

LINGUISTIC PATTERNS OF SLANG USAGE IN ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for social integration and adaptation in a linguistically diverse society. Slang represents a form of language commonly used by teenagers, often characterized by a sense of exclusivity and informality. These expressions are typically brief, trendy, and easy to remember. This study aims to identify the types of slang frequently used by Indonesian teenagers, uncover their meanings, and explore the reasons behind their use. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research relies on document analysis with listening and note-taking techniques. Findings indicate that slang is widely adopted among teenagers due to its simplicity, memorability, and ability to foster a relaxed, familiar atmosphere within peer interactions.

KEYWORDS

Sociolinguistics, Slang, Teenager, Community, Slang Words



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INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistics, a dynamic subfield of linguistics, explores the intricate relationship between language and society. It investigates how language functions in social contexts and how it reflects and shapes human interactions. Sociolinguistics is not limited to studying language structure alone; instead, it focuses on how language is used by people from diverse backgrounds and social settings. This field acknowledges that language is deeply intertwined with cultural norms, values, and social identities, influencing the way individuals communicate within their communities.

One of the core concerns of sociolinguistics is understanding how individuals choose and use language based on social circumstances. Fishman (1971, as cited in Kenbuan, 2000) famously defined sociolinguistics as the study of “who speaks what language to whom and when,” emphasizing that linguistic behavior is inherently social. This definition underscores that language is not merely a tool for communication but a vehicle through which social roles, relationships, and power dynamics are negotiated and expressed in everyday life.

Language plays a fundamental role in human communication, enabling individuals to express thoughts, share feelings, and convey intentions. It functions as a symbolic and structured system, as noted by Tarigan (2008), who stresses that both spoken and written forms of language are shaped by communal agreement and social conventions. Without this shared understanding of language, meaningful communication would be impossible, and social

cohesion would be difficult to maintain. Hence, language serves not only as a medium for individual expression but also as a cornerstone of societal organization.

From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, language use is heavily influenced by multiple sociocultural factors. These include age, education, gender, occupation, social class, and the situational context in which communication occurs. Age, in particular, plays a significant role in linguistic variation. As noted by Eckert (1997), adolescents tend to develop distinct linguistic patterns influenced by peer interactions and social experiences. This stage of life is marked by a heightened need for group identity and belonging, often leading to the creation of innovative and dynamic linguistic forms.

Adolescents are especially known for their flexibility and creativity in language use. They frequently modify their speech depending on the setting—opting for formal expressions in school or when speaking to authority figures, and using informal, relaxed language when among peers. This ability to code-switch and adapt language styles according to context is a hallmark of teenage linguistic behavior. As a result, adolescents often become trendsetters in language change, introducing new expressions and popularizing non-standard forms such as slang.

Slang is a prominent linguistic phenomenon within youth culture. It is generally characterized as a non-standard, informal variety of language that emerges within specific social groups. Often seen as a form of identity expression, slang is created through linguistic modifications such as abbreviation, metaphorical usage, or playful manipulation of standard forms. Aswin (2015) points out that slang functions as a kind of in-group language that may be incomprehensible to outsiders due to its reliance on shared cultural references and social context.

According to Sarwono (2004), slang is not just a linguistic curiosity but a sociocultural trend primarily driven by media exposure, popular culture, and peer influence. It reflects the attitudes, lifestyles, and interests of its users—predominantly teenagers. Slang often serves both to establish group cohesion and to mark boundaries between social groups. As a result, it becomes an important marker of adolescent identity and social belonging. In Indonesia, the influence of global media has further intensified the adoption and creation of slang among youth.

In recent years, the infusion of English into Indonesian slang has become increasingly evident. English terms are often integrated into teen vernacular, either directly or through creative adaptation. The growing use of English in digital media, music, films, and online communication has contributed to this trend, signaling the globalization of language. The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) defines slang as an informal dialect used for social interaction within specific groups, which aligns with this global-local linguistic blending. Given this background, the present study seeks to examine which English slang expressions are currently popular among Indonesian teenagers and to interpret the meanings they convey within their cultural context.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative descriptive research that aims to describe the structure of slang words used by teenagers and classify their forms based on their constituent elements. According to Yusuf (2017: 63), this type of research is used to accurately describe situations or events and to obtain deeper and broader information. The data used in this research consists of words, sentences, and slang expressions commonly used by today's teenagers. The document study technique was employed to collect data, along with listening and note-taking techniques. The slang vocabulary used by teenagers was analyzed based on the scientific

perspective of socio-linguistic studies, with the analysis stage using content according to Miles and Huberman. This stage includes (1) selecting data that is appropriate to the research problem's focus and eliminating unnecessary data, (2) classifying the data according to the type to be studied, presenting the data resulting from data reduction, and (4) drawing conclusions as the final stage of research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to present a list of English slang words that are commonly used by Indonesian teenagers in their daily lives, particularly on social media. The findings of this research reveal 15 frequently used English abbreviations of slang words.

Table 1. Common Slang Words Used by Teenagers: Abbreviations and Their Interpretations

No	Slang	Full Form	Example in Context
1	IDK	I Don't Know	"IDK what it means."
2	IMO	In My Opinion	"IMO, the movie was not that good."
3	OTW	On The Way	"I'm OTW to the meeting."
4	BTW	By The Way	"BTW, have you seen the new movie?"
5	OMG	Oh My God	"OMG! You are a genius!"
6	YOLO	You Only Live Once	"YOLO, let's go on a spontaneous road trip!"
7	LOL	Laugh Out Loud	"LOL, this baby is so funny."
8	CMIIW	Correct Me If I'm Wrong	"CMIIW, I thought you were a boy."
9	THX	Thank You	"Thx for the help!"
10	FYI	For Your Information	"FYI, the meeting has been rescheduled."
11	LMAO	Laughing My Ass Off	"LMAO, that joke was hilarious!"
12	BF	Boyfriend	"Jungkook is my BF."
13	GF	Girlfriend	"My GF and I are going to the movies tonight."
14	FOMO	Fear of Missing Out	"I went to the party to avoid FOMO."
15	Gimme	Give Me	"Gimme a gift on my birthday, could you?"

From table we can see that those slangs are frequently used in this modern era. The followings are the elaboration of those slangs:

1. **IDK (I Don't Know)**

This acronym is commonly used to indicate a lack of knowledge or uncertainty regarding a particular matter. It is frequently found in text-based communication such as messaging and social media.

Example: "IDK what it means" → "I'm not sure what that means."

2. **IMO (In My Opinion)**

Used to preface personal viewpoints or perspectives in informal contexts.

Example: "IMO, the movie was not that good."

3. **OTW (On The Way)**

Indicates that the speaker is currently en route to a destination.

Example: "I'm OTW to the meeting."

4. **BTW (By The Way)**

Used to introduce a new subject or additional comment in a conversation.

Example: "BTW, have you seen the new movie?"

5. **OMG (Oh My God)**

An expression of surprise, shock, or admiration.

Example: "OMG! You are a genius!"

6. **YOLO (You Only Live Once)**

This expression encourages spontaneous or bold action, often used as a justification for doing something adventurous.

Example: "YOLO, let's go on a spontaneous road trip!"

7. **LOL (Laugh Out Loud)**

An expression of amusement or laughter, commonly used in response to humorous content.

Example: "LOL, this baby is so funny."

8. **CMIW (Correct Me If I'm Wrong)**

A polite request for correction, often used when one is unsure of the accuracy of their statement.

Example: "CMIW, I thought you were a boy."

9. **THX (Thank You)**

A simplified version of "thanks," often used in quick text communication to express gratitude.

Example: "Thx for the help!"

10. **FYI (For Your Information)**

Used to share relevant information or updates, particularly in written communication.

Example: "FYI, the meeting has been rescheduled to next week."

11. **LMAO (Laughing My Ass Off)**

An exaggerated expression of laughter, indicating something extremely funny.

Example: "LMAO, that joke was hilarious!"

12. **BF (Boyfriend)**

A common abbreviation for "boyfriend."

Example: "Jungkook is my BF."

13. **GF (Girlfriend)**

Refers to a female romantic partner.

Example: "My GF and I are going to the movies tonight."

14. **FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)**

Describes the anxiety or concern of not being included in an exciting or popular activity.

Example: "I went to the party because I didn't want to experience FOMO."

15. **Gimme (Give Me)**

An informal contraction of "give me," used in casual speech.

Example: "Gimme a gift on my birthday, could you?"

Based on observations of teenage interactions both on social media platforms and in casual gatherings, it has been identified that approximately 15 slang terms—primarily acronyms and abbreviations derived from English—are frequently utilized. These terms include **IDK**, **IMO**, **OTW**, **BTW**, **OMG**, **YOLO**, **LOL**, **CMIW**, **THX**, **FYI**, **LMAO**, **BF**, **GF**, **FOMO**, and **Gimme**. Their usage predominantly serves to establish an informal and friendly tone in communication, enabling teenagers to express themselves more freely and efficiently.

The data analysis reveals that teenagers frequently employ a variety of English slang abbreviations to enhance their communication in informal contexts. These abbreviations are characterized by brevity, phonological simplicity, and semantic clarity. Notably, most of the abbreviations are either acronyms or clipped forms, making them easy to remember and use. Examples include "IDK" (I Don't Know), "LOL" (Laugh Out Loud), "OTW" (On The Way), and "YOLO" (You Only Live Once).

A closer look at usage patterns reveals several key communicative functions:

1. **Efficiency and Brevity:** Abbreviations allow teenagers to convey messages quickly, particularly in time-constrained or space-limited environments such as texting and social media. For example, "FYI" (For Your Information) provides an efficient way to preface additional information.
2. **Social Identity and Group Belonging:** The consistent use of slang marks in-group membership and differentiates teenagers from other age groups. Phrases like "YOLO" and "LMAO" reflect shared cultural values and humor among adolescents.
3. **Emotional Expression:** Certain slang terms, such as "OMG" (Oh My God) and "LMAO" (Laughing My Ass Off), convey strong emotional reactions, thus enhancing the expressiveness of digital communication.
4. **Politeness and Softening:** Abbreviations like "CMIIW" (Correct Me If I'm Wrong) function as pragmatic softeners, indicating politeness and reducing the imposition of potentially incorrect assertions.
5. **Interpersonal Closeness:** The informal nature of slang contributes to the creation of a relaxed and friendly tone in communication, promoting interpersonal closeness.

Linguistically, these abbreviations exhibit patterns of morphological innovation. Clipping (e.g., "Gimme" from "give me") and initialism (e.g., "IDK") are dominant processes. These forms demonstrate the creative capacity of language users, especially within younger demographics

CONCLUSION

Teenagers represent a distinct social group with a dynamic and evolving linguistic repertoire. Slang serves as a marker of group identity and solidarity, allowing for communication that is both expressive and efficient. The findings of this study highlight that slang terms—though considered non-standard—are widely understood and accepted among adolescent communities. These terms are typically short, memorable, and aligned with popular cultural trends. Morphological reductions and creative abbreviations characterize their structure, reflecting the innovative nature of youth language. In essence, slang functions not only as a linguistic shortcut but also as a symbol of social belonging and contemporary relevance.

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