

THE INFLUENCE OF SLANG MEANING CHANGES IN YOUTH LANGUAGE ON TWITTER (X) APP

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of slang on the evolving language patterns of youth on the Twitter (X) platform. As a dynamic social media environment, Twitter fosters rapid communication and creativity, providing fertile ground for the spread and development of informal language. The research explores how slang terms are adopted, adapted, and circulated among young users, and how this usage contributes to broader linguistic shifts in vocabulary, structure, and expression. Using a qualitative content analysis of tweets from selected youth accounts, the study identifies key slang trends and their semantic or pragmatic impacts on communication. The findings reveal that slang not only reflects youth identity and group belonging but also actively shapes digital language practices, signaling a shift toward more fluid and context-driven communication norms. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of digital sociolinguistics and the role of social media in contemporary language change.

Key words: Meaning Changes, Slang, Twitter App, Youth Language

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Language is one of the most powerful tools humans use to connect and express themselves, and it constantly changes over time. For younger generations, slang has become a crucial part of communication, allowing them to create their own unique identities and reflect the spirit of their times. Slang is often informal, creative, and dynamic, making it an essential part of youth culture. In the past, slang would develop and spread slowly through spoken conversations. However, in today's world, the rise of social media has accelerated the way slang is created, shared, and changed. With just a few clicks, new terms can spread globally and be adopted by millions of people almost overnight.

Twitter (now known as X) plays a particularly important role in this process. It offers an open, fast-moving space where young people interact, share thoughts, and build communities

through language. On this platform, slang words often undergo rapid shifts in meaning, influenced by trends, memes, viral events, and cultural discussions. A slang term might start with one meaning among a small group and, after widespread use, come to mean something completely different. Sometimes, the same slang word can even carry multiple meanings at once, depending on the community using it. These constant changes reflect the dynamic nature of language and show how youth are not just passive users of slang but active creators and innovators who shape the way it grows.

Studying the meaning changes in youth slang on Twitter is important for understanding broader social and cultural patterns. It reveals how young people use language not just for communication, but also for forming identities, expressing emotions, resisting authority, or joining social movements. It also shows how digital technology transforms language practices, creating new ways of expressing solidarity or marking differences. By analyzing how slang evolves in online spaces, researchers can gain deeper insights into the intersection between technology, language, and culture. Moreover, understanding these changes can help educators, linguists, and even marketers better connect with younger audiences in more authentic and meaningful ways.

1.2. Research Problem

In today's fast-changing digital era, slang has become a central part of youth communication, especially on social media platforms like Twitter (X). However, as slang spreads quickly online, its meanings often shift, leading to new interpretations and uses among different youth communities. These rapid changes can create both creativity and confusion in communication. Despite the importance of this phenomenon, there is still limited research that specifically explores how the meanings of slang terms evolve over time on Twitter and what impact these changes have on youth interaction and identity-building.

Many studies have focused on slang in traditional spoken settings, but few have examined how online environments, with their unique speed and scale, influence the meaning of slang. As slang terms gain new meanings, they may affect how young people express themselves, understand each other, and form online communities. Without a deeper understanding of this process, we risk overlooking how digital slang not only reflects but also shapes youth culture in powerful ways. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how slang meanings change on Twitter (X) and to understand the social effects these changes have among young users.

1.3. Research Objective

This study is significant because it provides a deeper understanding of how the meanings of slang terms evolve in the fast-paced digital environment of social media, specifically on Twitter (X). By examining how these changes occur and the factors influencing them, the research highlights the dynamic nature of youth language and its relationship to online culture. Understanding how slang meanings shift can offer insights into how young people create new forms of communication, express their identities, and navigate social relationships in digital spaces.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the growing field of linguistics and digital communication by offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of language, technology, and social behavior. It will help educators, linguists, and digital marketers better understand the language of youth, enabling them to engage with younger generations in more relevant and effective ways. Additionally, the findings may have broader implications for understanding how language evolves in the digital age and the role of social media in shaping modern communication practices.

1.4. Research Design

This study will use a qualitative research design to examine how slang meanings change among youth on Twitter (X). A qualitative approach is suitable because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the social and cultural factors behind these changes. The primary aim is to understand how slang terms evolve, what influences those changes, and how youth communities adapt and shape language on social media.

PREVIOUS WORKS

2.1. Theoretical Review

A. Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. According to Palmer (1981), semantics focuses on the relationship between linguistic signs and what they refer to in the real world. Leech (1981) also emphasizes that semantics deals with the meanings captured from an utterance or text, both direct and hidden meanings. Chaer (2007) states that semantics is the study of meaning in language, covering the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences.

B. Denotative and Connotative Meanings

In semantic studies, denotative meaning refers to the literal, objective meaning as found in the dictionary. Conversely, connotative meaning refers to additional meanings influenced by emotions, experiences, or cultural backgrounds of language users. According to Leech (1981), denotative meaning is the “primary” meaning, while connotative meaning is more “associative” and can change depending on the social context.

C. Semantic Shift (Meaning Shift)

A semantic shift occurs when a word’s meaning changes over time. This shift can be caused by social, cultural, or technological factors. Palmer (1981) explains that meaning change is a natural part of language evolution, where words can undergo broadening, narrowing, or even complete shifts in meaning.

D. Contextual Meaning

Contextual meaning refers to understanding the meaning of a word or expression based on its usage situation. Chaer (2007) mentions that a word’s meaning can differ depending on the social, cultural, or communicative context. Therefore, in slang research, context plays a critical role in determining the meaning of words used.

E. Prototype Theory and Associative Meaning

Prototype theory, as introduced by Rosch (1978) and adapted in semantics by Lakoff (1987), suggests that the meaning of a word is not always fixed but shaped around flexible categories, where members may vary in their typicality. In slang use, meanings are often associated with certain prototypes that can shift along with cultural developments among users.

2.2. Slang in Linguistic Studies

A. Definition of Slang

Slang is a form of language used by particular groups to express identity or social solidarity. Yule (2006) defines slang as “informal, non-standard words or phrases used by groups with shared interests or identities.” Fromkin et al. (2014) explain that slang is a form of linguistic creativity, often used to express informality, humor, or social closeness. Allan and Burridge (2006) add that slang is intentionally used to distinguish its users from the general population.

B. Social Functions of Slang

Slang functions not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of social identity, a means to strengthen group bonds, and a way to express rebellion against formal language norms. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slang acts as a symbol of solidarity and exclusivity within certain communities.

C. Characteristics of Slang

Slang has several key characteristics: first, it tends to be informal and often disregards standard language rules. Second, slang is highly creative, with many terms created by combining existing words or altering existing meanings. Third, slang is highly context-dependent, meaning its usage can vary greatly depending on the community or ongoing trends.

2.3. Previous Research

A. Research on Slang in Social Media

Several previous studies have examined slang usage in social media. For example, Eble (1996) in *Slang and Sociability* discussed how slang strengthens social bonds within online communities. More recent research, such as by Darmawan (2021) in the *Bahasa dan Seni* journal, shows that the use of slang on Twitter reflects the social dynamics of youth, including efforts to build group identity.

B. Semantic Research on Meaning Shifts in Slang

Semantic research on meaning shifts in slang has also been widely conducted. For instance, Putri (2020) in *Lingua Cultura* journal studied how slang expressions experience meaning changes among youth communities on social media. The study found that meaning shifts are often influenced by pop culture trends, technological developments, and the need for faster communication in digital environments.

DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Research Method

This method was chosen because the research focuses on describing in detail how meaning shifts occur in slang used by young people on Twitter (X). In this approach, the researcher does not collect numerical or statistical data but explores the meanings, interpretations, and social contexts that emerge from the use of slang expressions. As stated by Moleong (2017), a qualitative approach aims to understand social phenomena from the

participants' perspective. Through this method, the researcher can naturally and authentically capture the dynamics of slang language, including the changes in meaning that may occur in everyday online communication.

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

To ensure the data collected is relevant and accurate, several techniques are used:

A. Direct Observation of Public Tweets

The researcher conducts direct observations of tweets publicly posted on Twitter (X). Observations focus on tweets that use slang expressions typical among Indonesian youth. This process involves monitoring trending topics, popular hashtags, and conversations among young users.

B. Documentation

All slang-containing tweets are recorded through screenshots and transcribed into text form. This documentation ensures that the data remains authentic and can be analyzed repeatedly later.

Example of Indonesian slang data from Twitter:



“Hang out tonight, gas? Gas. Still having coffee even though I haven't eaten since this morning.”

Gas originally means “to go” or “to depart,” but has expanded to mean “let's do it!” or “keep going enthusiastically!”



“Want to eat sushi, sashimi but mager to go out.”

Mager this is to short for “malas gerak” too lazy to move. Used to express a general sense of laziness, not just physical inactivity.



“Next week I have exam but I’m still santuy to watching K-dramas.”

Santuy is a playful variation of “santai” meaning “relaxed”. Used to describe a laid-back attitude, even in urgent situations.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Once the data is collected, the analysis proceeds through several stages:

A. Classification of Slang Types

First, each slang word found is classified according to its type. For example, slang formed from abbreviations (like “mager”), slang formed from wordplays (like “santuy”), or slang using metaphorical meaning (like “gas”).

B. Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Meaning

Each slang term is analyzed based on its denotative meaning (literal meaning) and connotative meaning (additional or emotional associations). For instance, the denotative meaning of “gas” is “fuel,” but in slang context, the connotative meaning shifts to “enthusiasm” or “moving forward without hesitation.”

C. Analysis of Usage Context (Social Pragmatics)

The researcher examines in what context the slang is used. For example, whether “santuy” is more frequently used in casual situations among peers or when discussing serious topics in a joking tone.

D. Identification of Meaning Changes

Finally, the researcher identifies the forms of meaning changes that occur, such as:

Metaphor: when a term is used indirectly to describe something else (e.g., “gas” = spirit).

Meaning Extension: when the meaning of the slang word becomes broader than its original meaning.

Meaning Narrowing: when the meaning becomes more specific or restricted to certain situations.

In analyzing these changes, the researcher refers to Ullmann's (1972) theory of meaning change and modern semantic-pragmatic theory as explained by Cruse (2000).

FINDINGS, DISSCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Findings

from the analysis of public tweets on Twitter (X), several slang words commonly used by Indonesian youth were found. These include words like *gas*, *mager*, and *santuy*. These slang terms have shifted in meaning over time. For example, “*gas*”, which originally referred to fuel, now means to encourage someone or to show enthusiasm. Similarly, “*mager*”, meaning “too lazy to move,” now represents a general feeling of laziness, even about simple tasks.

The use of these slang terms is influenced by the context in which they are used. For example, during exam periods, words like “*santuy*” show how young people use slang to express a relaxed attitude even in stressful situations. This demonstrates how slang not only conveys a message but also shapes the identity and feelings of the user.

4.2. Discussion

The findings show that slang on Twitter (X) is always changing. As words like *gas* and *mager* are used in different contexts, their meanings evolve. This is consistent with Palmer's (1981) theory that meaning changes over time based on how language is used by people.

Additionally, context plays a big role in how slang is understood. According to Chaer (2012), the meaning of words can shift based on the situation and who is speaking. On Twitter, slang is often used among friends who share similar cultural references, making it easier for them to understand new meanings.

Slang also helps create group identity, as Yule (2010) notes. Using slang like *gas* or *mager* shows that people belong to the same social group. These changes in meaning reflect the ways youth express themselves and their experiences in online spaces.

4.3. Conclusion

To sum up, this research highlights how slang among Indonesian youth on Twitter (X) keeps evolving. Words such as *gas*, *mager*, and *santuy* have transformed in meaning, showing how language is flexible and creative. These slang terms are not only ways to communicate,

but also a means for young people to express their feelings and identities. The meaning of slang changes depending on the situation and the social context in which it's used. For instance, terms like *gas* and *mager* adapt to reflect the user's mood or attitude. This ongoing shift in meaning shows how language keeps evolving to meet the needs of those who use it.

In conclusion, slang plays an important role in online communication, particularly among young people. It reflects the culture, social ties, and ways youth express themselves in today's rapidly changing world.

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