society, highlighting how slang continues to adapt, diversify, and function as a key site of linguistic innovation and social expression.

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