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Between Memes and Meanings: Exploring the Linguistic Implications of Gen Z Digital Language on Intergenerational Communication in Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z digital language has transformed contemporary communication through the widespread use of emojis, internet slang, abbreviations, memes, GIFs, and other multimodal digital expressions. While these linguistic innovations facilitate interaction among digitally fluent users, they also present interpretive challenges in educational settings where students, teachers, and administrators possess diverse communicative experiences and generational perspectives. This study examined the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication within the basic educational system and proposed a pedagogical and language development framework to strengthen communication across generations. Employing a concurrent exploratory mixed methods design, the study integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches guided by Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics and Communication Accommodation Theory. Qualitative data were gathered through open-ended written responses in a researcher-developed mixed-methods questionnaire and analyzed through a Gadamerian-informed thematic interpretive process. The findings revealed eight major themes across the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions, demonstrating that digital language functions as an evolving communicative system in which symbolic interpretation, contextual understanding, interpersonal expectations, and communicative intent collectively shape intergenerational communication. Quantitative findings further indicated that both the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions were perceived as Highly Influential, confirming the substantial role of Generation Z digital language in educational communication. The integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence identified three underlying factors—Pragmatic Boundary Alignment, Semiotic Deciphering Friction, and Contextual Dependency—which served as the empirical foundation for the development of the UGNAYAN (Ugnayan ng Generasyon sa Bagong Anyo ng Komunikasyon) Framework. The framework consists of four interconnected pillars: Generational Awareness and Relational Sensitivity, Bidirectional Mentorship and Co-Learning, Institutionalized Netiquette and Capacity Building, and Cultural Integration and Grassroots Media Campaigns. Collectively, the findings emphasize that effective intergenerational communication depends on contextual awareness, reciprocal adaptation, and collaborative meaning-making, offering practical guidance for language education and communication practices within the basic educational system.

Keywords: *Generation Z digital language, intergenerational communication, semiotics, pragmatics, mixed methods, UGNAYAN Framework, language education*

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid digital communication expansion has transformed how individuals construct, negotiate, and interpret meaning across social contexts. Generation Z has developed a distinct linguistic repertoire of memes, emojis, acronyms, abbreviations, internet slang, textisms, and multimodal expressions. Rather than informal substitutes for conventional language, these forms have evolved into meaningful semiotic and pragmatic resources to communicate emotions, identities, intentions, and interpersonal relationships. As digital platforms shape everyday interaction, these linguistic practices increasingly influence communication beyond social media into educational settings.

Educational institutions provide a unique environment where multiple generations interact daily. In basic education, Generation Z students communicate with Millennial and Generation X teachers, administrators, and school personnel whose communicative experiences developed under different technological and linguistic conditions. These generational differences affect interpretations of emojis, internet expressions, abbreviations, humor, implied meanings, and contextual features of digital discourse. Research indicates that age, culture, and generational background influence how individuals understand emojis and digital symbols, increasing the possibility that the same expression conveys different meanings to younger and older communicators (Chen et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024). Although Generation Z regards digital expressions as efficient, engaging, and relational, older educational stakeholders may evaluate them against expectations of clarity, professionalism, appropriateness, and respect. Such differences can produce misunderstanding, relational tension, or communicative distance between students and educators (Bukhari et al., 2025).

Existing literature has examined internet discourse, digital literacy, emoji use, social-media communication, and younger generations' changing linguistic practices. Digital communication studies establish that online meaning depends substantially on context, relationships, communicative intent, and shared knowledge (Crystal, 2011; Tagg, 2023). However, despite increasing scholarly attention to digital communication and teacher–student interaction, limited research has simultaneously examined the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions of Generation Z digital language through qualitative interpretation and quantitative description within Philippine basic education. Previous Philippine research explored teachers' experiences communicating with students through social media, but the combined influence of digital signs, contextual meanings, and generational interpretation in basic educational institutions remains insufficiently investigated (Tarrayo & Oducado, 2022). This gap establishes the need for a contextualized inquiry integrating educational stakeholders' lived experiences with quantitative evidence concerning the extent of Generation Z digital language's linguistic implications.

Grounded in Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics and implemented through a concurrent mixed-methods design, this study explored the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication in selected public and private secondary schools in Olongapo City. Gadamerian hermeneutics recognizes that understanding is shaped by prior experiences, historical and cultural contexts, and continuing dialogue with different perspectives. Through pre-understanding, the hermeneutic circle, and the fusion of horizons, this interpretive orientation provides an appropriate means to examine how students and educators from different generations construct and negotiate digital expressions' meanings (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). The concurrent mixed-methods design enabled the study to integrate qualitative interpretations of communicative experiences with quantitative descriptions of linguistic patterns and implications, generating a comprehensive account of the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Specifically, the study aimed to (1) explore the lived experiences of high school educational community members regarding the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication; (2) determine the extent of these linguistic implications in basic education; (3) identify underlying factors associated with these implications; and (4) develop a localized

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pedagogical and language development framework to strengthen linguistic understanding and communication effectiveness within the educational community.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a concurrent mixed-methods design, in which qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed during the same phase of the investigation. This design was selected to develop a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language by integrating participants' interpretations and communicative experiences with descriptive quantitative evidence. The qualitative strand examined how educational stakeholders understood and negotiated the meanings of textisms, emojis, acronyms, abbreviations, memes, and other forms of digital discourse, while the quantitative strand measured the perceived extent of their semiotic and pragmatic implications for intergenerational communication. The two strands were integrated during the interpretation of the findings through data triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The qualitative component was grounded in Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, which views understanding as an interpretive and dialogic process shaped by individuals' prior experiences, assumptions, historical positions, and sociocultural contexts. Gadamer's concepts of pre-understanding, the hermeneutic circle, dialogue, and the fusion of horizons guided the interpretation of participants' accounts. Accordingly, their responses were not treated merely as fixed statements but as situated expressions of how members of different generational cohorts constructed and negotiated meaning in digitally mediated educational interactions (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

Research Locale

The study was conducted at two secondary educational institutions in Olongapo City, Philippines: Public and Private. The inclusion of one public and one private institution provided two distinct organizational contexts in which digitally mediated communication occurred among students, teachers, non-teaching personnel, and school administrators. These locales allowed the study to examine whether the semiotic and pragmatic implications of Generation Z digital language were observable across different institutional settings rather than being confined to a single type of school.

Participants And Sampling Procedure

The study involved 32 participants drawn from the two selected secondary schools. The participants included junior and senior high school students, teachers, non-teaching personnel, and a school administrator who regularly engaged in digitally mediated communication within their respective institutions. They were selected through non-probability purposive sampling based on their relevance to the phenomenon being investigated and their experience communicating with members of different generations in educational contexts.

The participants represented three active generational cohorts: Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X. Generation Z included individuals born from 1997 to 2012; Millennials included those born from 1981 to 1996; and Generation X included those born from 1965 to 1980. The Generation Z group consisted primarily of students and younger teachers, the Millennial group included mid-career educators, and the Generation X group comprised senior teaching and non-teaching personnel and school administration. Baby Boomers were not included because no active educational stakeholders belonging to that cohort were identified in the participating institutions.

Twenty of the 32 participants were enrolled students aged 13 to 18, constituting 62.5% of the sample. The remaining participants were teaching, non-teaching, and administrative personnel aged 25 to 47. This distribution enabled the study to gather perspectives from both digitally immersed younger

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participants and older educational stakeholders whose linguistic and technological experiences differed from those of Generation Z.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed mixed-methods survey questionnaire conceptually informed by Communication Accommodation Theory, Media Richness Theory, and Sociolinguistic Variation Theory to examine linguistic adjustment, media capacity, and generational language variation.

The instrument comprised three distinct sections. The demographic section gathered information on generational cohort, institutional role, and digital communication frequency to describe sample composition. The quantitative section utilized a Likert scale to measure the perceived influence of Generation Z digital language across semiotic elements like emojis, acronyms, memes, and visual symbols, alongside pragmatic dimensions including tone, intent, context, brevity, humor, sarcasm, respect, and professionalism. The qualitative section featured open-ended questions gathering participant accounts of communication challenges, misunderstandings, adaptive practices, and relational impacts to explore how meanings are constructed and negotiated.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began after the researcher secured the necessary administrative approvals from the University of Luzon Graduate School, the Schools Division Office of Olongapo City, and the administrative heads of the participating institutions. Formal letters were submitted to the appropriate officials, after which the researcher coordinated with department heads and grade-level coordinators regarding participant recruitment and questionnaire administration.

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered concurrently using the same mixed-methods instrument. The questionnaire was distributed through secure Google Forms links to facilitate participation and accommodate the digital communication practices of the selected cohorts. The quantitative section generated numerical ratings concerning the semiotic and pragmatic implications of digital language, while the open-ended section generated participants' written accounts of their experiences, interpretations, misunderstandings, and communication adjustments.

After data collection, the quantitative and qualitative datasets were initially processed as distinct but complementary strands. The numerical responses were organized for descriptive statistical analysis, while the open-ended responses were retained in their original form for interpretive analysis. The findings from both strands were subsequently compared and integrated through data triangulation. This integration was used to identify areas of convergence, complementarity, and variation between the statistical patterns and the participants' lived experiences.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the participants according to age, generational cohort, institutional role, and type of school. These measures provided a descriptive overview of the composition and distribution of the sample before the principal variables were examined.

The weighted mean was computed for each item to determine the perceived extent to which Generation Z digital language influenced intergenerational communication along the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions. The standard deviation was used to determine the degree of consistency or variability among participants' responses. These descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to examine both the central tendency of the ratings and the extent to which perceptions differed among Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X participants.

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Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative responses were analyzed using a Gadamerian-informed thematic interpretive process. Participants' written accounts were retained in their original form and read repeatedly to develop familiarity with their language, experiences, and perspectives. Interpretation proceeded through a continuous movement between individual statements and the broader context of each participant's account, consistent with the hermeneutic circle.

Meaningful statements related to digital-language use, interpretation, tone, contextual meaning, misunderstanding, communication adjustment, and generational difference were identified and grouped according to recurring patterns. These patterns were progressively organized into categories and broader themes representing the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions of participants' experiences. Throughout this process, the researcher considered how the participants' prior experiences, generational positions, and institutional roles shaped their interpretations.

The analysis also involved a fusion of horizons between the participants' accounts and the researcher's developing understanding of the phenomenon. Rather than imposing predetermined meanings on the responses, interpretations were repeatedly reconsidered in relation to the complete dataset. The resulting themes were then examined alongside the quantitative findings to determine whether participants' narratives explained, supported, expanded, or complicated the patterns reflected in the numerical data.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Integration occurred during the interpretation stage through data triangulation. Quantitative findings identified the perceived extent and variability of the semiotic and pragmatic implications of Generation Z digital language, while qualitative findings explained how and why these implications were experienced by participants. Areas of convergence and complementarity between the two strands were used to identify the principal communicative issues and underlying factors affecting intergenerational communication.

The integrated findings subsequently served as the empirical foundation for developing the pedagogical and language development UGNAYAN Framework, which was designed to promote generational awareness, reciprocal learning, contextual interpretation, appropriate code-switching, institutional netiquette, and clearer communication expectations within basic education.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary and commenced only after institutional approval had been obtained. Prospective participants received an information sheet explaining the objectives of the research, the procedures involved, the expected duration of participation, and the intended academic use of the data. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that no coercion, administrative pressure, financial compensation, academic incentive, or institutional privilege was attached to participation.

Informed consent was obtained from adult participants, while the necessary parental or guardian consent and participant assent were secured for minors. Participants were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw without penalty. Personally identifying information was excluded from the analysis and presentation of findings, and the collected digital data were stored in encrypted folders to safeguard confidentiality and anonymity.

RESULTS

This study examined the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication within the basic educational system through a concurrent mixed-methods design. The findings are organized according to the four research objectives. The first section presents the participants' lived experiences along the semiotic and pragmatic dimensions. The succeeding sections

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report the quantitative extent of these linguistic implications, the underlying factors identified in the study, and the pedagogical and language development framework derived from the integrated findings.

Lived Experiences of High School Educational Community Members on the Linguistic Implications of Generation Z Digital Language on Intergenerational Communication

The first research objective explored the lived experiences of members of the high school educational community regarding the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication. Guided by Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, the qualitative analysis examined how participants interpreted, negotiated, and reconstructed meaning through their previous experiences, generational positions, and communicative expectations. The findings were organized into two overarching linguistic dimensions: semiotics and pragmatics. Across these dimensions, Generation Z digital language emerged as more than a collection of contemporary slang, abbreviations, emojis, and internet expressions; it functioned as a communicative system through which students, teachers, and school personnel constructed meanings and negotiated relationships within educational settings.

Semiotic Dimension

The semiotic analysis generated four major themes: The Digitalization of the Pedagogical Space, Semantic Divergence and Alienation, Acceleration of Meaning Construction, and The Visceral Reality of Misreading. These themes demonstrate that digital expressions operate as socially and culturally situated signs whose meanings extend beyond literal forms. From a Gadamerian perspective, meaning develops through interpretive dialogue among communicators who bring different historical and cultural horizons to the interaction (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021).

Theme 1. The Digitalization of the Pedagogical Space

The first major theme, *The Digitalization of the Pedagogical Space*, reflects how educational communication moves into digitally mediated environments where formal academic discourse and informal online interaction coexist. The subtheme *De-contextualization of Class Boundaries* captures how Generation Z digital language gradually blurred distinctions between formal educational communication and informal interaction. Abbreviations, emojis, memes, slang, and textisms became embedded in exchanges among students, teachers, and school personnel.

Participants described digital language as facilitating faster, engaging interaction while creating difficulties for stakeholders less familiar with emerging expressions. Participant 14 explained:

> *"Gen Z's digital language impacts communication in our school by making interactions faster, more informal, and more engaging. Students often use abbreviations, emojis, slang, and internet expressions when communicating with their peers. While this can help students express themselves easily, it may sometimes create misunderstandings between students, teachers, and school staff who are less familiar with these terms."*

Participant 16 similarly emphasized:

> *"Among students, teachers, and school staff who are chronically online, Gen Z's digital language help in forming bonds by relating into funny memes and references. But at the same time, it can be confusing to those who are not chronically online and might misinterpret the message."*

Participant 24 noted:

> *"By using Gen Z's digital language it helps communication became faster and more engaging among students, teachers, and staff through chats and the online platforms."*

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These narratives show that digital language serves as a resource for accessibility, efficiency, bonding, and engagement while challenging traditional formal communication expectations. Viewed through Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, these contrasting interpretations demonstrate the role of *pre-understanding* in meaning construction. Meaning is not inherent in emojis or abbreviations alone but is negotiated between expression and interpreter (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; McCulloch, 2019).

Theme 2. Semantic Divergence and Alienation

The second major theme, *Semantic Divergence and Alienation*, emerged from accounts of how identical digital expressions carry different meanings across generations. The subtheme *Hierarchical Strain and Respect Mismatch* reflects recurring tensions surrounding professionalism, formality, and respect. Expressions intended as casual or humorous were sometimes interpreted by educators as inappropriate or disrespectful due to differing standards of institutional decorum.

Participant 2 explained:

"Gen Z's digital language helps students to connect with each other quickly, but it may lead to a misunderstanding with teachers who will find the casual tone different."

Participant 28 described a more pronounced divide:

"Gen Z's digital language creates a noticeable generational divide that slows down formal school workflows. While it enables students to express themselves quickly and build casual rapport among peers, it often alienates older teachers and administrative staff who find the informal shorthand disrespectful or confusing."

Participant 7 illustrated:

"Gen Z students who use online slangs in communication between student and teacher or someone older tend to end with the elder asking what it means and the student telling it and eventually using it from time to time to either fit in or just cause. Sometimes its good seeing elder understand and use it but overuse of the slang makes it annoying and tend to be not used."

From a Gadamerian perspective, these findings illustrate the *fusion of horizons*, where understanding becomes possible when individuals remain open to perspectives beyond their own (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). The findings align with Communication Accommodation Theory, where effective communication depends on adjusting communicative practices to meet others' expectations (Giles et al., 2023).

Theme 3. Acceleration of Meaning Construction

The third major theme, *Acceleration of Meaning Construction*, indicates that Generation Z digital language transformed the pace at which communication is produced, interpreted, and responded to. The subtheme *Fragmented Communication Rhythms* describes how abbreviations, slang, and emojis enabled students to exchange ideas quickly while requiring extra interpretation from educators, thereby disrupting intergenerational communication rhythms.

Participant 11 noted:

"it makes talking with peers quick but often confuses teachers and staff."

Participant 17 described:

"In my experience, it makes communication faster among students, but sometimes teachers and staff do not understand some of the slang or abbreviations we use."

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Participant 22 recognized both dimensions:

"Gen Z digital language makes communication faster and more relatable among the students po, but it can sometimes confuse teachers and staff especially if they dont know the meanings."

Viewed through Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, understanding develops through continuous interpretive movement between expressions and broader contexts. Communication delays originate not from the digital medium itself, but from differences in contextual familiarity and shared understanding (Crystal, 2011; McCulloch, 2019).

Theme 4. The Visceral Reality of Misreading

The fourth major theme, *The Visceral Reality of Misreading*, reveals that digital language implications encompass emotional and interpersonal consequences. The subtheme *Affective Anxiety and Cognitive Load*reflects emotional and cognitive demands—such as confusion, hesitation, frustration, and uncertainty—associated with interpreting unfamiliar expressions across generations.

Participant 18 described:

"Sometimes students think they're just being expressive, but teachers may misunderstand the message because they are unfamiliar with the slang or emojis being used. This can lead to confusion and make students feel like they are not understood."

Participant 9 emphasized:

"There are times when students and teachers understand the same message differently because of the words or expressions used online. This sometimes creates unnecessary misunderstandings even if no one intended to offend anyone."

Participant 26 explained:

"When teachers or staff don't know the meaning of some digital expressions, communication becomes slower because they have to ask what the words mean. Sometimes this becomes frustrating for both sides."

Viewed through Gadamerian Hermeneutics, understanding is dialogical and develops through continual negotiation of shared meaning. Differences in digital communication practices contribute to perceived distance between students and educators (Tarrayo & Oducado, 2022), but effective intergenerational communication develops through openness, dialogue, and the *fusion of horizons* (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

Pragmatic Dimension

The pragmatic analysis revealed that the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language extend beyond word and symbol meanings to encompass contextual communication interpretation in educational settings. Participants consistently described communication as shaped by speakers' intentions, situational contexts, and generational expectations. Although Generation Z digital language was perceived as facilitating efficiency, engagement, and connection, differences in contextual understanding frequently contributed to misunderstanding among students, teachers, and school personnel. Four major themes emerged: Contextual Re-mapping of Formal Channels, Interpersonal Friction in Tone Decoding, The Compression of Conversational Windows, and Somatic Responses to Perceived Linguistic Slopes.

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Theme 1. Contextual Re-mapping of Formal Channels

The first major theme, Contextual Re-mapping of Formal Channels, demonstrates that Generation Z digital language transformed contextual expectations governing educational communication. Digital communication platforms—including Google Workspace, Microsoft Teams, and institutional group chats—have evolved into hybrid environments where formal academic discourse coexists with informal digital practices. The subtheme Hybridization of Institutional Space illustrates how abbreviations, internet slang, emojis, and textisms are now used within channels traditionally associated with professionalism.

Participant 9 emphasized its influence on professionalism:

"its impacts the professionalism and proper way of communicating between one another in school."

Participant 15 acknowledged that contextual awareness remains essential:

"Gen z's digital language makes communication easier and relatable for students. However, some can create misunderstandings to teachers and workers. So, it is still important to know when to use formality."

Participant 4 noted broader institutional restructuring:

"The impact of Gen Z's digital language extends far beyond simple slang, fundamentally restructuring the rules of engagement, emotional expression, and institutional operations within schools."

Viewed through Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, these contrasting interpretations illustrate the role of *pre-understanding* in shaping communication. Individuals interpret messages through previous experiences, habits, and expectations rather than literal meanings alone (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). These differences in communicative practices between students and educators contribute to perceived distance within educational settings (Tarrayo & Oducado, 2022).

Theme 2. Interpersonal Friction in Tone Decoding

The second major theme, *Interpersonal Friction in Tone Decoding*, reveals that Generation Z digital language influences the interpretation of interpersonal tone. Differing interpretations frequently resulted in misunderstandings concerning politeness, friendliness, professionalism, and respect. The subtheme *Perceived Passive-Aggression* illustrates how informal digital expressions used without disrespectful intent were evaluated by educators as abrupt, emotionally distant, or lacking professionalism.

Participant 22 explained:

"There are some made-up terminologies amongst gen-z that the older people have trouble understanding. The main problem is that the younger generation got used to how they speak informally and doesn't realize it became an expression."

Participant 13 shared:

"It changes the way of communication between students, teachers and school staff, positive and negative way."

Participant 10 stated:

"Genz Z's language reshapes how students, teachers, and staff interact, sometimes bridging gaps but also creating challenges."

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Viewed through Gadamerian Hermeneutics, communicators interpret tone according to previous assumptions rather than literal decoding. This aligns with Communication Accommodation Theory, where communication effectiveness depends on adapting communicative behaviors (Giles et al., 2023). Genuine understanding becomes possible through the *fusion of horizons* when individuals become receptive to perspectives beyond their own (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

Theme 3. The Compression of Conversational Windows

The third major theme, The Compression of Conversational Windows, demonstrates how Generation Z digital language reshaped expectations regarding communication pace, timing, and responsiveness. The subtheme Asynchronous Expectation Pressures illustrates that while students anticipate immediate understanding and rapid exchanges, educators and school personnel require additional time to interpret unfamiliar abbreviations and slang before responding.

Participant 27 explained:

"It makes communication faster and more engaging, but sometimes causes misunderstandings between generations."

Participant 5 shared:

"it impacts it in a way teachers and other school staff wants to learn the genz language and to use it for communicating with us gen z in a way we could really understand what they mean."

Participant 20 stated:

"Gen Z digital language makes chats more engaging but can cause confusion between students and adults due to slang and abbreviations."

Viewed through Gadamerian Hermeneutics, expectations regarding communication speed are shaped by prior experiences and contextual assumptions. Communication depends on contextual cues and shared background knowledge rather than literal forms alone (Crystal, 2011; McCulloch, 2019). Differences in contextual frameworks produce communication delays, though educators' willingness to learn digital expressions demonstrates an openness to dialogue and adaptation.

Theme 4. Somatic Responses to Perceived Linguistic Slopes

The fourth major theme, *Somatic Responses to Perceived Linguistic Slopes*, reveals that pragmatic implications influence emotional and relational experiences. The subtheme *Emotional Exhaustion and Fatigue*reflects the emotional consequences, such as confusion, hesitation, uncertainty, and frustration, associated with interpreting unfamiliar expressions across generational boundaries.

Participant 10 explained:

"It makes things harder to understand because if the generational barrier."

Participant 21 shared:

"By the Gen Z's language it has a lot of impact from communication, it can lead to misunderstanding because of the language they use that they don't familiar with."

Participant 32 stated:

"In my point of view, it impacts the understanding and the feelings of every person, its shows that we all have different perspectives and feelings in understanding the different slang and word in each different generation in the school which some can understand and related to the language."

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Viewed through Gadamerian Hermeneutics, understanding is dialogical and develops through an ongoing process of interpretation rather than simple information transmission (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Genuine understanding becomes possible through openness to alternative perspectives and the continual negotiation of shared meaning (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). Effective intergenerational communication depends not only on linguistic competence but also on openness, empathy, and mutual interpretation.

Quantitative Extent of the Linguistic Implication of Generation Z Digital Language on Intergenerational Communication in the Basic Educational System

Following the qualitative exploration of participants lived experiences, the study quantitatively examined the extent of the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication within the basic educational system. The quantitative findings describe the demographic characteristics of the participants, their engagement with digital communication platforms, and the extent to which Generation Z digital language influences communication from the perspectives of semiotics and pragmatics**.** Descriptive statistical analyses, including frequency distributions, weighted means, standard deviations, and descriptive equivalents, were employed to determine the prevalence and perceived influence of Generation Z digital language among members of the educational community.

Distribution of Participants

Table 1. *Distribution of Participants by Generational Cohort*

Cohort	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gen Z	24	75.0
Millennial	4	12.5
Gen X	4	12.5
Total	**32**	**100.0**

The study involved 32 participants representing multiple generational cohorts and educational stakeholders within the basic education system. As presented in Table 1, Generation Z constituted the largest proportion of the participants (75.0%; n = 24**)**, while Millennials and Generation X each accounted for 12.5% (n = 4) of the sample. This distribution reflects the predominance of digital-native participants while ensuring that perspectives from older generations were likewise represented in examining intergenerational communication.

Table 2. *Distribution of Participants by Institutional Role*

Role	Frequency	Percent (%)
Student	20	62.5
Teacher	11	34.4
Admin	1	3.1
Total	**32**	**100.0**

With respect to institutional roles, students comprised the majority of the participants (62.5%; n = 20), followed by teachers (34.4%**;** n = 11) and school administrators (3.1%; n = 1). This participant composition enabled the study to capture perspectives from the principal users of Generation Z digital language while incorporating the experiences of educators and administrators who regularly engage in intergenerational communication within educational settings.

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Table 3. *Distribution of Participants by Type of School*

Type of School	Frequency	Percent (%)
Private	16	50.0
Public	16	50.0
Total	**32**	**100.0**

Regarding institutional affiliation, an equal distribution was observed between public and private schools. Each educational sector contributed 16 participants (50.0%), providing balanced representation across institutional contexts. This distribution ensured that the findings reflected communicative experiences from both public and private educational environments and minimized institutional bias in examining the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language.

Table 4 *Weighted Mean Scores for Digital Platform Engagement and Familiarity*

Indicator (Part 1 Survey Items)	Std. Deviation	Mean	Rank	Descriptive Equivalent
P1Q1: Frequency of using digital platforms for school communication	0.833	3.62	4	HI
P1Q2: Commonality of digital platforms used for school communication	1.279	4.09	3	HI
P1Q3: Frequency of encountering Gen Z digital language in school chats	1.120	4.19	1	HI
P1Q4: Familiarity level with Gen Z digital language (emojis, slang, memes)	1.257	4.03	2	HI
Overall	1.122	3.982	-	HI

Legend:

Statistical Limits	Descriptive Equivalent	Abbreviation
4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Influential	VHI
3.41-4.20	Highly Influential	HI
2.61-3. 40	Moderately Influential	MI
1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Influential	SI
1.00 – 1.80	Fairly Influential	NI

To establish participants' exposure to digital communication, the study measured their platform engagement and familiarity with Generation Z digital language. As presented in Table 4, all indicators obtained Highly Influential (HI) descriptive equivalents, yielding an overall weighted mean of 3.982 (SD = 1.122). These findings indicate that digital communication platforms and Generation Z digital language are highly integrated into participants' daily educational interactions.

Among the four indicators, the frequency of encountering Generation Z digital language in school chatsobtained the highest mean (M = 4.19, SD = 1.120), suggesting participants regularly encounter contemporary digital expressions during routine school communication. This was followed by commonality of digital platforms used for school communication (M = 4.09, SD = 1.279) and familiarity with Generation Z digital language, including emojis, slang, and memes (M = 4.03, SD = 1.257). Meanwhile, the frequency of using digital platforms for school communication recorded a mean of 3.62 (SD = 0.833), which likewise falls within the Highly Influential category.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that educational community members regularly utilize digital platforms for academic communication and are highly exposed to Generation Z digital language. The consistently high mean scores indicate that digital communication has become an integral component of educational interaction, providing an appropriate context for examining the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication.

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Table 5 *Mean Scores for the Linguistic Implications of Gen Z Digital Language along the Aspect of Semiotics*

Item Code	Indicator Statement	Std. Dev.	Mean	Rank	Descriptive Equivalent
P2AQ1	Emojis in school-related digital messages affect how I understand the sender's feelings or tone	0.920	4.16	1	HI
P2AQ2	Acronyms or internet shorthand by Gen Z (e.g., "brb," "OMG," "idk") influence how clearly I understand school-related messages	0.948	4.06	2	HI
P2AQ3	Visual symbols or reaction emojis affect the meaning I assign to digital communication in school	0.893	3.91	3	HI
P2AQ4	Memes, GIFs, or image-based expressions influence how I interpret a message in academic conversations	0.976	3.63	4	HI
P2AQ5	Gen Z digital symbols make school-related communication easier to understand across age groups	0.801	3.56	5	HI
P2AQ6	Gen Z digital symbols sometimes make school-related communication confusing across age groups	0.716	3.56	5	HI
P2AQ7	My response to a message changes depending on the emoji or symbol used in the message.	0.564	4.06	2	HI
P2AQ8	The meaning of digital symbols in school communication differs across generations.	1.091	3.81	4	HI
P2AQ9	Gen Z digital symbols affect the clarity of instructions, reminders, or announcements in school.	0.641	3.91	3	HI
P2AQ10	The unique slang, emojis, and symbols used in Gen Z language affect how satisfied students, teachers, and school staff feel with their conversations.	1.047	3.53	5	HI
	Overall Semiotic Aspect Mean	**0.840**	**3.82**	**-**	**HI**

Legend:

Statistical Limits	Descriptive Equivalent	Abbreviation
4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Influential	VHI
3.41-4.20	Highly Influential	HI
2.61-3. 40	Moderately Influential	MI
1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Influential	SI
1.00 – 1.80	Fairly Influential	NI

To determine the extent to which Generation Z digital language influences intergenerational communication through semiotic features, participants evaluated ten indicators related to emojis, internet abbreviations, visual symbols, memes, and digital expressions in school communication. As presented in Table 5, all indicators obtained descriptive equivalents of Highly Influential (HI), with an overall weighted mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.840). These findings indicate that semiotic elements exert a substantial influence on how educational community members construct, interpret, and negotiate meaning in digital communication.

Among the ten indicators, the statement "Emojis in school-related digital messages affect how I understand the sender's feelings or tone" obtained the highest mean (M = 4.16, SD = 0.920), indicating participants consistently relied on emojis as key cues for interpreting emotional intent. This was followed by two indicators sharing the second highest mean (M = 4.06): the influence of Generation Z acronyms and internet shorthand on message clarity (SD = 0.948) and the effect of emojis and symbols on participants' responses to messages(SD = 0.564). These results suggest that abbreviated digital expressions and visual symbols significantly shape message interpretation and response formulation in educational settings.

Indicators regarding visual symbols affecting assigned meaning (M = 3.91, SD = 0.893) and the influence of digital symbols on the clarity of school instructions, reminders, and announcements (M = 3.91, SD = 0.641) likewise received Highly Influential ratings. Participants also rated the influence of memes,

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GIFs, and image-based expressions in academic conversations (M = 3.63, SD = 0.976) and the role of digital symbols in facilitating communication across age groups (M = 3.56, SD = 0.801) as highly influential. The corresponding statement that Generation Z digital symbols sometimes make communication confusing across age groupsobtained the same mean (M = 3.56, SD = 0.716), showing participants recognized both communicative advantages and interpretive challenges. Perceptions that digital symbols differ in meaning across generations(M = 3.81, SD = 1.091) and that Generation Z slang, emojis, and symbols influence conversational satisfaction among students, teachers, and school staff (M = 3.53, SD = 1.047) further support the widespread influence of digital semiotic resources.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that semiotic features of Generation Z digital language are an influential component of basic educational communication. High ratings across all indicators suggest that these digital signs are integral resources through which meaning is constructed. Comparable ratings for statements describing both improved communication and increased misunderstanding indicate that Generation Z digital language simultaneously facilitates communication while introducing interpretive challenges across generational boundaries. These quantitative findings reinforce the qualitative results showing that digital symbols function as culturally situated signs negotiated through participants' differing horizons of understanding.

Table 6. *Mean Scores for the Linguistic Implications of Gen Z Digital Language along the Aspect of Pragmatics*

Item Code	Indicator Statement	Std. Dev.	Mean	Rank	Descriptive Equivalent
P2BQ1	Brevity or shortened message style affects the clarity of communication across generations.	0.859	**4.19**	2	HI
P2BQ2	Context is necessary for me to correctly interpret Gen Z expressions used in digital messages.	0.842	**4.00**	4	HI
P2BQ3	Gen Z digital language affects intergenerational understanding in online educational communication.	0.440	**4.00**	4	HI
P2BQ4	Gen Z digital language affects whether a message is perceived as respectful or inappropriate in academic contexts.	0.567	**4.47**	1	VHI
P2BQ5	Gen Z language often carries implied meanings that are not obvious to all generations.	0.491	**4.22**	2	VHI
P2BQ6	Humor, irony, or sarcasm in Gen Z digital language influences how messages are interpreted in school settings.	0.842	**3.75**	5	HI
P2BQ7	Implied meanings like “rizz”, and “cap no cap” in Gen Z digital language sometimes cause misunderstandings in school-related messages.	0.818	**4.09**	3	HI
P2BQ8	Pragmatic features of Gen Z language influence the quality of interaction between students and school personnel.	0.564	**4.06**	3	HI
P2BQ9	The communicative intent behind Gen Z expressions is not always interpreted the same way by different generations.	0.508	**4.00**	4	HI

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P2BQ10	The intended tone of Gen Z digital language affects how messages are understood in school-related communication.	0.683	**4.28**	2	VHI
	Overall Pragmatic Aspect Mean	**0.661**	**4.11**	**-**	**HI**

Legend:

Statistical Limits	Descriptive Equivalent	Abbreviation
4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Influential	VHI
3.41-4.20	Highly Influential	HI
2.61-3. 40	Moderately Influential	MI
1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Influential	SI
1.00 – 1.80	Fairly Influential	NI

The pragmatic dimension was quantitatively examined to determine the extent to which Generation Z digital language influences contextual interpretation, communicative intent, interpersonal tone, and intergenerational understanding within the basic educational system. The findings presented in Table 6 indicate that the pragmatic implications of Generation Z digital language were generally perceived to be highly influential, with several indicators reaching the Very Highly Influential (VHI**)** category, demonstrating that participants regarded contextual interpretation as a critical component of effective educational communication.

Among the indicators, the statement "Gen Z digital language affects whether a message is perceived as respectful or inappropriate in academic contexts" obtained the highest weighted mean (M = 4.47, SD = 0.567**),** receiving a descriptive equivalent of Very Highly Influential (VHI)**.** This finding indicates that participants strongly recognized the importance of contextual interpretation in shaping perceptions of professionalism, courtesy, and respect within educational communication. Likewise, the statement "Gen Z language often carries implied meanings that are not obvious to all generations" recorded a mean of 4.22 (SD = 0.491**)**, also corresponding to the Very Highly Influential category. These findings suggest that participants consistently perceived implied meanings, contextual nuances, and generational differences as significant factors influencing communication between students, teachers, and school personnel.

The remaining indicators were consistently rated Highly Influential (HI). The influence of brevity or shortened message styles on communication clarity across generations obtained a mean of 4.19 (SD = 0.859)**,** while implied expressions such as "rizz" and "cap/no cap" contributing to misunderstandings recorded a mean of 4.09 (SD = 0.818)**.** Participants likewise rated the influence of pragmatic features on the quality of interaction between students and school personnel with a mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.564)**.** Three additional indicators—the necessity of contextual understanding when interpreting Generation Z expressions**,** the influence of digital language on intergenerational understanding**,** and differences in interpreting communicative intent across generations—each obtained a mean of 4.00**,** indicating consistent agreement regarding the importance of contextual interpretation in educational communication. Finally, the influence of humor, irony, and sarcasm on message interpretation recorded a mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.842)**,** which also falls within the Highly Influential category, indicating that figurative and implied meanings remain significant components of digital interaction.

Overall, the quantitative findings demonstrate that the pragmatic features of Generation Z digital language exert a substantial influence on intergenerational communication within the basic educational system. Participants consistently acknowledged that communication effectiveness depends not only on the literal meanings of digital expressions but also on the contextual interpretation of communicative intent, interpersonal tone, implied meanings, and social appropriateness. The presence of two Very Highly Influential indicators, coupled with consistently high ratings across the remaining statements, suggests that contextual interpretation represents one of the most significant linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language. These findings further reinforce the qualitative results presented earlier, wherein

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participants described communication challenges as emerging from differences in contextual understanding, communicative expectations, and generational perspectives rather than from the linguistic expressions themselves. Collectively, the quantitative and qualitative findings provide converging evidence that pragmatic competence plays a central role in promoting effective intergenerational communication within contemporary educational environments.

Table 7 *Matrix of Identified Factors Influencing the Linguistic Implications of Gen Z Digital Language*

Identified Factor	Items & Means	Core Quantitative Drivers	Coupled Qualitative Themes	Linguistic on Communication Effectiveness
Factor 1: Pragmatic Boundary Alignment	**P2BQ4 (M = 4.47)**	Respect/propriety	**Theme 1: Preservation of Hierarchical Respect** Slang usage or over-casual tones leak into professional threads, shifting formal student-teacher boundaries.	**Relational / Behavioral:** Dictates whether an online message fosters rapport or is dismissed as unprofessional and inappropriate.
	P2BQ10 (M = 4.28)	Intended tone impact		
	P2BQ8 (M = 4.06)	Personnel interaction		
Factor 2: Semiotic Deciphering Friction	**P2AQ1 (M = 4.16)**	Emoji-driven tone	**Theme 2: Visual Saturation vs. Generational Decoding Gaps** Emojis successfully stabilize text tone, but niche acronyms create a multi-step translation process for older faculty.	**Structural / Cognitive:** Dictates processing speed and reading comprehension efficiency across distinct age demographics.
	P2AQ2 (M = 4.06)	Shorthand decoding		
	P2AQ8 (M = 3.81)	Generational split		
Factor 3: Contextual Dependency	**P2BQ5 (M = 4.22)**	Opacity of implied meanings	**Theme 3: Message Omission and Intent Guesswork** Highly brief and clipped messages often omit critical framing details, necessitating time-consuming follow-ups.	**Operational / Functional:** Dictates administrative accuracy and the immediate clarity of directives, instructions, or inquiries.

To synthesize the qualitative and quantitative findings, the study identified the principal factors influencing the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication in basic education. Integrating participants' lived experiences with survey results revealed three overarching factors explaining how communication is interpreted, negotiated, and experienced across generations. Guided by Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, these factors emphasize that communication effectiveness depends on prior experiences, contextual understanding, and willingness to negotiate shared meaning.

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Factor 1. ***Pragmatic Boundary Alignment***

Pragmatic Boundary Alignment describes how Generation Z digital language influences perceptions of professionalism, appropriateness, and interpersonal respect. Quantitative findings indicate the strongest contributor was the indicator "Gen Z digital language affects whether a message is perceived as respectful or inappropriate in academic contexts" (M = 4.47), followed by intended tone (M = 4.28) and quality of interaction between students and school personnel (M = 4.06).

Qualitative findings reinforce that communication challenges emerge when informal digital expressions enter institutional environments governed by expectations of professionalism. Participant 4 explained:

> *"The main issue isn't a malicious intent to be rude. Rather, it's that the casual nature of online messaging tricks students into treating an educator like a peer. When textisms leak into formal inquiries, it can erode the professional distance required to maintain an objective learning environment." (P4)*

Viewed through Gadamerian Hermeneutics, communicators interpret messages according to their own historical and cultural horizons. Students perceive informal expressions as natural, whereas educators evaluate them through expectations of professionalism and respect. Consistent with Communication Accommodation Theory, communication effectiveness improves when communicators adapt their linguistic practices to audience expectations (Giles et al., 2023).

Factor 2. ***Semiotic Deciphering Friction***

Semiotic Deciphering Friction reflects interpretive challenges associated with visual symbols, emojis, internet slang, and abbreviated expressions. Quantitative findings show emoji-driven interpretation of tone (M = 4.16) and shorthand decoding (M = 4.06) were the strongest contributors, with generational differences in symbol interpretation (M = 3.81) further demonstrating variation in meaning construction.

Participants described how visual elements facilitate communication among digitally fluent users while creating barriers for educators unfamiliar with emerging digital conventions. Participant 8 stated:

> *"When a student sends a message packed with niche acronyms, it turns into a puzzle. I have to spend time deciphering what should have been a straightforward question, which disrupts administrative workflows." (P8)*

In Gadamerian terms, understanding depends upon pre-understanding and interpretive horizons. Internet language relies upon shared cultural experiences that may not be equally accessible across generations (McCulloch, 2019), requiring communicators to negotiate meaning beyond literal forms.

Factor 3. ***Contextual Dependency***

Contextual Dependency refers to the degree to which successful interpretation depends upon contextual information beyond the message itself. This factor was supported by indicators showing "Gen Z language often carries implied meanings that are not obvious to all generations" (M = 4.22), brevity or shortened message style (M = 4.19), and the necessity of contextual understanding (M = 4.00).

Qualitative narratives demonstrated that abbreviated messages frequently require additional clarification before achieving shared understanding. Participant 8 explained:

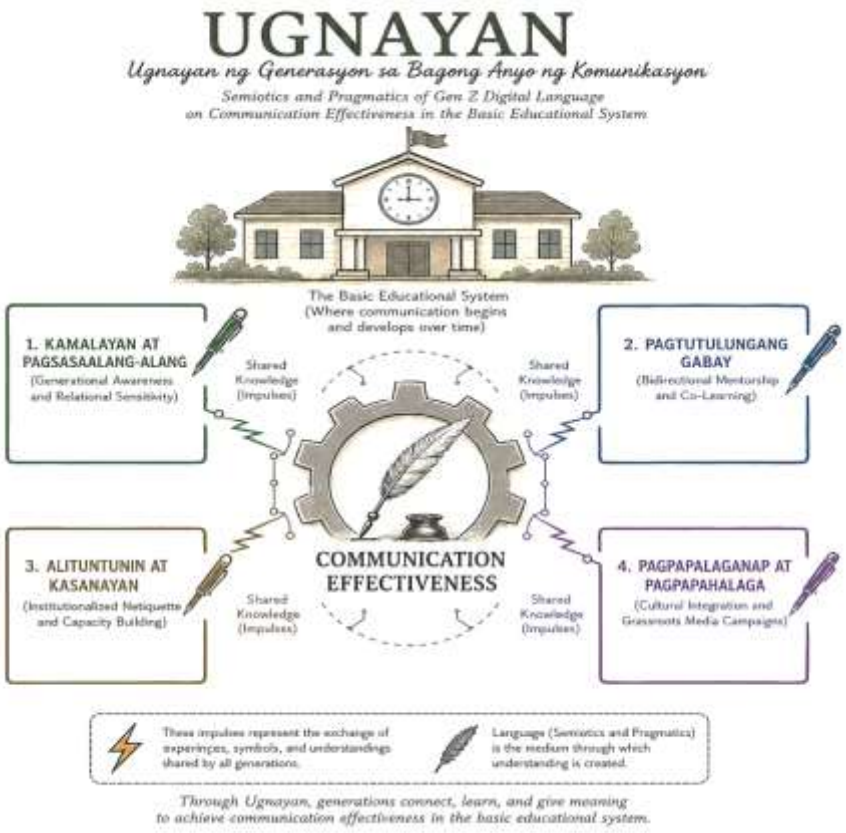
> *"We regularly receive short, context-free messages like 'Sir, I can't access the portal.' We then have to spend time sending multiple follow-up messages just to find out who the student is and what class they are in. This conversational style turns what could be a single efficient exchange into an ongoing feedback loop." (P8)*

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Under Gadamerian Hermeneutics, understanding develops through interaction between linguistic expressions and broader contexts. Communication depends upon contextual cues and shared assumptions (Crystal, 2011), often relying on implicit cultural knowledge rather than explicit explanation (McCulloch, 2019).

Synthesis of the Identified Factors

Together, Pragmatic Boundary Alignment, Semiotic Deciphering Friction, and Contextual Dependencyprovide an integrated explanation of Generation Z digital language's implications in basic education. Factor 1 emphasizes professionalism and interpersonal expectations, Factor 2 highlights visual and symbolic interpretation differences, and Factor 3 underscores contextual understanding in constructing shared meaning. The convergence of qualitative themes and quantitative evidence demonstrates that communication effectiveness depends on communicators' capacity to negotiate contextual meaning, recognize generational differences, and engage in dialogical interpretation, providing the empirical foundation for the proposed pedagogical framework.



Pedagogical and Language Development UGNAYAN Framework

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings culminated in the UGNAYAN (Ugnayan ng Generasyon sa Bagong Anyo ng Komunikasyon) Framework, a pedagogical model addressing Generation Z digital language in basic education. Grounded in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, the

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model views digital language as an evolving communhhicative resource requiring shared understanding, contextual awareness, and collaborative adaptation rather than elimination (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). An interpretive synthesis of participant recommendations, qualitative themes, and survey data yielded four foundational pillars spanning individual, interpersonal, institutional, and community dimensions.

The first pillar, Generational Awareness and Relational Sensitivity, emphasizes audience, context, intended tone, and institutional expectations. It advocates situational code-switching, where communicators adjust language according to setting while maintaining professionalism and respect. This aligns with Gadamer's focus on recognizing one's own horizon while remaining open to others (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

The second pillar, Bidirectional Mentorship and Co-Learning, promotes reciprocal learning where students share insights on digital language and online culture while educators offer expertise in academic discourse and professionalism. Through reverse mentoring and generational synergy, knowledge flows bidirectionally to negotiate shared meaning.

The third pillar, Institutionalized Netiquette and Capacity Building, highlights the need for formal digital communication guidelines and ongoing professional development. Combining clear organizational policies with training minimizes misunderstanding and builds capacity for interpreting digital expressions accurately in formal contexts.

The fourth pillar, Cultural Integration and Grassroots Media Campaigns, embeds communicative awareness into daily school life through localized media, infographics, classroom discussions, and curriculum integration explaining Gen Z expressions, ensuring sustained engagement beyond isolated workshops.

Operated as a dynamic, cyclical system centered on Communication Effectiveness, the UGNAYAN model relies on semiotics and pragmatics to negotiate meaning through continuous exchanges of shared knowledge impulses. Rather than functioning as isolated interventions, the four pillars operate as an integrated system of mutual adaptation where stakeholders continually construct shared understanding through dialogue, reflection, and collaborative meaning-making, transforming generational differences into opportunities for institutional learning and inclusivity.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication in basic education using a concurrent exploratory mixed methods design. By integrating qualitative narratives with quantitative evidence, the study demonstrated that Generation Z digital language extends beyond contemporary expressions to encompass semiotic and pragmatic processes that shape how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and negotiated across generations. The findings indicate that communication challenges stem not from digital language itself, but from the varying interpretive horizons, communicative expectations, and contextual assumptions that different generations bring to interactions. These insights reinforce Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, which posits that understanding emerges through dialogue, and Communication Accommodation Theory, which emphasizes adapting communicative behavior to achieve mutual understanding.

The integrated findings revealed that Generation Z digital language serves as both a communicative resource and a potential source of misunderstanding. Qualitative narratives highlighted generational differences in interpreting digital symbols, abbreviations, implied meanings, contextual appropriateness, and interpersonal tone, while quantitative findings consistently rated both semiotic and pragmatic dimensions as highly influential. Rather than offering contradictory views, the data strands converged to show that digital language facilitates communication when shared contextual knowledge exists, but generates friction when interpretive expectations differ. This convergence underscores the need for

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educational strategies that promote dialogue, contextual awareness, and reciprocal learning among students, teachers, and school staff.

Discussion of Research Question 1: ***Semiotic and Pragmatic Implications***

The first research question explored the semiotic and pragmatic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication. Integrated findings show that digital language has evolved into a dynamic communicative system through which participants construct, negotiate, and reinterpret meaning. Emojis, slang, abbreviations, memes, and GIFs facilitate expression among digitally fluent users while presenting interpretive challenges for educators with different communicative backgrounds. Quantitatively, both semiotic and pragmatic dimensions were rated Highly Influential, proving digital language is a major factor shaping educational interaction.

From a semiotic perspective, Generation Z digital language functions as a system of culturally situated signs whose meanings are continually negotiated based on prior experiences and shared digital culture. Emojis, shorthand, and visual symbols enhanced efficiency and expressiveness for students, but introduced ambiguity for older generations. Quantitatively, participants confirmed that emojis strongly influenced tone interpretation, while internet shorthand significantly affected message clarity across age groups. These findings demonstrate that digital signs derive value not from literal forms, but from shared conventions within specific linguistic communities.

These semiotic results strongly support Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics, which posits that understanding emerges through interpretation via one's historically effected consciousness rather than objective decoding (Coyne, 2021; Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). Students and educators interpreted identical expressions differently because they approached communication from distinct horizons, illustrating Gadamer's fusion of horizons wherein understanding develops through dialogical openness. This aligns with findings that digital communication relies increasingly on non-conventional symbolic systems (Danesi, 2017) and culturally shared internet conventions that are not immediately accessible to outsiders (McCulloch, 2019).

The pragmatic findings revealed that successful communication extends beyond lexical understanding to encompass contextual interpretation, interpersonal expectations, communicative intent, and emotional perception. Misunderstandings occurred frequently because informal expressions, abbreviated replies, and implied meanings were interpreted differently across generations. Quantitative evidence supported this, ranking contextual appropriateness, implied meanings, communicative intent, and perceptions of respect among the highest-rated pragmatic indicators. Effective intergenerational communication relies less on mastering individual expressions than on interpreting messages within proper interpersonal and institutional contexts. These pragmatic observations accord with Communication Accommodation Theory, which proposes that communication improves when individuals adjust their behavior to meet interlocutors' linguistic expectations (Giles et al., 2023). Participant recommendations for situational code-switching and audience awareness reflect accommodative strategies that reduce generational misunderstanding. Furthermore, digital communication is inherently context-dependent, relying heavily on shared assumptions and situational cues (Crystal, 2011). Communication difficulties arise not because digital language is inherently flawed, but because communicators operate under differing contextual frameworks.

Together, the semiotic and pragmatic findings position Generation Z digital language as an evolving communicative practice that expands expression while introducing new interpretive demands. Rather than posing a threat to academic communication, digital language is a legitimate contemporary practice whose success depends on contextual awareness, interpretive openness, and reciprocal adaptation. Strengthening intergenerational communication requires educational environments that cultivate dialogue and mutual meaning-making rather than suppressing emerging digital practices.

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Discussion of Research Question 2: *Quantitative Assessment of the Linguistic Implications of Generation Z Digital Language*

The second research question evaluated the extent of the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language using quantitative measures. Both semiotic and pragmatic dimensions were rated Highly Influential, proving that digital language is an established component of contemporary educational communication rather than a peripheral phenomenon. High weighted means across both dimensions confirm that digital expressions are deeply embedded in the daily practices of students, teachers, and personnel, directly shaping message interpretation, tone perception, and interpersonal relationships.

In the semiotic dimension, indicators associated with emojis, shorthand, digital symbols, and memes received the highest ratings. This demonstrates that contemporary educational interaction relies heavily on multimodal sign systems rather than written prose alone. These quantitative results substantiate qualitative themes (The Digitalization of the Pedagogical Space, Semantic Divergence and Alienation, Acceleration of Meaning Construction, and The Visceral Reality of Misreading). Theoretically, this reinforces Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics by illustrating that sign interpretation is situated within historical and experiential horizons (Valencia, 2021). It aligns with Danesi (2017), who describes digital symbols as an emerging visual grammar, and McCulloch (2019), who frames internet language as a set of evolving, community-negotiated conventions.

In the pragmatic dimension, contextual appropriateness, implied meanings, communicative intent, interpersonal respect, and tone decoding were rated highest. These findings confirm that context dictates whether a message is perceived as respectful or professional, directly mirroring qualitative themes (Contextual Re-mapping of Formal Channels, Interpersonal Friction in Tone Decoding, The Compression of Conversational Windows, and Somatic Responses to Perceived Linguistic Slopes). Quantitatively, these results support Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) by showing that effective communication requires adaptive strategies rather than rigid linguistic style (Giles et al., 2023). They also mirror Crystal's (2011) premise that digital discourse relies fundamentally on shared background assumptions and implicit situational cues.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

A central contribution of this study lies in the convergence of qualitative narratives and quantitative data. Qualitative accounts provided nuanced descriptions of lived experiences across eight major themes, while quantitative measures confirmed these experiences represented widespread patterns across the study population.

Rather than operating independently, semiotic interpretation and pragmatic understanding proved inseparable. Qualitative accounts demonstrated how digital symbols acquire diverging meanings based on generational background, while quantitative findings confirmed that contextual appropriateness and intent were the strongest predictors of communicative success. Together, they demonstrate that communication relies on individuals' ability to process visual signs within specific institutional and cultural settings.

This empirical convergence provides robust support for Gadamerian Hermeneutics, showing that intergenerational understanding requires a fusion of horizons achieved through open dialogue rather than forced linguistic uniformity (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). It also reinforces CAT, proving that mutual accommodation, via situational code-switching, reciprocal learning, and audience sensitivity, bridges generational divides (Giles et al., 2023).

Finally, the integrated evidence refutes the notion that Gen Z digital language is a linguistic deficiency or academic threat. Instead, it positions digital language as a legitimate, evolving communicative system (Crystal, 2011; Danesi, 2017; McCulloch, 2019). These empirical insights directly informed the UGNAYAN Framework, establishing a foundation for pedagogical strategies centered on generational awareness, reciprocal learning, and institutional capacity building.

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Theoretical Implications of the Study

This study extends Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to Generation Z digital language in basic education, demonstrating that its impact is fundamentally interpretive, relational, and educational rather than purely technological. Findings show that communication friction stems from differing interpretive horizons rather than the linguistic forms themselves, framing digital language as a dynamic system negotiated through interaction (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

Empirically, the results support key Gadamerian concepts—historically effected consciousness, fusion of horizons, and dialogical understanding—by proving that emoji, shorthand, and slang interpretation depends on individual experience, cultural background, and generational identity (Wu et al., 2024; Zhukova & Herring, 2024). While students rely on online conventions, educators evaluate messages through institutional norms. Effective communication occurs when both groups demonstrate openness to alternative perspectives rather than expecting linguistic uniformity. The study broadens CAT by showing that accommodation in digital spaces requires semiotic adaptation, contextual interpretation, and symbolic negotiation alongside verbal shifts (Giles et al., 2023). Recommended practices like situational code-switching, reverse mentoring, and audience awareness demonstrate that accommodation covers multimodal signs, implicit meanings, and evolving online norms.

Conceptually, the findings reveal that semiotics and pragmatics operate interactively rather than independently. Participants interpreted digital symbols simultaneously with intent, tone, and contextual appropriateness, proving that visual signs gain meaning only within specific interpersonal and institutional contexts.

Finally, the UGNAYAN Framework operationalizes these insights into four pillars: Generational Awareness and Relational Sensitivity, Bidirectional Mentorship and Co-Learning, Institutionalized Netiquette and Capacity Building, and Cultural Integration and Grassroots Media Campaigns. The framework bridges language education, sociolinguistics, educational communication, and digital literacy, affirming that modern educational communication relies on interpretive competence, contextual awareness, and sustained intergenerational dialogue.

Practical and Educational Implications

The integration of digital platforms into daily school operations requires recognizing Generation Z digital language as an evolving communicative reality rather than a disruption. Rather than suppressing digital expressions, schools must cultivate environments where digital language is contextualized and used appropriately based on audience and purpose.

First, institutions must develop digital communicative competence among educators. Many misunderstandings stem from unfamiliarity with digital conventions rather than intentional student disrespect. Professional development should expand beyond technical skills to encompass contemporary digital discourse, reducing misinterpretation in learning management systems and messaging channels.

Second, language instruction must emphasize contextual language awareness. Teaching should incorporate authentic digital texts, guiding students to analyze how emojis, abbreviations, and slang function across formal and informal settings. This builds critical language awareness and prepares students for academic, professional, and digital environments.

Third, schools need clear, context-sensitive netiquette guidelines that distinguish formal academic expectations from informal peer interactions. Policies focused on respect, contextual appropriateness, and digital citizenship foster mutual understanding more effectively than rigid linguistic prohibitions.

Fourth, fostering intergenerational collaboration through reverse mentoring, dialogue sessions, and joint digital literacy workshops allows students and educators to share communicative experiences and negotiate shared meaning.

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Fifth, language curricula should prioritize semiotic and pragmatic competence alongside traditional grammar. Training students to decode symbolic representations, tone, and implicit contextual cues enhances communicative flexibility in technology-mediated spaces.

Finally, these practical applications are operationalized through the UGNAYAN Framework. By unifying individual awareness, co-learning, institutional policy, and community engagement, the framework offers schools a research-informed strategy to address evolving digital language while maintaining professionalism, respect, and inclusivity across generations.

Contribution of the UGNAYAN Framework to Language Education and Educational Communication

The primary contribution of this study is the UGNAYAN (Ugnayan ng Generasyon sa Bagong Anyo ng Komunikasyon) Framework, an empirical pedagogical model designed to enhance intergenerational communication in basic education. Unlike purely descriptive models, UGNAYAN translates mixed-methods findings into actionable educational interventions grounded in dialogue, contextual awareness, reciprocal learning, and institutional collaboration.

Its originality stems from unifying semiotic interpretation and pragmatic meaning-making. The framework positions communication effectiveness as a dynamic process where participants continuously negotiate meaning across generational boundaries, advancing traditional perspectives that treat these linguistic dimensions independently.

Philosophically, UGNAYAN operationalizes Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics by framing communication misunderstandings as opportunities for interpretive growth and a fusion of horizons rather than failures requiring correction (Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022). It also extends Communication Accommodation Theory by framing accommodation as reciprocal rather than unilateral, students contribute digital literacy while educators provide disciplinary expertise (Giles et al., 2023).

As a preventive intervention, the model proactively addresses communication friction across individual, interpersonal, institutional, and community levels via four interconnected pillars:

1. Generational Awareness and Relational Sensitivity
2. Bidirectional Mentorship and Co-Learning
3. Institutionalized Netiquette and Capacity Building
4. Cultural Integration and Grassroots Media Campaigns

Ultimately, the framework reframes Gen Z digital language from an academic threat into a legitimate, evolving communicative resource (Crystal, 2011; McCulloch, 2019), offering a transferable model for curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional policy in modern educational environments.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the linguistic implications of Generation Z digital language on intergenerational communication in basic education using a concurrent exploratory mixed methods design. Integrated qualitative and quantitative evidence confirms that digital language is an essential component of educational interaction whose influence relies on complex semiotic and pragmatic processes rather than vocabulary alone.

Qualitative narratives revealed that emojis, shorthand, and memes facilitate expression among digitally fluent users while creating interpretive ambiguity for older generations. Pragmatically, communication success depended heavily on contextual awareness, intent, tone, and audience expectations. Quantitatively, both semiotic and pragmatic dimensions were rated Highly Influential, proving that communication challenges stem from differing interpretive expectations rather than digital language itself.

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These empirical findings validate Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics by showing that understanding requires dialogical openness, while extending Communication Accommodation Theory to include semiotic adaptation and symbolic negotiation (Giles et al., 2023; Haghiri-Vijeh & McDonald, 2022).

Translating these empirical insights into practice, the UGNAYAN Framework offers a holistic strategy, spanning individual awareness, co-learning, institutional policy, and community engagement, to strengthen intergenerational discourse. Rather than resisting linguistic evolution, educational institutions must foster interpretive competence, contextual sensitivity, and collaborative dialogue, transforming generational differences into opportunities for inclusive, effective communication.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, educational institutions are encouraged to promote generational awareness and contextual sensitivity in digitally mediated communication. Students, teachers, administrators, and school personnel should be provided with opportunities to understand how emojis, abbreviations, slang, humor, tone, and implied meanings may be interpreted differently across generations.
2. Schools may establish clear but flexible digital communication guidelines that distinguish between informal peer interaction and formal academic or administrative communication. These guidelines should emphasize audience awareness, professionalism, respect, message completeness, appropriate tone, and the responsible use of digital expressions without entirely prohibiting Generation Z digital language.
3. Educational institutions are also encouraged to implement bidirectional mentoring and co-learning activities in which students share their knowledge of emerging digital expressions and online communication practices, while educators provide guidance concerning formal language, academic decorum, and professional communication. Digital netiquette workshops and communication capability-building programs should involve both younger and older members of the educational community.
4. The proposed *UGNAYAN Framework* may be considered for pilot implementation in selected secondary schools. Its four pillars—Generational Awareness and Relational Sensitivity, Bidirectional Mentorship and Co-Learning, Institutionalized Netiquette and Capacity Building, and Cultural Integration and Grassroots Media Campaigns—may be incorporated into communication policies, classroom instruction, student orientation, faculty development, and school-based information campaigns.
5. Future researchers may examine the framework in other geographical locations, educational levels, and institutional contexts using larger and more diverse samples. Subsequent studies may also evaluate the effectiveness of the UGNAYAN Framework through intervention-based, longitudinal, comparative, or validation studies and investigate other variables such as digital literacy, language proficiency, institutional role, cultural background, and frequency of online communication.

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