

“GOTCHUU!”: THE USE OF SLANG IN SOCIAL MEDIA BY GENERATION Z

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Abstract: Slang has received much attention in research on analysis in recent years. Many studies found that slang dominated media, film, and novels. Similarly, studies on English slang received higher interest than other languages. The present study, in contrast, analyzes the slang used by Indonesian Generation Z in WhatsApp groups. The research is a qualitative study, with the researcher's primary focus in data collection being content analysis. Based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, the researcher discovered 50 slang classified into seven functions: starting a relaxed conversation (27 occurrences), expressing an impression (12 occurrences), creating an intimate atmosphere (5 occurrences), addressing (3 occurrences), abusing others (3 occurrences), humiliating (0 occurrences), and expressing intimacy (0 occurrences). Furthermore, those are divided into five types: fresh and creative (7 occurrences), flippant (9 occurrences), imitative (12 occurrences), acronym (14 occurrences), and clipping (14 occurrences) (8 occurrences). In conclusion, Generation Z has used this slang to increase the intimacy of their daily WhatsApp conversations.

Keywords: Slang, Generation Z, WhatsApp, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

There is a group of words in a language known as slang. Hutabarat et al. (2020) explain that slang is a non-standard language used in a non-formal situation. The development of technology and information that spreads quickly is one of the influencing factors (Muliawati & Murfi, 2017). They also mentioned that slang usually does not agree with the rule of proper grammar and pronunciation. Therefore, positive or negative information is easily obtained.

Slang is a common type of language since the speech style is characterized by language codes personal to a generation or group. It is a language that a specific group of people uses to communicate with one another and to convey their thoughts in casual settings (Putrawan et al., 2020; Saputra & Marlina, 2019). According to Trimasturi (2017), slang is a term Indonesian teenagers commonly use to interact. It requires more than complete grammar with clear articulations. Still, it is

sufficient to pronounce the abbreviations or acronyms of the vocabulary because there is an understanding of the meaning in the group. The factors causing the acquisition of slang include the current development of science and technology. In addition, language skills often put pressure on linguistic knowledge to influence vocabulary mastery. Therefore, vocabulary is a crucial element in language activities that are pleasing to the delivery of ideas. Furthermore, it is considered that slang is the language of the young generation because all children of the 2000s understand what the speaker and the interlocutor mean.

Specific slang phrases, such as unpleasant or rude, are deemed appropriate for use in the actual world (Supri & Tajudin, 2021; Irma et al., 2018). According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slangs have seven functions; addressing, humiliating, starting a relaxed conversation, creating an intimate atmosphere, expressing an impression, abusing people, and expressing intimacy. He also divided slang into

five types; Fresh and creative, Flippant, Imitative, Acronym, and Clipping. Speakers intentionally violate the standard usage within a group by using slang words unrestrainedly (Kulkarni & Wang, 2018). Based on researcher observation, slang is mainly used by the young age-group generation, and it is a huge possibility that those types and functions of slang will be found in young people's conversations.

There is a term for the young age groups born after 1996 called Generation Z (Gen Z). Parker (2020) stated that this generation is a digital native. They were born during an era with a solid economic situation and much development of technology tools. Generation Z nowadays is easily using social media to spread the message, causing a rapid development of slang (Rezeki et al., 2019). One phenomenon is that globalization and technological development have been given to the generation. This generation uses much technology in the field of information and communication. Email, SMS, instant messaging, and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, are often used to communicate (Afifi et al., 2018; Muthalib et al., 2020; Muslem et al., 2022). This generation makes their language beyond the standard and is only known by them. This phenomenon happens as a manifestation of the internet boom (Ardi, 2019). As Indonesian Generation Z, they use a variety of familiar languages when communicating in person or online on social media. A variety of intimate languages are utilized to make communication convenient. They use gadgets and make the internet a basic necessity. One platform currently used by most Generation Z is WhatsApp. Therefore, this research analyzed data collected from that application.

Moreover, those facts have made the researcher interested in doing this research because, in the social context, she usually uses slang to talk to friends. In addition, young people typically use slang. Hence, Wahib (2020) figured out various types of slang from the most prevalent videos, yet the research does not focus on a specific generation. The novelty of the current research lies in the specific use of slang by Generation Z (Gen Z). Because the researcher is also a part of generation Z, it is easier to collect the data. The age grouping of slang users in this study and

the closeness of the researcher to social data sources are considerations the study results could be an appropriate reference for the use of slang among Generation Z.

METHOD

This research adopted content analysis to analyze the materials collected from data sources, such as textbooks, songs, and public records (Ary et al., 2006). The subjects of this research were 72 Generation Z of the English Department, Universitas Syiah Kuala, selected randomly. Data were collected through their WhatsApp personal and group chats. It examined the commonly used slang for personal or group chats on WhatsApp.

It is a qualitative study by documentation. Data were collected in the following steps:

1. determining the data sources;
2. asking permission from the WhatsApp account holder to access the data;
3. transferring/transcribing the data from mobile phone to laptop/pc.

After the data were collected, they were tabulated in the table to make it easier to analyze. The analysis began by identifying the slang on WhatsApp chat, putting them into a table based on Allan and Burridge's category, and analyzing them for a brief description and conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current research presented the analysis results of the slang types and functions by Generation Z (Gen Z). There found 50 slang used by the participants, as listed in table 1.

Table 1. Types of slang words among Generation Z on social media

No	Type of slang	Occurrences	Percentage
1	Fresh and Creative	7	14 %
2	Flippant	9	18 %
3	Imitative	12	24 %
4	Acronym	14	28 %
5	Clipping	8	16 %
	Total	50	100 %

Based on table 1, the most used slang type is the acronym, while the least common ones are fresh, creative, and clipping.

Types of Slang Word

Acronym

This type is the first and the most common type among generation Z, with a percentage of 28% and several occurrences of 14 items. This sizable result is most likely caused by the fact that Generation Z creates their language in daily interactions, especially when chatting on WhatsApp. The acronym is an abbreviation for a phrase created by taking the first letter of each word in the sentence and is pronounced as a word itself. This type of slang has become very familiar in communication among generation Z. Here are some examples of this type of slang.

(1) *Eh **btw** vaksin kan ada 2 kali* [Eh, by the way, there are two times vaccines]

(2) *Tunggu aku cerna **SS** nya si Siren dlu* (wait for me to conceive Siren's screenshot first)

In example (1), the typist uses '**btw**,' which stands for 'by the way. In other ways, in example (2), "**ss**" stands for "screenshot." In these cases, those words can be understood by using abbreviations that their peers very commonly comprehend due to the desire to facilitate the communication process on WhatsApp and shorten the time spent delivering messages on WhatsApp.

Imitative

According to Allan and Burrige (2006), slang imitates or derives from Standard English (SE) words, uses Standard English (SE) words in different contexts, or combines two different words. This type became the second most common type found during the analysis, with a percentage of 24% and several occurrences of 12 items. This sizable result is most likely caused by Generation Z, who creates their language in daily interactions, especially when chatting on WhatsApp. Here are some examples of this type of slang.

(3) Okay, **lemme** know asap [Okay, let me know asap]

(4) **Dunno** what should I do Ja :((I do not know what should I do, Ja)

In examples (3) and (4), the typist typed '**lemme**' to make it easier to say 'let me' and '**dunno**' to say 'do not know.' The use of slang words is also familiar to Generation Z today. In this example, the typist asks to be notified as soon as possible about certain information.

Flippant

According to Allan and Burrige (2006), flippant is slang composed of two or more words that do not correspond to the denotative meaning. It is the third most common type, with the number of occurrences of 9 items or 18% of the total data. This small number is most likely because of this type of slang, and it takes two words that are not linguistically correlated but are related in meaning. Those who are not native English speakers are undoubtedly less likely to use it than the other common types. Some examples can be seen below.

(5) *Cepat **spill the tea** lah dluu* [Quick, spill the tea first]

(6) Just **chill out**, *ntar bias aku antar* (Just chill out, I can deliver later)

In example (5), the message typist uses '**spill the tea**,' referring to something shared or poured with others. In this case, the typist wants to refer to a news or secret that is still warm, like freshly brewed tea. But, of course, the use of this slang is complicated to find in non-natives because its meaning is rather difficult to digest at a glance by ordinary people, especially by people who need help understanding the context of the conversation.

In example (6), the message typist uses the word '**chill out**,' which means 'relax,' 'easy,' or 'take it easy.' There is no language link between the two words and their meanings, but the other person can understand slang during the chat process on WhatsApp. This slang adds an incredible, innovative, and friendly impression to its users during the chat process on WhatsApp.

Clipping

Clipping is one method of creating new words in English. It entails shortening a longer word, frequently to one syllable. Clipping is the fourth type of slang found, with eight items or 16% of the total data. Generation Z wants to simplify expressions like this type of slang. The tendency to facilitate communication and a fast-paced lifestyle among Generation Z is the cause of the emergence of a relatively common type of clipping slang when using the WhatsApp chat application. Some examples of clipping-type slang are described below.

(7) *Wowww, **Congrats** kaaaa* [Wow, Congratulations sister.]

(8) *Itu tulisannya typo* (There is a typo in writing)

In example (7), the clipping slang '**congrats**' comes from the word 'congratulations.' The purpose of forming slang like this is to convey the word's original meaning in a more straightforward and shorter version. Usually, by saying a short form like this example, the other person will immediately understand the importance of the word without the typist adding additional information related to the congratulations.

Furthermore, in example (8), the typist uses the slang word 'typo' to modify the 'typographical error.' Short for typographical error, a typo is a mistake made in the typed or printed textbook that contains some typographical errors. However, also this can happen when the conversation happens on social media, such as WhatsApp.

Fresh and Creative

This type of slang is the type that is found the least during the analysis process. From all the data, only seven or as much as 14% of slang expressions belong to new and creative slang. Here are the examples.

(9) **Nope**

(10) *Oww shoot*

In example (9), the meaning of '**nope**' in Indonesian is 'not,' or a word for rejection. The word 'nope' is trendy among Generation Z and is a trend. This new and creative word can also be used in everyday conversation or when chatting with a friend.

In example (10), the meaning of 'shoot' comes from the word 'shit.' This phrase is used in response to something surprising, excellent, or extraordinary. It can also be used when an individual is excited or shocked at something.

Table 2. Functions of slang words among Generation Z on social media

No	Function of slang	Occurrences
1	To start a casual conversation	27
2	To express impression	12
3	To create an intimate atmosphere	5
4	To address	3
5	Abusing people	3
6	To humiliate	0
7	To express intimacy	0
	Total	50

Based on the table, the most used slang function is 'to start a casual conversation.' In contrast, the least common slang function is 'to abuse people.' Each slang type and function found in the chats from the analysis are presented in the following sub-sections with examples from the conversations and explanations.

Based on table 2, the most common slang function found is 'to start a casual conversation,' and a minor standard part is 'to abuse others.' Meanwhile, the 'to humiliate' and 'to express intimacy' functions were not found.

Functions of Slang

To Start A Casual Conversation

This function is most commonly found during the data analysis, with 27 occurrences. It might occur because most WhatsApp users, especially Generation Z, use it to chat casually with their peers. Here are some examples.

(5) Happy Birthday *Uul*, **WYATB** [Happy Birthday Uul, wish you all the best]

In example (5), the typist uses the abbreviation '**wyatb**' as a shortened form of 'wish you the best.' This slang expression is only used in casual conversations and usually with peers. The typist wants to say a prayer for the interlocutor on their birthday.

To Express Impression

This function is the second most commonly found slang, with 12 occurrences. The amount is quite a lot compared to the total amount of data. The most significant possible cause is that many young people seem excessive or trite when using WhatsApp with their peers, especially when responding to statements by their close friends. Here is an example.

(6) *Oww shoot* [Oh shit]

In example (6), the typist uses '**shoot**,' which means '**shit**.' Typists want to respond casually to the other person's statement, who, in this example, is their close friend. This expression is not polite, but it becomes an effective conveyer of an impression when using the WhatsApp application among Generation Z because words like this are used according to the context.

To create an intimate atmosphere

Only some examples of this function were found during the analysis process. Therefore, this function only has five occurrences from the total data. Here is an example.

(7) **Gotchuu** *okelah* [I have got you, okay]

In example (7), the typist uses '**gotchuu**' as the closing at the end of the conversation. This slang word means "I have got you," which can be interpreted as trust between two parties in friendship. It can also be construed as sympathy and empathy for someone who has been through hard times. Finally, this slang word can also be interpreted as "I understand you."

To Address Information

The researcher found only three slang with this function during the data analysis. With only three occurrences, this function is the second-shortest of all the parts analyzed. It might be because most WhatsApp users already know most of the people they contact through the chat feature, so it has little possibility to use. Here is an example.

(8) Thx **sis**, *nnti di kabarinnn* [thank sister, I will let you know later]

In example (8), the typist refers to a woman he may have known for a long time using the expression '**sis**,' which means 'sister' or 'my sister.' This expression is commonly used in monologue conversations by a narrator in advertisements for women's products. Still, it is rarely found in a conversation between two people who have known each other for a long time.

To Abuse Others

The researcher found three slang during the data analysis process. This type of slang is rarely found because it exerts a harmful effect on harsh words. So the terms must follow the context, as in the following excerpt.

(9) Call him **fuckin** s

In example (9), the typist wants to show emotion during the chat process with the word '**fuckin**'. In this case, he could be very annoyed, but it could also be a joke between close friends.

Based on the framework used in this study, there are five types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and

clipping. In addition, there are seven functions of slang: address, humiliate, start a casual conversation, create an intimate atmosphere, express impressions, abuse people, and express intimacy. However, from the analysis, not all functions of slang appear in this study.

In line with this result, a study comes from Sudiyanti et al. (2017), which observed the slang function used in "Step Up: All In" movie, stated that there are four types of slang in that movie, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, and clipping. Slang phrases used in that film serve several functions, such as addressing, creating an intimate atmosphere, starting a relaxed conversation, conveying an impression of intimacy, and humiliating. Therefore, addressing people and starting a casual conversation are frequent functions since people often address their close friends in particular ways and habitually use slang words to set a casual condition (Ratna et al., 2021).

Compared to the previous studies, this research has differences in research subjects and the results. For example, Lestari (2020) examined slang on the Twitter platform. The results found many slangs on the forum, but the study provided No—classification of the data sources. Meanwhile, in this study, the researchers determined the data sources, namely teenagers who are still classified as Generation Z and are university students with a close age range.

Mailisa et al. (2022) analyzed the function of American slang in "Despicable Me 3" movies. Frequently used slang in the movie is used to humiliate, initiate, and show intimacy. People tend to communicate using slang words to mock and praise the interlocutor. People also use slang words depending on the interlocutors (Harared, 2018). Slangs also lead to grammatical errors. Trimasturi (2017) affirms in his research that slang used in social media has many grammatical mistakes, including irregular capital letter usage, abbreviation, and alphabet changing.

Slang in everyday communication, mainly social media, has made it popular (Matsumo et al., 2019; Fata & Apriliya, 2021). Fata et al. (2019) added that slang spreads rapidly, especially among people who use mass platforms like WhatsApp. The use of social media makes it possible for slang that may

have started in one group to become quite effortlessly popular.

Using slang in WhatsApp in daily communication allows people to set the mood during chatting. The use of slang in Generation Z is strengthened daily by the ease of communication facilitated by technology, such as WhatsApp. Furthermore, using slang in WhatsApp for everyday communication allows them to set the tone of the conversation. The ease of communication facilitated by technology encourages Generation Z to utilize slang daily. In addition, generation Z is free to express their emotion using slang as they can create a casual atmosphere (Utami et al., 2020; Matsumo et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify the types and functions of slang in WhatsApp conversations among Generation Z (Gen Z). The study discovered five out of the seven functions of slang words based on Allan and Burrige's theory, which are: (1) creating a casual conversation with 27 occurrences; (2) creating

an intimate atmosphere with 12 occurrences; (3) expressing an impression with five occurrences; (4) abusing others with three occurrences, and (5) addressing, with three occurrences. This study did not identify two functions used to humiliate and express intimacy. Slang is commonly used to express intimacy between two people who are very close, such as couples, best friends, and family. Meanwhile, there found five types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. Because the respondents are college students from Generation Z who are active on social media, slang is easy to find in their conversations.

This research would benefit ELT (English Language Teaching) and linguistic development. It contributes to mind mapping the language used by the young generation daily. Teachers must build language awareness when teaching English in the classroom.

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