

Decoding the Code: The Use of Gen Alpha Slang in the University of Eastern Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This research study was focused on the Gen Alpha Slangs in the University of Eastern Philippines. This research study aimed to collect slang expressions, categorize them according to the following categories: Shortenings/Abbreviation/Acronym, Neologism/Coinage, Meaning Re-assignment, Compounding, Wrong Talk Funny One, Flippant, Fresh and Creative, Interjection, and Imitative. This study determined the gloss or meaning of each slang expression collected from the student-participants according to its context. Further, this study employed “pagtatanong-tanong” in gathering the data through an informal interview. This study revealed that the students of the University of Eastern Philippines are certified users of the slang expressions. This study further revealed that the student-participants of this study are indeed users of different slang expression which can be categorized to different slang expressions. Furthermore, this study also found out that the slang expressions used by the student-participants has different gloss in reference to the context of each term.

INTRODUCTION

This study focused on collecting the Gen Alpha slang expression used by the students in the University of Eastern Philippines. The Gen Alpha slangs are words or various forms of expressions that were created or widely used expressions during the Gen Alpha period, though the Gen Alpha people refers to people who are born between 2010-2024. Further, slangs in the Gen Alpha period can be used by any person regardless of their generation. The newest generation of students coming into higher education have unique linguistic features that trace back to their digital exposure and cultural experiences. These slang used by the students, whether in formal or informal context, in the University of Eastern Philippines are considered Gen Alpha slang.

Further, this study also categorized the collected slang expression according to Bauer's classification of slang and Bloomfield's slang classification. This study was conducted aiming to aid understanding between intergenerational conversation, in the academe or not. A study on the Tlemcen speech community revealed that adolescents between 11 and 18 years of age tend to use new expressions and innovations, which are different from adult speech. This linguistic behavior is influenced by various transitions during adolescence, including biological, social, cognitive, and emotional changes. Another reported finding was that, while adults generally exhibit fixed language patterns, a subgroup of them employ innovations in youth language, thus revealing intergenerational influence, leading to misunderstanding and miscommunication (Bendjaballah, 2015).

More importantly, the research broadens the horizons as regards to the use of slang expressions in the Gen Alpha period, especially in the on-campus conversations and

even in the classroom communication setting. Since slang expression is part and parcel of today's discourses, there is a reason to examine how this linguistic feature is used in different context. Thus, knowing the role that slang expression plays in student communication can help better pedagogic approaches towards accommodating this learning generation in more innovative ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Laurie Bauer's Word Formation Theory describes the processes and mechanisms by which new words are created and how they fit into the larger linguistic system. Especially in his book *English Word-Formation* (1983), Bauer's work provides a comprehensive framework of the different ways in which words are formed, focusing on the different morphological processes that drive word creation in a language. Bauer identifies several major processes through which new words are formed. These processes fall into two broad categories: derivation and compounding (Bauer, 1983).

Derivation

This involves adding prefixes or suffixes to a base word, or root, to create a new word with a modified meaning. This also includes creation of new meaning from an entirely new word. Derivation includes the following classifications:

Meaning Change and Re-Assignment Processes

Bauer knows that words evolve not only by morphological operations but also through semantic change. This is how the meanings of existing words change over time. Some words can get new meanings because of cultural changes, technological changes, or other social influences. For

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example, “mouse,” which originally referred strictly to an animal, has also become the name of a computer input device.

Neologisms/Coinage

Bauer’s theory also extends to coinage—the coining of entirely new words, which may not necessarily have any connection to existing lexical items. New technologies, cultural phenomena, and the development of language are responsible for the emergence of these words. For example, “blog,” “selfie,” and “hashtag” are neologisms that emerged as cultural phenomena entered everyday language.

Acronyms/Abbreviations/Shortenings

Other essentials in Bauer’s theory include how abbreviations, or clipping is used in making words. An example of these shortened forms of extended words or expressions is “ad” from the word “advertisement” or “info” from “information.” Such methods like abbreviation are practiced to save more time or more space in a spoken or a written form of communication. Abbreviations words like “TV,” which means “television,” and “radar,” which means “radio detection and ranging” are the result of clipping and abbreviation.

Compounding

Combining two or more words to form a new word. On the other hand, according to Bloomfield, as cited by Putri (2020), there are three (3) forms of slang words (Putri, 2020).

The Wrong Talk Funny One

The funny one is a modification of pitch and a strange question which is used as a rough language that is funny or expresses a mistrust feeling of something. For example: Iz dat zo? R u sure? 2.

Shortened Form

This shortened form is present in various languages. For example: Just wanna be w/ u and U2

Interjection

Interjection is a form of slang that is usually used to express feeling or emotions. For example, “That’s my girl!”, “You’re the man!”, are expressions of being happy and being proud, and “Yum-yum” or “Yummy” in expressing liking and satisfaction in food.

In addition, Allan and Burrige affirm that there are five different types of slang namely; fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym and clipping (Wardayani, (2020).

Fresh and Creative

Prihandoko explained that fresh and creative means that slang has totally new vocabulary, informal variety, cleverness, imagination, and it also can be an up-to-date word. For example, “mom” to call mother, “dad” to call

father, “bro” to call brother, and “buddy” to call friends.

Flippant

Abadi says that flippant means that slang language has words that are irrelevant to the context. For example, “nuts” it does not mean fruit but to “feel crazy about something.” This slang is often used in sarcastically or humorously, it is flippant if it is exaggerated or mocking the original meaning.

Imitative

Allan and Buridde explained that imitative means that the slang word is imitating or is derived from the Standard English word; using the Standard English words in different meaning or combining two different words. For example, “gonna.” This is the slang word that is derived from the phrase “going to.” The slang word “gonna” is commonly used by almost all of the people in the world.

Acronym

According to Kahn and Illson, acronym is a word formed by taking the initial sounds or letter of the words of a phrase and uniting them into a combination which is itself pronounceable as a separate word. For example, BTW (By The Way), LOL (Laughing Out Loud), and so on.

Clipping

Umam and Purnianda state that clipping refers to the shortening of the polysyllabic word into a shorter form which usually consists of one syllable only. For example, sax (saxophone), sis (sister) and so on.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in the University of Eastern Philippines, the first state university in the Visayas, Philippines. UEP is a comprehensive state university and the only SUC in the province of Northern Samar. With this, the UEP is a linguistic melting pot in the province, with its students coming from different parts province and its neighboring areas. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to be able to scientifically describe the slang expressions collected. Further, this study used “pagtatanong-tanong” (informal asking questions) as it method of data gathering. Further, this study has no exact sample size for this interviewed students until data saturation was met or when no new slang expression was retrieved, then data saturation is met. The researcher conducts an informal interview to the respondents who are the students in UEP about random things such as their crushies, their nightlife experiences, and even their campus or classroom rivals. From the answers of the respondents, the researcher extract the slang expressions used and classified them according to the given classifications by Bauer, Bloomfield, and Allan and Burrige, and Beatrice Warren’s phonemic replacement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research study collected a total of 121 Gen Alpha

slang expressions used by the students in the University of Eastern Philippines. It suggests that Gen Alpha slang expressions though developed and popularized in the internet, now infiltrates the face-to-face conversations or interactions. These Gen Alpha slang expressions collected by the researcher are words patterned from English Language, Filipino (Philippine National Language), and Ninorte-Samarnon (Local Language in the Province of Northern Samar, Philippines). Slang expression such as “slay”, “bet”, and “very demure” are examples of Gen Alpha slang patterned or borrowed from the English language. On the other hand, word like “asim” is an example of slang expression from the Filipino language, and term like “taplong” is patterned from Ninorte-Samarnon.

This result confirmed the result of the study of Firooz Namvar (2020), which claims that undergraduate students are the main source of slang expressions. Though the study did not mention whether those slang expressions were used in the internet or in face-to-face interaction. Further, this study revealed that the slang expressions used by the students in the University of Eastern Philippines can be classified or categorized into Bauer’s slang classification of slang, while some of the slang expressions could also be classified to Bloomfield’s and Allan and Burrige’s classifications of slangs. Table 1 shows the slang expressions collected from the respondents of this study. The table also shows the classification of the slang expression and the reason for its classification.

Table 1: Classifications of the Gen Alpha Slang Expressions Collected.

Category	Slang Expression	Context/Explanation
Bauer’s Slang Classification		
Abbreviation/ Acronym/ Shortenings	IYKYK	This slang is categorized under acronym because each letter signifies a word. This means “If You Know, You Know”.
	Sus	This slang expression is used by the students in the university, this is a shortened form of the word “suspicious”.
	OTW	This slang expression is an acronym which stands for “On the Way” however, in some cases when the speaker is teasing a friend, it could playfully mean “On the Water” which means a person is still taking a bath.
	ASAP	This is very common slang expression but is still in use of today’s generation. This slang means ‘As Soon As Possible’ which means that something should done very soon.
	BRB	This term is a slang which falls under the acronym category because each letter consists of a word. BRB particularly stands for “Be Right Back”.
	TYT	This common slang expression stands for “Take Your Time” used by the speakers to tell the receiver that he/she can wait.
	GG	This term is an acronym of either “Good Game” or “Gago”. Good Game is often used by the youths during online games, when they put a good fight or when they are about to win, then eventually loses. In addition, the abovementioned meaning is used simultaneously with “Gago”, which is often used by the speakers during a conversation with friends.
	HG/HB	This slang expression is used by the speaker to refer to a person who loves to stay at home, for girls, it is HG and for boys is HB, which stands for “Home Girl” or “Home Boy” respectively. This slang expression is under the acronym category.
	DM	This slang term is an acronym of the word “Direct Message” which means a private message and not through a groupchat. This is often used by the youths to ask someone to directly message them, especially if both of the speaker and the receiver are part of a groupchat, but prefer for the message to be delivered directly to his/her messenger.
	SKL/SML	This expression is a slang which is an acronym of the words “Share Ko Lang” or “Share Mo Lang” respectively. This is used by the speakers to usually to tease their friends about sharing something not really relevant in the conversation.
	El (L)	Pronounced as /il/, this slang expression is an acronym of the word Lose or loser.
	Dobolyo (W)	Pronounced as /daboljo/, this slang expression is used by the speaker as an acronym of the word “win” or “winner”.
FR	This slang term stands “For Real?”. This slang expression is used by the speakers to asked something they do not really believe or even sometimes to clarify.	

	NGL	This slang expression is an acronym of the word “Not Gonna Lie” which means that the speaker will say something without filter or lie.
	TLDR	This expression is an acronym of the words “Too Long, Didn’t Read”. This is oftentimes used by the youth to refer to something they did not read due to the length of the text.
	GOAT	This is an acronym of the words “Greatest Of All Time”. This slang is oftentimes used by the speakers to something or someone they thing is amazing or great. However, sometimes this could be used ironically.
	MOSH	This slang term is an acronym of an endearment “My Only SweetHeart”. However, in the today’s time, most oftentimes, this slang is used by the speakers to playfully tease people because MOSH is seen to be cringy.
Coinage/Neologism	Delulu	This slang expression is categorized as coinage because this term came from the word “delusional”. However, even with the changes in its form, the meaning remains the same. This is not also considered as shortening, because it takes a new form.
	Stan	This slang term is a coinage from the song of “Eminem” with its title “stan” and later on used by the people in different context referring to the act of following and adoring an idol or a person.
	Simp	This expression is a coinage from the animated movie series “The Simpson” wherein the characters are said to be silly. Overtime, the word was coined from the title of the movie.
	Jejemon	This slang expression is categorized as coinage because this is coined after the word “jeje”. The word then refers to a person who is “jeje” or lame.
	Mewing	This slang term is a coinage from the name of Dr. Mew who introduced the posture of the tongue to enhance the jawline. The said posture enhances the jawline of a person seen to be a characteristic of a handsome/beautiful person.
	Bougee	This word is coined after the word “bourgeois” which is a French word for middle class. However, the meaning of “bougee” transitioned into extravagant given the context that French people are often extravagant in their clothing.
	Awoop Jumpscare	This slang expression is coined after the sound created by Ariana Grande during an interview where she was shocked and scared because of a prank. The word later on become a famous slang referring to an act of shocking or scaring a person.
Meaning Re-Assignment	Gucci	This slang term is coined after the famous brand “Gucci”. The meaning of this slang transitioned into “goo” or “cool” given that Gucci brand is seen as cool and expensive.
	Slay	This expression is categorized under “Meaning Re-assignment” given that the original meaning of slay is “to kill” its meaning then transitioned into “a compliment to someone who did well in something”.
	Bet	This slang term is categorized under meaning-reassignment because its original meaning is “to gamble”, however, in the context of slang, this term is used when the speaker expressed his/her liking.
	Lowkey	Originally means a lower key in the music context, this slang expression becomes a term used by the speaker to say “secretly” or express subtlety.
	Ghost	This slang term refers to the soul, however, this term in slang means a sudden stop of connection or relationship.
	Tea	This term originally means to a kind of drink, but in slang, this term means a gossip.
	Yeet	This slang expression means excitement but transitioned into “forceful throwing of something” in slang.
	Drip	Originally refers to a drip of water. On the other hand, this terms assumed the meaning of being “stylish or style”.
Ate	Originally, this slang expression refers to a past tense of the word “eat”, in slang, this term refers to a compliment when someone did something really good.	

Sigma	This term means an organization or a Greek symbol, however, in the slang context, this word means cool and independent.
Best Friend	This word originally means a really close friend, but in slang, this word assumed a completely opposite meaning, the word becomes an ironic word for enemy or someone you do not like.
Bitter	Originally, this word refers to the taste, like the taste of the bitter melon, however, in slang, this term means “killjoy”.
Yapper/Yapping	This slang expression means a loud annoying sound most oftentimes coming from a dog or any animals, however, in slang, this means a person who always talks a lot.
Asim	A Filipino word which originally means sour, in slang, this term refers to a characteristic of a person who is full of himself, or boastful.
Giving	Originally, this means an act of handing something or merely giving. In slang, this means that a certain outfit or thing is great or amazing.
Savage	This term is originally used to describe something or someone that is untamed or uncivilized. In slang, this term is used to describe being brutally honest.
Bussin	Originally, this term is usually used to describe something that is very good, but mostly limited to food. However, in the slang, this term is used to describe something good, in general even if it is not about food.
Mog	Used as a short word for moggy, a type of cat, the meaning of this word in the slang context transitioned into an act of outshining someone in terms of looks.
Grind	Originally refers to an act of pulverizing something, this slang transitioned into an act of working hard.
Tweaking	Tweaking originally means a small adjustment of something or even a small tweaking sound. On the other hand, this slang transitioned into “overreacting”.
Let Him Cook	Literally means, letting someone to cook, this slang term becomes “letting someone do his thing”.
Beef	Originally means a kind of meat coming from a cow, this slang term becomes a word referring to conflicts, arguments, fights, or even issue.
Grapevine	Refers to the vine of a grape plant, this slang assumed a new meaning which is a mutual friend or a common friend.
Sobrang Latina	Originally referring to a race; Latinas are people often coming from Spain and other countries. On the other hand, this slang term means very beautiful.
Groomer	This word refers to people who grooms, mostly pets, however, in today’s generation, this term refers to someone who takes care of a child or minor until legal age to become his/her partner.
Walwal	In Ninorte-Samarnon language, this originally means an act of putting your tongue outside your mouth due to exhaustion or other reasons. On the other hand, this slang assumed the meaning of being drunk due to too much alcohol intake.
Makity [City]	Originally, this means a place in Luzon, however, as a slang, this term means flirty.
Maaward/ Awarding	Originally, this slang expression refers to an act of receiving a recognition or an award, however, in the slang context, this term means an act of being scolded.
Awit	In Filipino and originally, this term refers to a song, however, in the slang context, this term is used to show annoyance.
Print	Originally, this means a printed element in a sheet or even clothing, however, in slang expression, this refers to the bulge on a man’s pants.
Mugging	This slang expression originally means a robbery on the street, but a slang, this means dominating.
Roast	Originally means a process of cooking food through a direct fire, however, in the slang context, this word means “playfully teasing someone”.
Deflated	This term refers to something, mostly a balloon which lost its air content. However, as a slang, this term means being exhausted.

	Cap	Originally, this refers to the hat used by people as a style or to protect from sunlight or rain. However, in slang this means “a lie”.
	Clout	Originally means power, influence, or social status. However, as a slang, this term refers to an act doing something for the sake of popularity.
	Snatched	This originally means to forcefully get something. As a slang, this means stylish.
	Mid	Originally, this refers to the center or middle of something, as a slang, this refers to something average.
	Lit	This word is the past tense of light, however, in slang, this means cool.
	Fire	This originally refers to the hot fire that is used to cook food. However, in slang this means “amazing”.
	Threads	This originally refers to things used to either create clothes or in sewing. In slang, this refers to dress.
	Kicks	Originally, this refers to an action of transferring force to something using your feet. In slang, this refer to shoes.
	Golden Retriever	Originally, this slang expression refers to breed of a dog, in slang, this refers to person’s personality who is bubbly and super nice.
	Black Cat	This word refers to the color of the cat, in slang, this refers to person’s personality who is mysterious and introverted.
	Blue	This originally means the color blue, and in literary, this could also mean sadness, but in slang, this refers to a very close friend whom a person can always rely on.
	Mood	The meaning of this word is atmosphere. This was categorized as meaning reassignment because this was originally used to refer to a person’s emotional state, but today it assumed the meaning of atmosphere.
	Flex	Originally, this means bends of contract muscles, but in the slang context, this now means to boast or show off.
	Lag	This word originally means “to fall behind something” however, in slang this now means a slow or delay.
	Streak	Originally this means a continuous line or mark, but its new meaning now in slang is a consecutive interaction or messages.
	Negative Aura	This originally means an negative aura or the medical condition or physical glow of a person, but its new meaning reveals that it now refers to a person who gives out a bad energy.
	Era	Originally refers to a long period of time in history, but in the present time, this now means a personal phase of a person.
	Vibin’	This originally means feeling or atmosphere, like good vibes or bad vibes, but nowadays, it now means relaxing or enjoying.
Compounding	Petpeeve	This slang expression is considered as one example of compounding because this is composed of two words – Pet which refers to an animal people take care, and peeve which is used to describe annoyance. Hence, the slang expression means someone you are annoyed or someone you do not like.
	Fanum Tax	This is categorized under compounding because this was created out of the words “fanum” which is a word from the word “fanumTV” a streamer who also popularized this slang expression; and “tax” which refers to money paid to the government by tax payers. This slag expression refers to a food playfully stolen by a friend.
	Caked Up	This slang term is a compound of the words “Caked” which refer to a sweet snack often baked; and “up” which describes elevation. Together, this slang expression means “to wear too much make up”.
	Two-man	This is a slang expression composed of the words “Two” which is a number; and “man” which refer to the physical person. Together, the slang expression Two-man refer to an act of dating of two partners, a double date.

	Core-Memory	This slang expression is composed of the words “Core” which means central or center of something; and “memory” which refers to the past experiences of a person. Together, this slang expression means “a memory or experience that a person truly treasures”.
	Face Card	This slang term is a combination of the words “Face” and “Card”. Face as defined is a part of a person which has the eyes, nose, etc. while card refers to something that is used for different purpose, per say, deck of cards. Together, the word face-card means beautiful or handsome.
Other Classification		
Fresh and Creative	Gaur	This slang expression is under fresh and creative because it is an entirely new vocabulary with basis of the “go” but was created creatively.
	Oum	This slang means “yes” or “oo”. This was categorized as fresh and creative because it is an entirely new vocabulary creatively crafted to suit the linguistic landscape of the generation.
	Sheesh	This slang word is an entirely new word created by the Gen Alpha people to say “wow”.
	Yaaas	Yaaas is a new word created by people to say “yes”. This word is an entirely new word, though it is patterned from the word “yes” it assumed new form.
	Gyat	This word, though other may think is an acronym, this slang is not. This is an entirely new wrd created by the people to express their excitement, surprise, or admiration.
	Harurut	This slang word is an entirely new word created by the speakers of slang to express their feeling when they do not understand the what is being said to them. Instead of saying “what?” and in local language ‘ha?’, people would say “harurut” to playfully express their feeling.
	Linggay	This word is an entirely new word, this has no word patterned from but has assumed the meaning of being tipsy.
	BOP	The slang expression BOP may look as an acronym but this is an entirely new word created by the speakers of slang to express say “great song”.
	Pookie	Pookie is created by the speakers of slang as an endearment between lovers or partners. This means sweet heart.
	Hooman	This slang term is an entirely new word made from the creative lenses of people. This is a play from the imagination of people, as if speaking as their pets calling their owner, which is why it assumed the meaning of a “human” and could also be “friend”.
Bembang	This word is an entirely new word heard from different people who are fond of speaking or using slang. This word means “sex”.	
Wrong Talk Funny One	Omsim	Omsim means exactly or mismo. This slang word is a play of word from the words “mismo”.
	Periodt	This slang word means period. The word was modified by adding “t” at the end to further fit how the people speak today.
	Shoockt	This word is a slang expression for the word shocked, but was modified as to how people speak today, especially during informal conversations.
	Lodi	This word literally means “Idol” but was modified, played, read/written backward.
	Ticnap Notnac	This is a slang word used commonly by people today. This is a backward word for “Pancit Canton”.
	Gunthe	Banking on the sound of the word “Ganda”, this word is its playful counterpart.
	Aniz?/Anek?	Oftentimes heard from gays, this word has come into contact even with people who are not emmbers of LGBTQIAA+. This is just a play of the word “ano?”.
	Freshedt	This word is a play of the owd “fresh”, modified by the speakers of slang.
Lavarn/Labandtt	This word is a modified and played version of the word “laban”, but despite the changes in its form, the meaning stays the same.	

	Shetted	This word is a played and modified version of the word “shit”. The meaning of this word remains the same, a word used to show frustration.
	Danceriszt	This word is a modified version of the word Dancer.
	Songeriszt	This word is a modified version of the word Singer.
	Titokiriszt	Tiktoker refers to a person who is fond of using tiktok, but in slang context, this was modified into the word “tiktokiriszt”.
	Opkursi	This word is a play and modified version of the word “Of Course”.
	Bekenemen	This slang word is an entirely new word, but banking from the words “Baka naman”. This was created out of the speakers’ creativity.
	Wiz/Wes	This was first heard from a gay lingo which means “none or nothing”. This word is an entirely new word formed due to the creativity of the speakers.
	Epek	This word is an entirely new word or vocabulary which means “great or amazing”.
	Wasti na!	This word is a play and modified version of the word “Tiwas na” which means “we are done”.
	Person	This word is a playful version of the word person.
	S[um]akses	This word is created from the word “success”. Its composition is a playful and modified version of its original word.
Flippant	Very Mindful	This is a flippant because this slang is often used sarcastically. The meaning is often different from the words itself. Instead of someone who are keen to details, this could now refer to someone who is not really that midful.
	Very Demure	This is considered a flippant because this slang is often used sarcastically. The meaning is often different from the words itself. Instead of someone who are keen to details, this could now refer to someone who is not really that demure but the opposite.
	Very Cutesy	A flippant because this slang term is often used sarcastically. The meaning is often different from the words itself. Instead of someone who are keen to details, this could now refer to someone who is not really that cutesy.
Interjection	Yikes	This word is categorized under interjection because the word “yikes” is used to express a sudden emotion which shows a strong disapproval.
	Aguyy/agik	This word is categorized as interjection because this word is used to express a sudden emotion, in particular, annoyance.
	Ick	This word is an interjection slang because this expresses a sudden emotion, disgust in particular.
Imitative	Finna	This word is under imitative because this is derived from the words “fixing to”. Just like in the context of “gonna” from the words “going to”.
Phonemic Replacement	Mananas [kam]	The term Mananas is coined after the word “mananap”. People are said to use “mananas” rather than “mananap” because it is taken as less offensive.

CONCLUSIONS

The students of the University of Eastern Philippines use different slang expressions. This study further revealed that undergraduate students are the most users of slang expressions. This data implies that even if the current undergraduate students of the University of Eastern Philippines are not part of the Generation Alpha, they are still users of the Gen Alpha slang. This further implies that the current linguistic landscape of the student in the university, Gen Alpha slang is a part and parcel of it.

In addition, this study found out that the slang expressions used by the students of the University of Eastern Philippines can be categorized into different categories, namely: Shortenings/Abbreviation/Acronym, Neologism/Coinage, Meaning Re-assignment, Compounding, Wrong Talk Funny One, Flippant,

Fresh and Creative, Interjection, and Imitative. Further, this found out that meaning re-assignment is the most common category of slang. This implies that the students or the youths of today uses different slang expressions which are common to the English language or other language, but already have assumed new meaning.

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