A stance-taking study of *wkwk* as laughter in WhatsApp-based Indonesian-speaking youth conversation

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ABSTRACT

Laughter, often overlooked as a mere emotional outlet, is a complex phenomenon with its unique charm. Online laughter, in particular, seems to differ significantly in terms of its paralanguage features from face-to-face laughter. Building on our prior understanding of how laughter and youth language is used in face-to-face communication, studying online laughter in youth conversation can provide insights into the types of information that are typically conveyed nonverbally. This is important because laughter often conveys a wealth of essential information that is not explicitly stated in the words that are used. This study takes a close look at *"wkwk"*, one of the Indonesian expressions of laughter in social media. This study aims to examine how the use of *"wkwk"* reflects interlocutors' self-positioning across different social contexts in *WhatsApp*-based Indonesian youth conversation. Through conversation analysis (Schegloff, 2007) and stance-taking theory (DuBois, 2007), this study examines the utterances made by interlocutors in producing laughter in chats. The findings reveal a similarity between *"wkwk"* and other forms of laughter in previous studies, which are closely bound to the laughable context of the conversation that serves as a key to indicate Indonesian youth language. However, the use of *"wkwk"* is specifically shown to indicate closeness and bond reinforcement among interlocutors. In conclusion, within the Indonesian social context of laughter, *"wkwk"* as a linguistic tool can facilitate the interlocutors' expression of closeness and their positioning of self and others within the online conversation.

Keywords: digital conversation; intersubjectivity; online laughter; stance-taking

INTRODUCTION

Studies on laughter have shown that laughter is more than just the mere expression of a single emotion. People laugh in ways that are joyful, sorrowful, apprehensive or even in ways intended to tease or even hurt others. In short, what these studies have shown is that behind laughter is a wealth of implicit information. Hidden within non-verbal aspects, laughter can communicate more than just humor but a range of emotion from joy to aggressiveness (Holmes & Wilson, 2022; Holt, 2019; Mazzocconi et al., 2020; McLachlan, 2022; Voges et al., 2022). Through its ability to convey a wide range of emotions, laughter becomes a tool for effective communication (Evaldsson, 2023; Looney & He, 2021; Voges et al., 2022).

In examining the role of youth language in digital conversations, we find a significant correlation for both laughter and linguistic practice. The playful experimentation with creative language, slang, and heteroglossic styles enriches the digital discourse, creating a possibility of negotiating, constructing, and resisting identities through humor (Jaspers & van de Weerd, 2023). Young people's choice of linguistic features often represents shared cultural knowledge, enhancing social acceptance and facilitating the needs of youth to show their identity or self-actualization in terms of having functional humorous interactions (Djenar et al., 2018). The asynchronous nature of digital communication further allows for strategic and creative linguistic choices for youth language

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(Jonsson et al., 2019). By focusing on how youth language constructs style and genre in social contexts, we gain insights into how these linguistic practices contribute to the development of identity and social relationships. This approach highlights the dynamic nature of laughter in digital communication and its impact on social bonds, moving beyond enduring patterns of social and linguistic variations (Jaspers & van de Weerd, 2023).

Although still in its early stages, research on online laughter has been introduced to the idea of stance (DuBois, 2007; König, 2019; Linares-Bernabéu, 2023; McKay, 2020). The idea stems from the fact that online laughter cannot access paralanguage features that are usually available in face-to-face conversations. Petitjean and Morel's (2017) conversation analysis of laughter in WhatsApp conversations reveals that online laughter expressions are used to facilitate online conversations in an environment where most of the usual paralanguage features are unavailable. In other words, it matters more what an utterance does than what an utterance means (König, 2019; Logi & Zappavigna, 2019; Petitjean & Morel, 2017). In the context of chat-based interactions, where interlocutors cannot perceive the complex array of paralanguage cues (e.g., gaze, physical gestures, and intonation), communication is largely mediated through structural elements such as turn-taking, sequence closure, and topic management (König, 2019; Petitjean & Morel, 2017).

In line with Petitjean and Morel, König (2019) also argues that online laughter is more tied to their sequential position in chat. According to the stance taken, context, and its position in chats, laughter sequences are divided into two types: laughing with (interlocutors laugh together) and laughing at (only one interlocutor laughs) (Glenn, 2013; König, 2019). Using DuBois' (2007) stance-taking theory as an approach, König analyzes how interlocutors use laughter particles to negotiate their stance in dyadic and group WhatsApp chats. It is found that laughter particles contextualize utterances that is considered humorous (referred to as "laughable" in the studies to describe humorous contexts where laughter is expressed in chat) and are used dialogically and interactionally (DuBois, 2007; König, 2019) by interlocutors, who also define and interpret stances expressed by laughter (König, 2019; Petitjean & Morel, 2017). Therefore, the ability of laughter to convey laughable cues and negotiate stances in chat conversations is influenced by (1) its position within the individual message and (2) the message's position within the conversational sequence. At the end of their research, König calls for more research on stance-taking with laughter particles in different languages, to explore the potential for variation in results between interlocutors.

These observations made by past studies have opened the study of online laughter to more complex analysis of intersubjectivity. Building on our prior understanding of how laughter is used in face-to-face communication, studying online laughter can provide insights into paralanguages and interpersonal connections. This shows that online laughter is also essential for social interactions, shared humor and a growing sense of community online (Davies, 2019; Grundlingh, 2020; Outley et al., 2020; Sierra, 2019).

McKay (2020) and Grundlingh (2020) examined the use of online laughter, written as Typed Laughter-Derived Expressions, (hereafter TLDE) on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. They both argue that beyond positioning oneself, online laughter can express language identity and decision-making in the absence of nonverbal cues (Grundlingh, 2020; McKay, 2020). This means that not only what is shown and intended in the conversation, rather than assessing what an utterance of online laughter means to an individual, we can assess the different potentials of meaning it can have between interlocutors.

This study takes a close look of *"wkwk"*, one form of Indonesian digital laughter. Emerging in the late 2000s, *"wkwk"* has become one of the most used forms of online laughter. The distinct orthographic feature of "*wkwk*" sets it apart from other commonly used laughter orthography such as "*haha*," "*hihi*," or "*hehe*". This unique style and associated stereotypes contributes to its widespread use within online youth communities on chat platforms and forums (Hasibuan, 2021; Prasetya, 2019). However, despite the extensive use in Indonesia and its distinct features, research on online laughter, especially *"wkwk"*, in Indonesia is still limited.

Building on the limitations and suggestions of previous studies, this study aims to explore how the use of "*wkwk*" in Indonesian online laughter reflects interlocutors' positioning across different social contexts. At the same time, it addresses some of the methodological gaps left by previous studies that relied upon open-source data. This reliance has restricted previous findings to general observations regarding the usage and motives of online laughter. To bridge these limitations, this study conducts a detailed analysis of the use of "*wkwk*" across diverse online contexts, using a mixed-methods case study approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) with an emphasis on stance-taking perspective within the

framework of conversation analysis (Schegloff, 2007), specifically examining Indonesian chat group conversations.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed methods design to analyze a case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Hirose & Creswell, 2023) of "*wkwk*" as laughter in WhatsApp chats. This design involves collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, to provide in-depth analysis for a case in its real-world context to get better understanding of a research problem (Afriani, 2020; Creswell, 2021).

In the quantitative phase, the author used descriptive statistics to analyze numeric data on "*wkwk*" usage in a WhatsApp group chat. WhatsApp was chosen as the data collection platform due to its large and diverse user base (Koivisto et al., 2023; König, 2019). This analysis elucidated the frequency and categorization of laughter occurrences based on their position in the chat (front/middle/back/standalone) and orthography (capitalization). To interpret the data, stance-taking analysis is used to analyze the contextual aspects of each instance of laughter as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings. In this study, we examined the results of the quantitative analysis through conversation analysis (Koivisto et al., 2023; Schegloff, 2007) before beginning to interpret the data as the qualitative data collection phase. Conversation analysis serves as a connector across quantitative and qualitative phases to give equal weight to both quantitative and qualitative data (Hirose & Creswell, 2023).

The study included twelve interlocutors, six men and six women aged 23-27, who consented to WhatsApp chat recording for research purposes. The group chat consists of close-knit university friends who have maintained their connection since their undergraduate years in Jakarta. This enduring relationship is reflected in their communications, which often include inside jokes, shared nostalgia, personal reflections, gossip, and laughable or humorous comments. In alignment with Djenar et al. (2018), this study views youth identity as rooted in social roles, while emphasizing the intricate and contextual nature of the self, concepts that emerge from youth interactions. In the field of sociolinguistics, key aspects of these youth practices are examined through the processes by which individuals actively construct their identities and the ways in which identities are assigned by others in youth (Jaspers & van de Weerd, 2023). The first author joined the group chat as an interlocutor (abbreviated to AUT, i.e., author) and excluded their own laughter from the analysis. The author also conducted data triangulation to ensure the accuracy of the contextual data. After grouping and analyzing the data, the pattern of laughter "*wkwk*" is mapped based on the analysis. WhatsApp's share and export feature was used to collect the data, which was then processed using Microsoft Excel.

In finding laughter utterances in the chat, we used the *find and replace* feature in Microsoft Excel. After collecting enough data from a month-long conversation, the data were then sorted by using *Regex (Regular expression* accessible at https://regex101.com). Regex is a string of text or expression with a specific pattern used to search for a specific text, word, expression, and data in a string (Zappavigna, 2023). To achieve the amount of specifically sorted *"wkwk"* in the group chat, the regex pattern was tested on a sample of chat data to ensure that it accurately identified all laughter utterances. The results showed that the Regex pattern managed to accurately identify all laughter utterances in the sample data. In this study, Regex was specifically used to sort chats with "*wkwk*" in it and those who do not by using this formula:

$$\wedge(?!.*(wk/Wk/WK/wK)\{2,\}).*\$$$

Note:

^	: the start of bubble chat
?!	: negation, a prompt to find text that does not contain the required pattern of *.*(wk/Wk/WK/wK){2,}*, any text that contains "*wk*" whose repetition is at least twice.
(wk/Wk/WK/wK)	: the required prompt in form of a repetition, may consist of wk, WK, wK, or Wk
.*	: a quantifier that matches any string that is not followed by any string n.
|	: signifying **or** in the pattern that contains repetition,
{2,}	: a command to find "*wk*" character that is repeated at least twice (to form "*wkwk*") within the data; a command to find any repetition within the () at least twice.
$	: signifying the end of the text.

Procedures

The following figures show some of the captured steps of data processing from *Regex*. Figure 2 shows the data before sorting by *Regex*, while Figure 3 shows the result after data sorting.
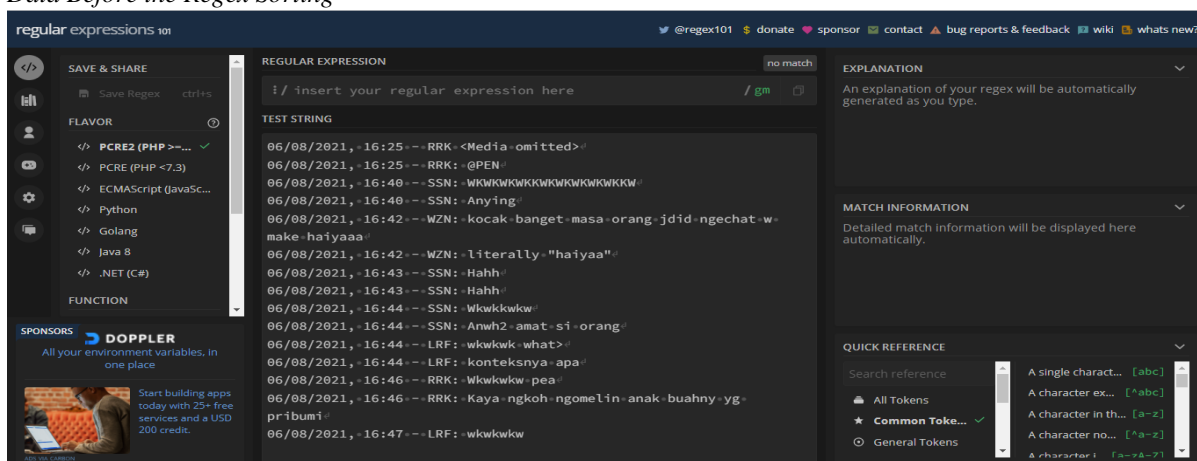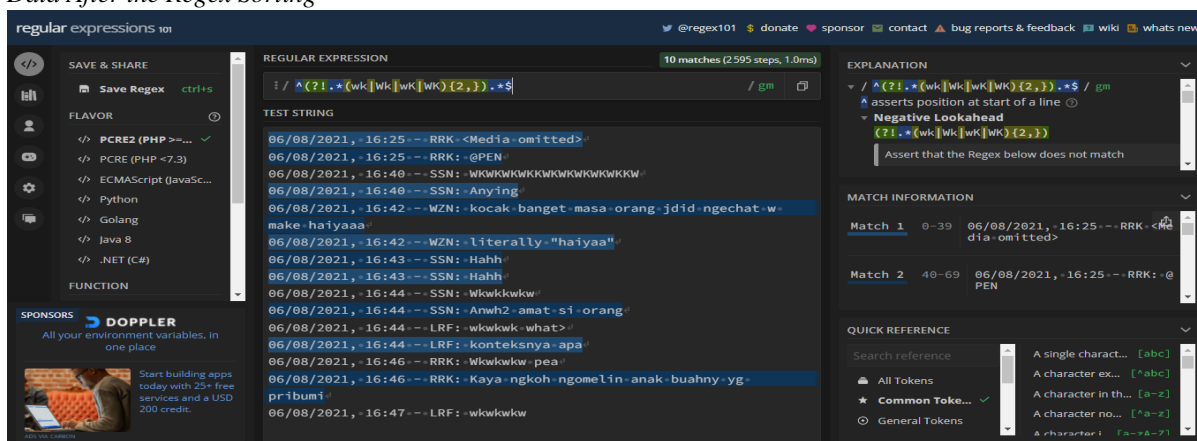
Figure 2
Data Before the Regex Sorting

Figure 3
Data After the Regex Sorting

After sorting all chat utterances that did not contain "*wkwk*", the data and pattern were then processed into *Visual Studio Code*, a code editor and Integrated Development Environment (IDE), to process the chat data. In this step, chats sorted out in *Regex* that do not contain "*wkwk*" are replaced with blank spaces. This is analogous to the *find and replace* feature in Microsoft Excel, which is only different in terms of the tool used to find and replace the aimed text by using the *Regex* pattern string to sort out chats that do not contain "*wkwk*".

The remaining data was calibrated with the original chat data to identify the utterances of "*wkwk*" and their laughable contexts. The data was then listed in a table, with each row containing the laughter utterance, its form, position, and context. The data was also sorted by the position of the laughter utterance in the chat (front, middle, back, or standalone). Eventually, the context of each laughter utterance was identified based on its orthography (use of capital letters) and the preceding and following chat utterances. This study analyzes the forms of "*wkwk*" in an Indonesian-speaking WhatsApp conversation. Other variations of "*wkwk*", such as "*wgwg*" and "*wqwq*", were excluded from the analysis because, similar to König's research (2019), these variations were used by only one participant in this study and are regarded as personal choices with limited influence on the data analysis. In contrast, "*wkwk*" was employed by all participants, suggesting that this laughter orthography serves as a common prototype (König, 2019).

Data analysis
In this study, the WhatsApp chat data were processed and presented in two steps. First, the raw data were categorized based on the forms of "*wkwk*", following the work of König (2019). In their respective work, König (2019) categorized laughter based on its orthography and its position in chat. Next, the placement of the laughter was analyzed using Conversation Analysis (Bryant & Bainbridge, 2022; Koivisto et al., 2023; Schegloff, 2007). The data was then presented in a conversation analysis table similar to Ewing (2019) according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie et

al., 2008), which systematically categorizes the position of laughter in a conversational sequence as either (1) when only one interlocutor laughs (laughing at) or (2) when more than one interlocutors laugh together sequentially (laughing with) (Glenn, 2013; König, 2019, Meredith, 2019). Examples of laughing at and laughing with are provided below.

Table 1
Sample of Laughing At

	Interlocutor	Message
1.	KCS	https://meet.google.com/rpa-mpmr-cnr
2.	KCS	*yuk geng yang mau* IMP gank that want 'let's go guyz'
3.	FPJ	*<photo>*
4.	FPJ	Lama ah Long INS 'too long'
5. >>	**KCS**	**wkwkwk WZN perutnya lagi bergejolakkk** wkwkwk WZN his stomach currently turbulent 'wkwkwk zesa got a stomachache'

Table 2
Sample of Laughing With

	Interlocutor	Message
1.	FPJ	Gua ditahan ga boleh *resign* I was arrested not can *resign* 'I can't resign just yet'
2.	FPJ	*<attachment photo>*
3.	FPJ	Gimana ya jir 'How yes dog' 'What should I do'
4.	AJI	Cabutt Unplug 'Runn'
5.	AJI	Itu hanya janji2 busukkk Those only promises rotten 'Those are empty promises'
6. **>>**	**AJI**	**Wkwkkw**
7. **>>**	**RPK**	**Wkwkkw**
8.	RPK	Kalo mau nahan minta gaji 2x FPJ If want hold ask salary two times FPJ 'If they want to keep you (FPJ), at least ask for twice higher salary'

Once the WhatsApp chat data have been categorized, they were then analyzed using stance-taking framework (DuBois, 2007). The analysis focused on the laughable context or how the laughter emerged (König, 2019), the relationship among interlocutors, and the purpose of a specific laughter utterance in the conversation. To describe the data analysis, the utterance "*wkwk*" is typed in bold and italicized as the core of the analysis, and other elements of the conversation are only italicized. Results are collected and mapped, with observable patterns documented and arranged according to the frequency of their occurrence in various contexts, accompanied by attached data samples.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
This section discusses several findings of this study. We start by presenting our findings on the distribution of *wkwk,* based on its position in the chats and its relationship with laughable contexts in general. Following this, the discussion focuses on how interlocutors position themselves through the use of *wkwk.* The last subsection discusses intersubjectivity among interlocutors.

Distribution of *wkwk* in the utterances

The WhatsApp chat data consisted of 8102 turns of conversation, as defined by the number of bubble chats. Within these turns, there were 629 laughter utterances of "*wkwk*". First, the "*wkwk*" utterances were categorized based on their position (front, middle, back, or standalone) and orthography (capitalized or non-capitalized). The distribution of "*wkwk*" utterances is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
The Distribution of "Wkwk"

The position of "*wkwk*" in the utterance	Capitalization	Total
Front	10	91
Middle	-	17
End	7	252
Stands after another chat by the same interlocutor, before another interlocutor.	32	165
Stands after another interlocutor, before proceeding to say something new	4	57
Stands before and after different interlocutors, in-between	10	47

The collected data include samples of single utterances of "*wkwk*" in a bubble chat, as well as "*wkwk*" followed by emoticons, mostly laughing and sad emoticons (although the number is not significant, with only 3 instances out of 651). There are also different uses of capital letters in expressing laughter. Even though the number is small, and this is mostly used by female interlocutors, this suggests that capitalized laughter may be used to express emotional intensity (Al-Jahdali, 2022; Varnhagen et al., 2010). Moreover, most "*wkwk*" stand after chats uttered by the same interlocutor, in which the interlocutor expressed their opinion first before laughing in "*wkwk*". However, there are also 100 utterances of "*wkwk*" that come from different interlocutors (i.e., the interlocutor who uttered "*wkwk*" is a different interlocutor from the one who expressed an opinion earlier on).

The function of laughter in the current data aligns with the findings of König (2019), who observed similar laughable patterns. In particular, across all conversations in this study, interlocutors use laughter to either support another user's laughable stance (laughing with), reinforce a teasing dynamic (laughing at), or introduce incongruity to soften the tone of the interaction (Mazzocconi et al., 2020). Notably, the data in this study shows that conversations predominantly take place among peers in online group chat settings. It can thus be inferred that the occurrence of youth language in the study's data is significantly attributed to its use within laughable contexts. Laughable contexts in this study are characterized by a high degree of informality and colloquial Jakartan language, reflecting the nature of everyday interactions among youths who have spent a significant amount of time living in Jakarta (Ewing, 2019). While understanding the general laughable context in which "*wkwk*" is used provides valuable insight into the application of youth language, the primary focus of this study is on how "*wkwk*" functions to position interlocutors within these interactions.

The interlocutors' positioning through the use of *wkwk*

In stance-taking, alignment refers to an action or reaction shown by the interlocutors in responding to a conversational context (Iwasaki, 2023; Linares-Bernabeu, 2023). In the context of laughter, alignment can refer to a stance taken against something laughable (König, 2019). In this study, there are two common groups of stance-taking done by the interlocutors: laughing with and laughing at.

As alluded to before, this study finds that all forms of "*wkwk*" functions as a response to a preceding utterance. In that sense, the function of laughter does not significantly change despite the interlocutors using different languages and forms of laughter (König, 2019; Petitjean & Morel, 2017). In line with previous studies (Glenn, 2013; Holt, 2019; König, 2019), this study also finds that all laughters expressed by the interlocutors suggest that the interlocutors consider the occurring topic or context as laughable. The following example demonstrates the use of "*wkwk*" where it functions to indicate either "laughing at" or "laughing with" in response to laughable contexts.

Additionally, the data show that written laughter consistently refers to the preceding statement, signifying that there is always at least one subject of the laughter present. While the subject of laughter and the subsequent laughter response may not always be physically adjacent within the WhatsApp message thread in the data set for this study, it can still be linked sequentially to the laughable contexts due to the utilization of WhatsApp's built-in reply function and the analysis of the overall conversational context (Koivisto et al., 2023; König, 2019).

In written communication, the systematic use of "*wkwk*" is observed across various forms and contexts, including its capitalization and placement in chats. Although occurrences of capitalized "*wkwk*" are relatively infrequent and predominantly used by female interlocutors, such capitalization in

the analyzed data denotes that the speaker finds the context exceptionally laughable, thereby expressing a more intense form of laughter. The study further identified various ways capital letters are used to represent emotions, as shown in Table 5.

Table 4

Examples of Laughing at

	Interlocutor	Message
1	SSN	*https://youtu.be/ux4I1Yc0rUc*
2	**SSN**	**Wkwkkwkw ngakak**
		Wkwkkwkw laughing
		'Wkwkkwkw so funny'
3	SSN	*https://youtu.be/vuknYTjpRgA*
4	SSN	*INI LAGU APA SIH ANYING*
		This song what INT
		dog
		'WHAT THE HELL IS THAT'
5	SSN	*@AJI @RRK @WNW @FPJ*
6	**SSN**	**Ya Allah ekwkwkkwkw**
		Yes God ekwkwkkwkw
		'Oh my God ekwkwkkwkw'

Type of laughter	: *wkwk.*
Laughter position	: front (2), and end (6).
Context	: In this conversation, SSN attached a YouTube video link about songs he found weird and funny, signified through utterances number (2) and (6) which also attached a laughter chat right after so that other interlocutors in that group understood that SSN found the video funny which persuaded them to also watch the video. This is also emphasized by mentioning other interlocutors (5) to watch the video.
Positioning	: In this case, SSN used an informal expression to show his closeness with other interlocutors.
Alignment	: In the conversation, SSN as the interlocutor of the laughter attached *"wkwk"* that referred to the video link he sent (2). The word *ngakak*, meaning laughing in Indonesian, showed that SSN gave a positive alignment towards the video he had just watched. In other words, SSN found the video funny. The same thing occurred in the next laughter (6). In laughter number (6), SSN asked other interlocutors to also watch and laugh at the video.

Table 5

Laughing While Denying Something

	Interlocutor	Message
1	KCS	*ini jg rada sensitip tp keknya sebenernya gaikutan acara*
		this also quite sensitive but maybe actually not join event
		kampus jg gamasalah ya gaksi geng
		campus also no problem yes no INT gank
		'This is a hot take but actually being not involved in campus activities wouldn't be a big deal…right'
2	KCS	*cm jadinya u ansos aja*
		just result you antisocial only
		'But you will be an outsider, kinda'
3	FPJ	*Ikutan bem gimana*
		Join student council how
		'How about joining student council'
4	FPJ	*Sampe dapet crush noval xixixi*
		Until get crush noval *xixixi*
		'Crushing on noval xixixi'
5	FPJ	*Kaburr*
		Runn
		'Run!'
6	**EDP**	**WKWKKWKWKWKW**
7	**KCS**	**wkwkwk anjir gua gada apa22 sm nopal samsek woiii**
		wkwkw dog I there is no what same nopal at all EXCL
		'Wkwkwk damn I don't have anything to do with nopal!'

Form of laughter	: *wkwk*
Position	: standalone (6) and at the end of an utterance (7)
Context	: The interlocutors were talking about what to do and not to do as a college student, and KCS said that not joining student activities as a committee should not be a big problem because it will not affect a student's professional path later on. The downside for not joining these activities is that one will not know anyone in their batch and major. FPJ responded by asking about the student council, because KCS used to be a student council member. FPJ also teased KCS about how the student council had brought them into meeting their love interest, referred to as Nopal (4). EDP responded to FPJ by laughing in "*wkwk*" in all capitalized letters (6). KCS also did the same thing with their defense on how they had nothing serious with Nopal (7).
Positioning	: In this conversation, FPJ, EDP, and KCS positioned themselves as same-aged friends, shown by the use of informal language variation. The closeness among interlocutors can also be seen from the use of swear word "*anjir*" (trans.: damn) (7), the use of the pronoun "*gua*" (trans.: I) and the use of the word "*geng*" (trans.: everyone, guys) in showing that they belong to a close circle of friends.
Alignment	: In this conversation, EDP laughed at the way FPJ teased (4) KCS. EDP also showed support for FPJ's argument (5) by laughing in "*wkwk*" in all capitalized letters. KCS, as someone who got picked on, laughed along (laughing with) by adding "*wkwk*" at the beginning of her chat. Differently, KCS disagreed with FPJ that they had had something going on with Nopal (7). To make the utterance doesn't sound too harsh or angry, KCS added "*wkwk*" at the beginning of their response.

The function of "*wkwk*" as a laughter response aligns with patterns identified in earlier research (König, 2019; Mazzocconi et al., 2020; Petitjean & Morel, 2017). Similar to the uses of laughter described by Holt (2019) and Glenn (2013), "*wkwk*" is dependent on its laughable context. Therefore, it can be said that the use of "*wkwk*" to express laughter reflects how responses in conversation are systematically shaped by contextual considerations (Glenn, 2013). However, it is crucial to focus not only on the laughable context in which "*wkwk*" is uttered but also on the recipient of "*wkwk*.".

Despite the range of contexts in which "*wkwk*" appears, it is consistently used in informal conversations in this data. The use of informal language is noteworthy as it serves as a linguistic marker in youth language, highlighting closeness among interlocutors (Djenar et al., 2018). This study thus introduces a new perspective by exploring how specific "*wkwk*" relate to the closeness of interlocutors, an aspect not thoroughly investigated in previous studies.

Positioning and laughter: Finding intersubjectivity among interlocutors through "*wkwk*"

This study found that the current analysis regarding the laughable context of "*wkwk*" aligns with the usage of previous studies suggesting functional similarities between online and face-to-face laughter, despite the differing languages employed in studies' samples. (König, 2019; McKay, 2020; Petitjean & Morel, 2017). However, this study finds that the analysis of social context that indicates that all instances of "*wkwk*" significantly occur in informal conversations, mainly supported by (1) linguistic markers, such as the use of colloquial pronoun in everyday basis, in this case all of the interlocutors use "*gua*" and "*lu*" (equivalent to colloquial "I" and "you" in Indonesian), confirming that the study participants live in Jakarta, (2) presence of slang and swear words, and (3) solidarity through shared humor that is shown through inside jokes. These elements together collectively emphasize a close and informal relationship between interlocutors, negotiating stances through the association of "*wkwk*" within particular social contexts involving close-knit group of youth.

Table 6
Example of Joke Among Interlocutors

	Interlocutor	Message
1	AJI	BAHKAN TEMEN KANTOR LU SADAR AKAN HAL INI RRK
		EVEN FRIEND OFFICE YOU AWARE FOR MATTER THIS RRK
		'EVEN YOUR COWORKERS ARE AWARE ABOUT THIS MATTER RRK'
2	AJI	PERASAAN GUA GG PERNAH SALAH
		FEELING I NOT EVER WRONG
		MY FEELINGS WOULD NEVER BE WRONG
3	AJI	DASAR RIZKI JERMAN
		DAMN RIZKI JERMAN
		'DAMNNN RIZKI JERMAN'
4	AJI	Kek ragil jerman
		Like ragil jerman
		'He looks like ragil jerman'
5	**SSN**	**WKWKKWKWKWK**
6	SSN	Tapi perasaan kamu ke RPN salah loh
		But feeling you to RPN wrong PART
		'But your guess about RPN is wrong'
7	SSN	Y gg @RPN
		Yes no @RPN
		'right @RPN'
8	**RPN**	**Wkwkwk**
9	SSN	Yah diketawain @AJI
		EXCL being laughed @AJI
		'Well he just laughed @AJI'

Form of laughter : *wkwk*.
Position : standalone (5, 8)
Context : In this conversation, AJI and SSN were discussing one's intuition to guess someone else's sexual orientation. AJI was fiery in explaining that the intuition about this is innate. Hence, they believed that their and RRK's colleague's intuition when it comes to guessing one's sexual orientation never misses (2). SSN thought that AJI's explanation was funny because they sounded very fiery, shown through the use of capital letters. SSN responded to it by showing laughter just as fiery (5). After that, SSN threw a joke about AJI's guess about RPN was wrong (6), implicitly stating that RPN had a different sexual orientation from AJI's guess. SSN then asked for a clarification to RPN (7). RPN only responded with the laughter "*wkwk*" (8), without actually answering nor denying SSN's query (7).
Positioning : AJI, SSN, and RPN positioned themselves as same-aged friends by using *gua* and *lu* as a colloquial variation of *aku* and *kamu*–meaning I and you in Indonesian, respectively.
Alignment : In the conversation RPN as the one who uttered a laugh did not show any sign that they laughed at the joke directed to them because they found it funny. They laughed in "*wkwk*" to exempt themselves from the question and to take the question lightly. This is different from SSN's laughter (5) that shows the enjoyment function from thinking that AJI's utterance was funny and indirectly agreeing to it. SSN's response was more intense because of the use of capitalized word, while RPN responded more stoically and intentionally called for an open interpretation for other interlocutors. In this case, the use of stance taking in humor can be seen as a conversation whose meaning is constructed and adjusted by the interlocutors (König, 2019).

This section presented various usages of *gua* dan *lu* as one variation of Indonesian colloquial pronouns. According to Ewing (2019), the use of *gua* and *lu* shows social index or how the interlocutors position themselves in an occurring daily conversation. In Jakarta, the use of the pronoun *gua* and *lu* refers to the colloquial variation of the first and second person pronouns (Djenar et al., 2018; Ewing, 2019). All interlocutors in this study come from Jakarta or live long enough in the city; hence the immense use of *gua* and *lu* in their daily conversation.

Moreover, the use of swear words in this study such as *anjir, anjing* ('damn') and *pea* ('dumb') also shows that the interlocutors have a close and equal relationship. The use of swear words as emotive utterance is often used to let out negative emotions such as irritation, anger, or disappointment (Ibda, 2019; Lafreniere et al., 2022). Simultaneously, it is also shown that swear words are frequently used to show the social aspect in a language such as showing one's identity and in-group solidarity (Debray, 2023; Ibda, 2019) as a friendly gesture to signify close interpersonal relationships in youth community (Cho & Tian, 2020; Daly, 2004).

Table 7

Example of Laughing Together while Making Fun of Others

	Interlocutor	Message
1.	SSN	*Gua suruh ini worker nulis nama lengkap sesuai* I order this worker write name complete well-suited KTP ID 'I told this worker to write his full name according to his ID'
2.	SSN	*Eh dia malah nulis* INT he instead write 'Instead he wrote'
3.	SSN	*Gubeng Jaya IV no. 8*
4.	SSN	*ITU ALAMAT ASTAGA* THAT ADDRESS INT 'THAT'S HIS ADDRESS OMG'
5.	SSN	*@RRK @WZN tolong pak* @RRK @WZN help sir '@RRK @WZN send help'
6.	**RPN**	**Wkwkwkw**
7.	**RRK**	**wkwkwkw buruh pea** **wkwkwkw laborer stupid** **'wkwkwkw stupid laborer'**
8.	**WZN**	**Wkwkkw**

Form of laughter	: *wkwk*.
Position	: standalone (7. 9), at the beginning of the utterance (8)
Context	: SSN ranted about a man who could not fill out a form based on their instruction. He wrote his address instead of his name in the name box, even after SSN instruction to fill out the name box according to his ID card (2). SSN then asked WZN and RRK about this matter because they all worked in the same field. RRK and WZN found this hilarious then they laughed (8, 9).
Positioning	: In this sample, the first author, SSN, RRK, RPN, and WZN used the informal variation of the Indonesian language to show their closeness. This can be seen from the use of colloquial pronouns (*gue, gua, w,* and *lo*) in Jakarta's Betawi language, and swear words *pea* (trans.: dumb) (8). By the use of the pronouns *gua* and *lu* and the use of swear words *pea*, shows how the interlocutors are in a comfortable state with one another to use such a choice of language (Lafreniere et al., 2022).
Alignment	: In this conversation, RPN, RRK, and WZN laughed together at the client who filled out the form wrongly. By doing so, this shows that RPN, RRK, and WZN found the accident funny.

Table 8

Example of Laughing while Making Fun of Self

	Interlocutor	Message
1.	EYP	*Pengen nyoba bucin siah gua* Want try slave love INT I 'I want to fall in love'
2.	**EYP**	**WKWKWKWKWKWKWKWKWKK WKWWK**
3.	AUT	WKWKWKWKWWKWKKWKWKK
4.	AUT	*Anjing??* Dog?? What the fuck??

Form of laughter	: *wkwk*.
Position	: standalone (2)
Context	: EYP said that they wanted to be desperately in love, or at least to fall in love with someone (1). The statement was followed with the utterance of "*wkwk*" in capital letters (2) to give an unserious tone against message number (1). AUT was startled with such a statement from EYP then responded with "*wkwk*" (3) followed by a swear word "*anjing*", which contextually translates to "what do you mean?", to show confusion about EYP's sudden declaration.
Positioning	: In this conversation, EYP and AUT positioned themselves as close friends by talking about EYP's love interest and how EYP used the colloquial pronoun "*gua*" to refer to themselves.
Alignment	: In this conversation, EYP laughed at themselves (2) for not believing what they said earlier. Same goes with AUT who was shocked and in disbelief in what EYP said (3). EYP and AUT's disbelief is shown through the use of "*wkwk*" laughter in all capitalized letters to show emotional intensity.

This section shows the presence of inside jokes within the group chat. Interpreting them as indicators of a close relationship leads in building such shared jokes and experiences only they will understand. This aligns with the concept of intersubjectivity (Djenar et al., 2018; Raymond, 2019), defined as a shared understanding fostered through frequent interaction.

The concept of intersubjectivity in this study, in turn, facilitates both deeper conversations and the development of inside jokes. In this study, laughable or humor is argued as one way to contribute to a sense of belonging and strengthen interlocutor relationships by reinforcing a "safe space" for equal participation (Djenar et al., 2018; Higgins, et al. 2021; Yang, 2020). This pre-existing closeness influences the use of "*wkwk*" in particular as a response in a way that reinforces solidarity within interlocutors by positioning themselves close within the group as youth (Jonsson et al., 2019; Raymond, 2019; Spitzmüller et al., 2021). This study aligns with Ewing's proposition (2019) that language carries social significance beyond mere information exchange. Thus, in application, interlocutors might tend to use "*wkwk*" to negotiate their stances and reinforce their relationship towards each other through the use of youth language in laughable contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the functions and strategies of "*wkwk*" as the laughter utterance in Indonesian online conversation, based on its orthography and characteristics. The analysis reveals that all "*wkwk*" utterances are used in informal contexts and are contextually bound to informal situations, regardless of the laughter's position in the conversation. On that account, it confirms previous studies on the use of digital laughter in Indonesian context about the function of online laughter that relies on a sequential position. In this study, the use of informal language across various conversation topics highlights the identity of youth, with laughable contexts serving as key for identifying Indonesian youth language.

Building upon König (2019) work on cross-linguistic digital laughter functions, this study introduces a novel role for "*wkwk*" that is intrinsically tied to the particular setting of the Indonesian context. It is found that "*wkwk*" fosters interaction between interlocutors, implying a closer relationship compared to previous studies on other forms of laughter in different regions. Notably, in Indonesia, "*wkwk*" is used significantly not only to convey laughable topics but also to reinforce and sustain solidarity among participants. Therefore, this study suggests that the function of "*wkwk*" is determined less by conversation topics or laughable contexts and more by how interlocutors use the topics to position themselves towards each other in online conversation.

However, this study is limited by solely analyzing one Indonesian laughter variation ("*wkwk*") and focuses on a specific close-knit age group. This creates opportunities for future research to investigate other Indonesian laughter orthographies ("*haha*", "*hehe*") to broaden the understanding of Indonesian online laughter, and to explore how "*wkwk*" and other laughter variations function across diverse age groups and relationship dynamics within the Indonesian context. By addressing these limitations, future research can further contribute to understanding the roles of digital laughter in specific cultural contexts and social interactions.

ENDNOTE

1. The pronouns *gua* '1sg' and *lu* '2sg' come from Hokkien Chinese and were first introduced by Chinese descendants in Jakarta. From the frequent and intense communication between the Chinese descendant community and Jakarta residents, the pronouns are also acquired into Betawi Malay (Djenar et al., 2018). However, the adaptation of "*gua*" and "*elu*" into everyday language has also shaped societal attitudes toward the language. What began as colloquial

variations has shifted into indicators of perceived arrogance and "*urban hipster*" language, mainly due to their strong association with Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia.

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