

## **SEMANTIC SHIFTS IN INTERNET SLANG: MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN DIGITAL YOUTH COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstrak**

Bahasa dalam komunikasi digital mengalami perkembangan yang sangat pesat, terutama melalui platform media sosial di mana kaum muda secara aktif menggunakan bahasa gaul internet untuk mengekspresikan makna secara efisien dan kreatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pergeseran makna dalam bahasa gaul internet serta mengkaji bagaimana makna dibangun dalam komunikasi digital kalangan muda. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dari platform media sosial seperti TikTok, Twitter, dan Instagram dengan berfokus pada ungkapan slang yang umum digunakan dalam interaksi daring. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan mengidentifikasi ungkapan slang terpilih serta menganalisis makna asal dan makna kontekstualnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa banyak ungkapan slang mengalami perubahan makna, termasuk generalisasi, penyempitan makna, dan perluasan metaforis. Perubahan tersebut dipengaruhi oleh interaksi sosial, tren budaya, dan kebutuhan komunikasi. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa makna dalam bahasa gaul internet dibangun melalui konteks, pemahaman bersama, dan interaksi antar pengguna. Oleh karena itu, bahasa gaul internet mencerminkan proses semantik yang dinamis serta memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk pola komunikasi dan identitas di kalangan generasi muda digital.

Kata kunci: Komunikasi Digital, Bahasa Gaul Internet, Konstruksi Makna, Pergeseran Makna

### **Abstract**

Language in digital communication has developed rapidly, especially through social media platforms where young people actively use internet slang to express meaning efficiently and creatively. This study aims to analyze the semantic shifts of internet slang and to examine how meaning is constructed in digital youth communication. The data were collected from social media platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram, focusing on commonly used slang expressions in online interaction. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method by identifying selected slang expressions and analyzing their original meanings and contextual meanings. The findings show that many slang expressions have undergone semantic change, including generalization, narrowing, and metaphorical extension. These changes are influenced by social interaction, cultural trends, and communicative needs. In addition, the study reveals that meaning in internet slang is constructed through context, shared understanding, and interaction among users. Therefore, internet slang reflects dynamic

semantic processes and plays an important role in shaping communication patterns and identity among digital youth.

Keywords: Digital Communication, Internet Slang, Meaning Construction, Semantic Shift

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in human communication, particularly in digital environments where interaction occurs rapidly and informally. In recent years, social media has become one of the most influential spaces for language development, especially among young people. Platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram provide opportunities for users to create, modify, and spread new linguistic expressions. As a result, language in digital communication becomes more dynamic and flexible compared to traditional forms of communication.

One of the most noticeable phenomena in digital language use is the emergence of internet slang. Slang expressions are widely used by young people to communicate efficiently, express emotions, and establish social relationships. However, many of these expressions do not carry their original meanings. Instead, they undergo semantic shifts, in which their meanings change according to context and usage. This indicates that meaning in language is not fixed but constantly evolving.

The study of meaning in language is closely related to semantics, which examines how words and expressions convey meaning in different contexts. In digital communication, semantic change becomes more visible because of the fast-paced interaction and the influence of online communities. Words such as “*slay*,” “*ghosting*,” and “*cap*” demonstrate how meanings can shift significantly from their original definitions to new contextual meanings. These changes are not random but are shaped by social interaction, cultural trends, and communicative purposes.

Previous studies have shown that digital communication contributes significantly to language change, particularly in the formation and spread of slang. However, many studies focus on general language use or written communication, while fewer studies examine how semantic shifts occur specifically in internet slang used by young people. Furthermore, the process of meaning construction in digital interaction has not been fully explored in relation to semantic theory.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze semantic shifts in internet slang and to explain how meaning is constructed in digital youth communication. By focusing on commonly used slang expressions in social media, this study seeks to identify types of semantic change and to examine how these changes function in communication. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding

language development in digital contexts and its relevance to semantic studies, particularly in relation to contemporary language use among young people.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. This approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meanings and identifying types of semantic change based on contextual usage rather than numerical data.

### **Data Source**

The data sources of this study are social media platforms, including TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram. The data consists of written and spoken expressions containing internet slang commonly used by young people in digital communication.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected through several steps. First, the researcher observed social media content to identify commonly used slang expressions. Second, selected expressions were documented and categorized. Third, expressions that show potential semantic shifts were selected as the main data for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted by comparing the original meanings of the selected slang expressions with their contextual meanings in digital communication. The analysis then categorized the types of semantic change, including generalization, narrowing, and metaphorical extension. In addition, the study examined how meaning is constructed through context, interaction, and shared understanding among users.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study are presented in three main sections: (1) types of semantic shift in internet slang, (2) contextual meaning in digital communication, and (3) meaning construction among digital youth.

## 1. Types of Semantic Shift in Internet Slang

The analysis shows that internet slang expressions undergo several types of semantic change, particularly generalization, narrowing, and metaphorical extension.

Generalization occurs when a word expands its meaning beyond its original scope. For example, the word “*slay*”, which originally means “*to kill*”, is now widely used to express admiration for someone’s performance or appearance. This shift shows that the meaning has become broader and more abstract.

Narrowing, on the other hand, occurs when a word becomes more specific in meaning. The word “*ghosting*”, originally related to the concept of a “*ghost*”, is now specifically used to describe the act of suddenly ending communication without explanation. This indicates that the meaning has been restricted to a particular social behavior.

Metaphorical extension is also a dominant type of semantic shift. The word “*sick*”, which originally refers to illness, is often used to describe something impressive or exciting. This shift reflects a metaphorical relationship between physical condition and emotional response.

These findings demonstrate that semantic change in internet slang follows identifiable patterns and is influenced by communicative needs and social context.

## 2. Contextual Meaning in Digital Communication

The study also reveals that meaning in internet slang is highly dependent on context. Words cannot be interpreted based solely on their literal meanings, as their meanings are shaped by interaction, tone, and situational factors.

For instance, the expression “*cap*” is used to indicate that something is false, while “*no cap*” is used to emphasize honesty. Without understanding the context, these meanings would be unclear. However, within digital communication, users share a common understanding that allows them to interpret these expressions correctly.

Similarly, expressions such as “*slay*” and “*sick*” function as evaluative language, expressing positive attitudes rather than literal meanings. Their meanings are constructed through repeated use in specific contexts, which eventually become widely accepted within the community.

This shows that contextual meaning plays a crucial role in digital communication, where language is flexible and highly dependent on shared knowledge among users.

### **3. Meaning Construction in Digital Youth Communication**

Meaning construction in internet slang occurs through interaction and shared understanding among users. In digital communication, meaning is not fixed but negotiated within a community.

Young people actively participate in shaping meaning by using, modifying, and spreading slang expressions. A word becomes meaningful when it is widely used and accepted by the community. This process reflects the social nature of language, where meaning is constructed collectively rather than individually.

In addition, social media plays a significant role in accelerating meaning construction. Trends, memes, and viral content contribute to the rapid spread of slang expressions, allowing new meanings to be adopted quickly by a large number of users.

The findings also show that internet slang functions as a tool for identity construction. By using specific slang expressions, young people signal their membership in a particular social group. This indicates that language is not only a means of communication but also a way of expressing identity and social belonging.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examines semantic shifts in internet slang and the process of meaning construction in digital youth communication. The findings show that slang expressions undergo various types of semantic change, including generalization, narrowing, and metaphorical extension. These changes are influenced by social interaction, cultural trends, and communicative needs.

The study also reveals that meaning in internet slang is highly dependent on context and shared understanding among users. Words are interpreted based on interaction and situational factors rather than their original meanings. In addition, meaning construction occurs through collective use and acceptance within digital communities.

In conclusion, internet slang reflects dynamic semantic processes and plays an important role in shaping communication and identity among young people. This study contributes to semantic research by providing insight into how language evolves in digital contexts. Future research is recommended to explore different platforms and to analyze a wider range of slang expressions in order to gain a deeper understanding of language change in digital communication.

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