



**BALANCING ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND DIGITAL IDENTITY:
IMPACT OF SLANG ON GEN Z**

Fatima Maqsood

Research Scholar, English Literature and Language, University of Okara

Email: fatimamaqsood494@gmail.com

Maneha Raza

Research Scholar, English Literature and Language, University of Okara

Email: maniharaza252@gmail.com

Dr Rabia Khan (Corresponding Author)

Assistant Professor, The University of Faisalabad

Email: rabiakhan.ENG@tuf.edu.pk

Abstract

This research explores the influence of slang usage on academic language and communication habits of Generation Z university students. Based on sociolinguistics and language attitude theory, the study examines how often exposure to informal language, initially through social media, affects student's academic writing and formal representation. The study has used primary data through online survey by Google form; and, analyzed using quantitative research method. Moreover, the theoretical framework integrates Sociolinguistics and Language Attitude Theory, investigating insights into variation in language patterns among students. In academic settings slang is still used sometimes, either deliberately or inadvertently. Results show that slang provides a tool for social connection and spontaneous representation, but can negatively affect academic order and language standards. The research accentuates the need of promoting awareness to language variation and code-switching, helping students create balance between academic writing and their digital identity effectively. Fostering these skills among students can maintain language standards, keeping their digital life uninterrupted.

Keywords: *Generation Z, slang language, social media, academic language, Sociolinguistics, language attitude theory.*

1. Introduction

In the world of 8.6 billion people, communities of different languages, races, colors, ages, genders and social roles, live. Everyone around the world shares a language, a language which they use to express, communicate, interact, and socialize. Besides, language has some other roles in different fields of life such as academia, pharmacy, and humanities. In academia we use language in a formal way; while in common life we use language as a tool for expressing our ideas, emotions, opinions, and facts. Studying the role of language under the context of society is studied under the umbrella of sociolinguistics. According to Spolsky (2010), sociolinguistics is "the study of the link between language and society, of language variation, and attitudes about language". As soon as the context of society, social media, age fellows and peers change, our language styles also change. The study of those language styles is basically sociolinguistics. Wardhaugh (2010) describes sociolinguistics as "the study of the relationship between language and society," examining how factors like class, age, and gender shape linguistic behavior. Factors like education, money and geography also play an important role in shaping the language behavior according to society. Moreover, with the technological advancement to frame



contemporary teaching approaches, the expectations of university GEN-Z students have evolved greatly (Khan, Farooq, & Khan, 2025).

1.1 Slang

While using language in common interactions like friend's circle, peers and society we normally use informal and comfortable language. We use different registers for different persons and different situations. Language tones and styles vary from person to person in our society. Sometimes we use some particular words with particular groups of people such as "WhatsUp, Buddy", "Lowkey/Highkey" and "Bruh" for brother or friend. Such expressions are known as slangs. According to Budiasa, Savitri, Shanti, and Dewi (2021), slang is a phenomenon of using language variations that arise due to language development and a social dynamic in society in the realm of language. Development of language varies with the development of society. As the language develops it often changes its slangs itself. According to Eble (1996), slang is something which has no rules in English grammar and used in specific groups like friends, using words like OMG (Oh My God), and BTW (By The Way). We use the word OMG to convey a feeling of shock. Social media has successfully spread the emerging new slang language, so it is not surprising that slang is also used as a social language on social media. Linguists, Dumas and Lighter (1978) suggest that an expression qualifies as "true slang" if it meets at least one of the two criteria i.e. "Its use implies familiarity with a particular group or subject. It is considered taboo in ordinary discourse with people of higher social status. It replaces a well-known conventional synonym to avoid discomfort or to be more vivid." In this study we have analyzed the impact of slang language on GEN-Z students' academic performance.

1.2 Generation Z and Slang usage

According to Jeresano and Carretero (2022), slang manifests the culture of digital natives, particularly those belonging to Generation Z. Generation Z refers to individuals born after 1995, characterized as digital natives proficient in technology and social media. Gen-Z is basically narrated as a generation which was not introduced to technology they just accepted technology. There are a number of factors which play a role behind shaping the language of a person and in the context on Gen-Z generation one of the most major and foremost role is played by social media and technology. Slang is basically made by using different lexical processes to make a new word according to situation, accidentally, or ironically. Slang is casual and mostly used to express emotions and feelings and to build relationships. In universities slang is used among students for the sake of enjoyment in communication and show strong relationships. Bodle (2016) notes that, according to the Global Language Monitor, approximately around 5,400 new words are created every year, but only about 1,000 gain enough usage to appear in print. All of these new words are produced by diverse language users and their needs. While in the case of English, slang can basically originate from any area using their first or second language. It's a diverse field to study.

1.3 Academic writing

While Academic language is something which is different from non-standard and informal ways. As it's narrated by Schleppegrell (2004) "Academic language is focused on specific words which convey complex ideas and used in educational settings to meet with the standard forms." It's the most formal way of language often selected by scholars in researches, students in examination, teachers in lectures, lawyers in courts and by establishment in making policies. According to



Bailey (2011), academic writing is “clear, concise, focused, structured and backed up by evidence. Its purpose is to aid the reader’s understanding.” Academic writing do not have any sort of flexibility in it for new slangs. It’s very structured, aligned, and disciplined. As it’s described by Cottrell (2005), "Academic writing is linear, with one central point or theme, with every part contributing to the main line of argument, without digressions or repetitions." Slang is informal and having casual playful tone, often disregards grammatical rules, follows trending words and culture specifications. Easily used by common people in everyday life, slang words may not overstay and get changed. Academic language is professional and serious, follows strict grammatical norms using universally understood vocabulary more stable and consistent over time. Younger generation mostly influenced by social media like Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, Messenger like people on Facebook can share their emotions in any language or dialect. Students’ conversation in non-standard language has influenced the language in an excellent way. Students often use informal language in formal premises of university sometimes in the flow.

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of internet, college, university slang on GENZ students’ academic level. This research is basically focused on the inspection of effects of slang usage among university students on their academic language. Language Attitude theory will be used for this examination.

Research Questions

1. How does Gen Z's frequent slang use impact their ability to write formally in academic settings?
2. What are the primary reasons Gen Z students use slang and how do these motivations affect their academic writing choices?
3. How do different types of feedback on slang in academic work influence Gen Z students' understanding and application of formal language standards?

2. Literature Review

Slang in Linguistic Context

Slang, a dynamic and informal subset of language, has garnered significant academic attention due to its growing influence in digital and youth cultures. Its rise is closely tied to social dynamics, group identity, and the evolution of communication platforms, particularly social media. Slang reflects rapid linguistic innovation and cultural exchange. Eble (1996) defines slang as vocabulary that arises informally among speakers and lacks rigid grammatical constraints, often carrying a vivid or emotionally resonant character. Dumas and Lighter (1978) propose that slang should fulfill specific social conditions, such as group familiarity and informal, even taboo, discourse that contrasts with more formal linguistic expressions. From a sociolinguistic perspective, slang acts as both a linguistic and social phenomenon, shaping and reflecting group dynamics, especially among young digital natives like Generation Z. Slang has long been marginalized in academic discourses as inappropriate or detrimental, yet increasing scholarly work suggests that it plays a critical role in identity construction and sociocultural expression (Garrett, 2010; Wardhaugh, 2010). Particularly, in digitally-saturated environments, slang offers both linguistic innovation and social connection.



Generation Z: Digital Natives and Linguistic Evolution

The generation Z (most people born after 1995) is described as being heavily involved with technology and electronic settings. They did not enter the world that is digital but grew up in it and influenced their cognitive and communicative development. Generation Z uses slang not only to entertain or as cordiality or a shortening of the language as Jeresano and Carretero (2022) affirm, but to allow demonstration of identity, membership, and emotional appeal online either on WhatsApp, TikTok, or Instagram. Participatory culture and peer-to-peer text strengthens this generation, and is constantly emerging as the communicative language of the group. Investigating digital vernaculars, Tufail, Asgher, and Ali (2024); highlight that the use of slang is currently facilitated by accelerating technological changes, and such platforms as Instagram and TikTok correspond to linguistic laboratories where the new slang is invented, developed, transferred. The results of their research show that such mode of communication tends to be rich in emotional message and cultural associations that can be closely connected to lived experiences and values of Gen Z. In a similar way, Siagian (2024) with TikTok data proved that slang that appeared in social media is greatly determined by cultural patterns and peer-group interaction where the language is a degree of mimicking, attachment, and opposition. This perspective of sociolinguistics also coincides with that of Spolsky (2010) platform, whereby the social context cannot be divorced of language variation. The use of slang by Gen Z is thus not only expressive, but a symbol of identity and in-group solidarity as well as insurrectionism against the official order of words- a feature that is described by Dumas and Lighter (1978) who argue that slang is used as a replacement to official language in the search of emotionality as well as sociocultural orientation.

Slang vs. Academic Language

The confrontation of the slang and academic language is quite contrasting in the aspect of structure, purpose and reception. According to Bailey (2011), academic writing can be described as being short, organised and evidence supported in a formal manner of communicating highly involved ideas. Schleppegrell (2004) also goes on to advance this by suggesting that academic language can be defined as a specialized register that is highly demanding in terms of consistency in syntax and vocabulary in order to ensure high level reasoning and knowledge building. Slang is omitted in academic language not because of formality since academic language is usually non-formal but because of precision, clarity and lack of universal understanding or knowledge in the field which is his/her duty that a slang lacks. Nevertheless, the lines between slang and scholarly writing are having more and more overlap, especially in instances of student populations that are deep into informal online communication. This juxtaposition presents a dilemma in higher education how to maintain the integrity of the academic discourse and still recognize the changing linguistic realities of the present-day students. Cottrell (2005) sheds some light on this dilemma by claiming that academic writing is linear and purposeful, of which all sentences serve a coherent argument. Slang, in turn, lives on spontaneity, emotions, and sociability and this makes it tend to break the linearity and clarity required in academic writing. The consequence of this is what other researchers have called inadvertent use of informal language in the formal realms (Malik, Amin, & Inam, 2024). As shown in their study, the communication modes of texting, online chat, and use of slangs have



had the direct impact on the writing style of the students in the Pakistan schools, more particularly where the choice of words, sentence structures and the tone are concerned.

Sociolinguistic and Psychological Implications of Slang

Garrett's (2010) Language Attitude Theory provides a critical lens through which we can interpret these phenomena. Language attitudes are not neutral; they reflect value judgments that societies and individuals place on different linguistic varieties. Within academic institutions, the use of slang is often viewed negatively, signaling a lack of seriousness or competence (Garrett, 2010; Wardhaugh, 2010). This shapes the way students are assessed, taught, and disciplined. But the identical linguistic performance in a peer group can also be a sign of creativeness, authenticity, or in-group loyalty. Surprisingly, one of the recent studies investigated by Hashmi, Mahmood, and Naz (2019) viewed the role of mass media in the popularization and normalization of English slang among Pakistani students. According to their research, greater prevalence of consumption of Western media through the use of the films, YouTube, and music has deeply roots new phrases of slang in daily communication. Such phrases tend to creep into the academic one either consciously or unconsciously through overuse. Consequently, students including those who understand the logic of not using slang in official contexts can still have difficulty in switching between informal and formal codes. Such behavioral tendency can be supported by the findings of Khan, Farooq and Khan (2025) who also point out that the Gen Z expectations of educational systems are now subject to the provisions of digital fluency, personalized learning and loose boundaries for formal and informal language use. The problem is that academic institutions have to adjust to such expectations and still support standards.

Motivation for Slang Use

The reasons that students have in using slang vary as much as slang does. According to Tufail et al. (2024), not only being under the influence of other peers and exposure to media, slang also has functional and emotional roles. With some students the slang is used as an abbreviation (e.g., I don't know, OMG, LOL) and others in order to convey a mood, or relay a joke. In such a way, a high proportion of users uses slang, trying to strengthen social identity and common cultural information, as Eble (1996) reports on in-group language. Specifically, in the frames of the present study, some of the motivations implied in university students related to that they want to feel so-called cool, to save time, and to preserve peer relationships, which is in line with previous international literature (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022; Hashmi et al., 2019). The colloquial character of vulgarity also adds to the difficulties on the way to the restriction of applying slang to the academic environment, in cases when students believe that its use can help them feel more communicatively capable or gain certain authority within a new group of friends.

Slang in Academic Writing: Prevalence and Consequences

The empirical evidence that was collected in the course of this study proves the fact that slang does find its way into academic writing. A considerable percentage in the sample (42.4) responded that they use slang at school scenarios with or without the intention. Notably, more than half (52.5%) did not use colloquial words in their academic formal writing, indicating that they have certain level of awareness of registers and linguistic compartmentalization. These findings speak with the experience of Malik et al. (2024) who noted that despite being able to switch the codes, a long-term exposure to structural language can affect the performance of a student in academic writing. Unconscious usage of informal language, abbreviations and



emotional phrases in scholarly papers may result in lowered grades, understanding, and perceived knowledge. The findings of another study by Budiasa et al. (2021) confirm this because the researchers examine how slang was born as a result of the development of social principles and how slang may substitute the established linguistic forms. Nevertheless, they also warn that such a substitution is capable of interfering with standardized language application, especially in schools. Lack of relevant training in formal writing can definitely attribute to poor ability of compartmentalizing language usage. The teachers have the assumption that the students know how to change registers and when to do so by themselves. But judging by the results of this study, some irregularity is the way in which this issue of slang use in academic work is treated. Only a quarter of students stated that they were regularly receiving feedback regarding inappropriate slang and more than half of them asserted that they received no comments at all which may imply that the faculty does not pay much attention to grammatical correctness or the fact that language norms are not highlighted in evaluation rubrics.

Media Influence and Linguistic Identity

The role of digital media in shaping language cannot be overstated. Digital platforms facilitate rapid linguistic shifts and promote informal communication. Bodle (2016) reports that thousands of new words enter digital discourse annually, though only a few gain traction. This reflects the velocity of language change and the fertile ground that online platforms provide for slang innovation. Khan and Khan (2025) argue that sociolinguistic patterns differ significantly by gender and that linguistic choices, including slang usage, often reflect broader social negotiations of identity. In university contexts, where students are forming adult identities, language—including slang—becomes a vehicle for expressing autonomy, creativity, and peer solidarity. As such, educators must navigate the tension between accepting linguistic plurality and upholding academic integrity.

Educational Implications and Theoretical Synthesis

The hybridization of the slang and academic writing leads to the rethinking of the pedagogical approaches. Among the alternatives to remedy the situation that are present in the current literature, it is possible to note better taught code-switching- the skill to switch between linguistic language registers in accordance with the context (Garrett, 2010; Cottrell, 2005). Teachers are in a position to build up an understanding among their students as to when and how to move between informal and formal forms of expression without condemning the vernacular language. The Theory of Language Attitude can be a very helpful model in such change. By considering slang not as a disability but rather as an alternative, acceptable form of expression, the education community will be able to form more positive feedback techniques and enable the students to preserve their language identity and learn the academic rules at the same time. This is in line with a culturally responsive pedagogy in which the linguistic capital of the students is acknowledged and valued. In addition, the digital literacy subjects at the university should be used to help students question the impact of their online social contact behavior having on their academic language. According to Tufail et al. (2024) and Hashmi et al. (2019), language awareness exercises, peer editing, and genre recognition activities should be offered in the framework of such programs to emphasize the differences between formal and informal writing.



3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach used in this research is the aspect of Sociolinguistics especially Language Attitude Theory. The linguistics subdivision responsible in analyzing the connection between language and society, is called Sociolinguistics and this has shown how language varies between different social groups and situations (Wardhaugh, 2010). Language Attitude Theory is a sub branch of the sociolinguistics field, which learns how communities or people judge/opinion about given language forms, such as individual dialects, registers, informal language such as slang (Garrett, 2010). This has influence on identity, construction, communication and perceptions, credibility or intelligence. In the study situation theory of the research provides an advantageous practice to understand how university students use slangs are viewed by the students and teachers in the academic circles. This theory helps to explore the question on whether slang is perceived as negative, as a threat to academic norms, or as positive, as the way of identity and creativity. Besides, acceleration of the outer societal implications of the use of language including affiliation with team affiliations and casualness are enabled through the rather certainly Language Attitude Theory. Using this theoretical framework, the research aim was to reveal how perceptions of language constrained by scholarly communications are developed and how slang either competes or co-exists with the formal academic language in universities. The research s on the other hand indicates that gender has a central place in the manner of communication through sociolinguistic studies of language and gender. This is because it is widely known that over 50 percent of ballots that have not yet been cast, are spoilt (Khan & Khan, 2025). These patterns may be either formal or informal or slang.

4. Research Methodology

The research quantitative research for which a structured form of online survey containing the use of closed-ended forms of questions was designed to elicit quantitative information on the factors involving awareness, frequency, and context of the use of slang by the students. Quantitative research studies were chosen to guarantee quantifiable findings which would be statistically extrapolated and inferred within the parameters of the sample. The applied approach can be linked to the advice provided by Creswell (2014) on the use of quantitative measures to evaluate the attitudes and behavior patterns of a large group of subjects. It was an exploratory study that aimed to measure how frequently slangs are used and determine whether they have the potential of penetrating academic language.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed in this research. Among those people who were surveyed, over 60 individuals at the beginning, 58 of those were chosen according to their acquaintance with this slang or personal usage of the same in other forms of non-academic verbal communication. This sampling technique made it possible to include respondents whose language conduct was relevant according to the research purposes. The purposive sampling method was suitable in this case because it covered a specific subpopulation of students who were supposedly differentiated in terms of familiarity with slang, which is in line with the suggestions provided by Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016). The sample focused more on the Generation Z students due to their engagement in the digital communication platforms in which slang develops at an accelerated rate (Tufail, Asgher, & Ali, 2024).



Data Collection Instrument

A close-ended question online survey was provided and data collected was structured and objective-based. The survey was focused towards measuring some of the important variables such as awareness of slang terms, how often do they used slang and also whether students used slang intentionally and not known to them or unconsciously. Such questions were based on the existing bodies of research in sociolinguistics and designed according to the Pakistani context to guarantee cultural and linguistic appropriateness (Hashmi, Mahmood, & Naz, 2019; Jeresano & Carretero, 2022).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using the automatic tools provided by Google Forms. The platform's features enabled the researchers to review frequency distributions, comparative percentages, and visual data representations such as pie charts. These outputs were used to identify key trends in slang usage among university students, particularly focusing on patterns of informal language use in academic settings. The analysis involved reviewing recurring themes in participant responses and organizing them into statistical categories. These findings were interpreted through the theoretical lens of Language Attitude Theory and Sociolinguistics, both of which emphasize the dynamic relationship between language use and social context (Garrett, 2010; Spolsky, 2010).

Results:

University Affiliation

Purpose of Question: To identify the universities from which students participated and ensure diverse representation.

Data was gathered through an online questionnaire shared with students from various universities. A total of 59 responses were collected from students across different institutions.

Perceptions of Slang Usage and Its Influence on Formal Writing

Purpose of Question: To explore students' beliefs about whether slang impacts their ability to write in formal academic settings.

52.5% believed slang significantly affects academic writing.

27.1% thought slang might have some impact.

13.6% felt slang has no impact.

6.8% were unsure of its effect.

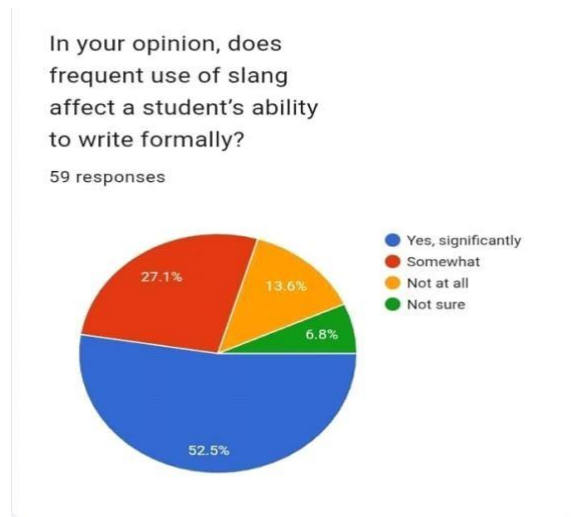


Fig.1: In your opinion, does frequent use of slang affect a students' ability to write formally?

Frequency of Slang Usage in Daily and Academic Life

Purpose of Question: To measure how commonly students use slang in both casual and academic settings.

Respondents were asked to elaborate their opinion about frequent use of slang that how frequent they use slangs in their daily as well as academic life. 42.4% students acknowledged that they have been using slang sometimes in their academic writing .while 25.4% students answered that they have often used slangs in their daily life 23.7%occassionally used slang in their academic writing while 8.5% respondents had not used slang in their daily life .

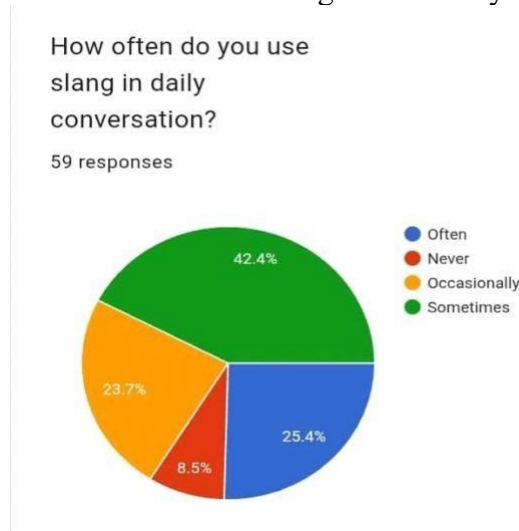


Fig.2: How often do you use slang in daily conversation?

Use of Slang in Formal Academic Tasks (Essays, Reports, etc.)

Purpose of Question: To determine whether students intentionally use slang in structured academic writing assignments.

Respondents were asked to answer that how often they use slangs in their academic writing like essays reports etc but 52.5% of respondents answered that they did not used slang in their academic writing because they never considered it as a part of formal writing just 11.9% said that they frequently used it 8.5% more added that they used it often 27.1% added that they frequently used it in their formal writing.

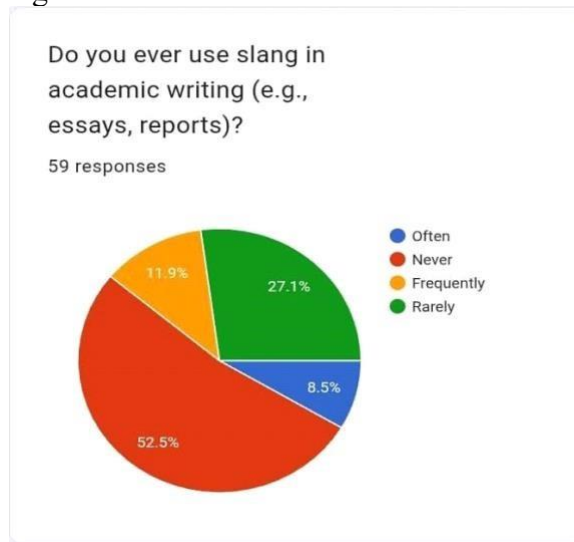


Fig.3: Do you ever use slang in academic writing?

Preferred Contexts for Using Slang

Purpose of Question: To find out in what settings students are most comfortable using slang.

Respondents were asked to answer that where they feel more comfortable for using slang 54.2% people answered that they frequently use slang on social media 30% told they used it in the company of peers and friends while 10% said they listened and observed it in movies and media the other 10% listed it that they used it in academic settings.

54.2% preferred using slang on social media.

30% used it around friends/peers.

10% said they picked it up from media/movies.

10% admitted to using it in academic settings.

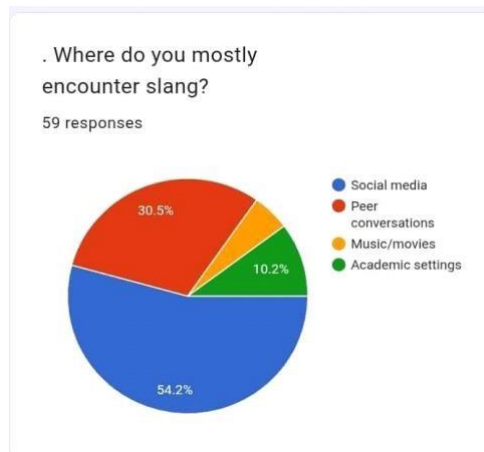


Fig.4: Where do you mostly encounter slang?

Receiving Feedback for Slang Usage in Academics

Purpose of Question: To understand if students have received any formal or informal feedback about using slang in academic work.

research participants were asked to share their experience about receiving feedback for using slang among academic writing 47% participants responded that they never received any sort of feedback from anyone majorly because they might not had been using slang in formal settings. 25% answered that they have multiple times received feedback for their slang usage among formal settings. 13% were not assure that if they had received any feedback or not while other 13% were those who answered that they found feedback once.

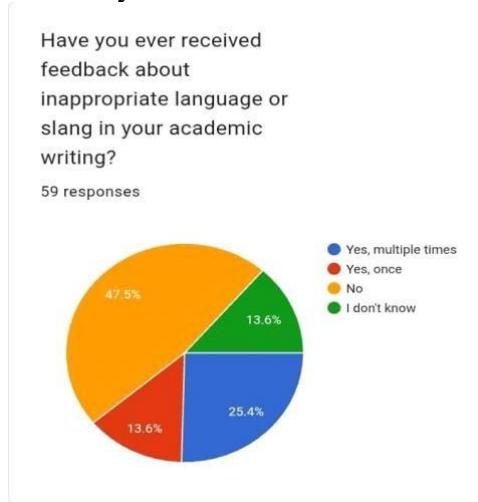


Fig.5: Have you ever received feedback about inappropriate language or slang in your academic writing?

Reasons for Using Slang

Purpose of Question: To uncover the motivations behind why students use slang in communication.

Research participants were asked to share the reason of using slang different participants answered differently 27% answered that they use slangs to feel cool. 25% used to save time and convey conventional meaning and emotions more fastly. 20% said they used slang too feel connected with peers 16% said they use it as a habit and sound cool and minority respondents said they used it for personal reasons

27% used slang to feel cool.

25% used it to save time and express ideas quickly.

20% felt slang helped them connect socially.

16% used it as a habit and to sound trendy.

A small number cited personal reasons.

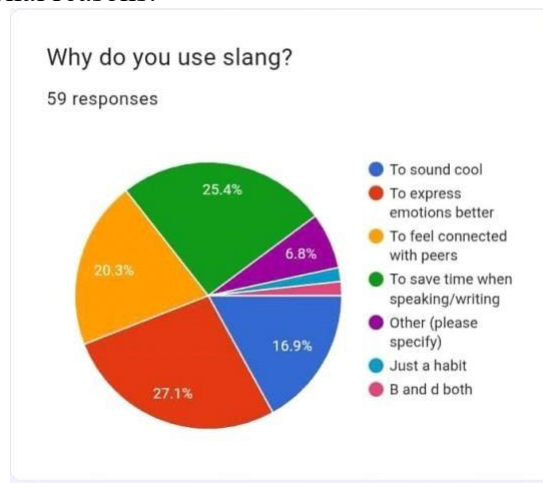


Fig.6: Why do you use slang?

Impact of Slang on Academic Discipline

Purpose of Question: To assess how students feel slang affects the overall quality and discipline of their academic writing.

participants were asked in questionnaire to tell that how slang usage might effect the discipline of their written academic work 37% respondents told that using slang among academic writing effect negatively on their work 30% were not sure that what kind of effect it had on their work 10% answered that it is taken positively in academic work to use slang .

37% said slang had a negative effect.

30% were not sure.

10% believed it had a positive impact.

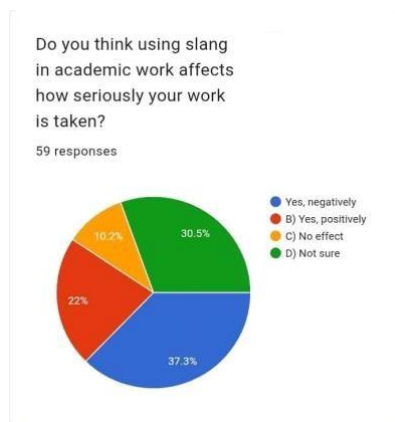


Fig.7: Do you think using slang in academic work affects how seriously your work is taken?

Discussion:

The results of the current study provide the rich insight of alteration of academic writing produced by typical neologism presence in its written communication in the literary construction by students of Generation Z within the Pakistani University context. These findings show the linguistic flexibility of Gen Z as well as the possible difficulties of such a flexibility on academic standard. The fact that 52.5 percent of the participants stated that the use a slang has a substantial impact on their formal writing in academia resonates with the results of the previous studies on the impact of informal registers on the structured text. That goes along with Language Attitude Theory which states that the perceptions and values of speakers towards language varieties like slang are the number-one sources of direction of their linguistic behavior towards formal contexts (Garrett, 2010). The findings are further facilitated by the high rate of use of digital media by the participants. In particular, 54.2 of the students responded that they commonly use slang in such platforms as WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. This complies with a study by Tufail, Asgher, and Ali (2024), which captures the digital vernacular habits of the Pakistani Gen Z, in which they identify the platforms as a tool that normalizes slang as a means of expressing communication. It was also discovered by Siagian (2024) that TikTok slang as used by Gen Z users is becoming closer to real-life expression and might involuntarily be used in scholarly conversations. Digital immersion, in turn, proves to be the primary medium through which informal language use enters the academic expression of students and should confirm the ultimately stated by Hashmi, Mahmood, and Naz (2019) conclusion according to which media also has a potent impact on the lexicon and language achievements of students.

Interestingly, 42.4% respondents confessed to the usage of slang language in academic writing either deliberately or accidentally. This proves manifestation of gaps in knowing the register- not always are students in a position to know the difference between informal and academic tone especially in written work done under pressure or in a ludicrous learning situation. Such phenomenon is reflected in the works of Budiasa et al. (2021), analyzing the Indonesian users of social media, which pointed to the possibility of informal digital communication to destabilize the differences between formal and casual registers. In a parallel way, Jeresano and Carretero (2022) underscore that to Gen Z, social media slang gets internalized and normalized and it is internalized not only in language but also extends to written discourse. Fifty-two point five



percent of the participants have stated that they are aware of using slang hence avoid it in precise academic tasks like essays and reports. This implies that, although informal language has become commonplace nowadays, students are aware of the requirements associated with academic writing. Such bilingual awareness is the same sociolinguistic phenomenon of code-switching in which speakers can modulate their language depending on a situation (Spolsky, 2010). Nevertheless, the possibility of successful implementation of this switch seems uneven in the sample itself, which indicates a necessity in the formal acquisition of information about language registers and stylistic norms.

Instructor feedback on slang usage was another key finding. Approximately 47% of students noted receiving remarks regarding slang in academic submissions, while 25% stated that such feedback was repeated or emphasized across multiple assignments. This disparity in experiences might reflect inconsistencies in instructor expectations or institutional standards. As Bailey (2011) notes, the enforcement of academic writing conventions often depends on how clearly educators articulate expectations. The fact that nearly half of the students are flagged for informal usage while others are not could signal unequal emphasis on language instruction across institutions, possibly based on course type, subject matter, or faculty awareness of changing linguistic norms. The reasons behind slang usage were multifaceted. Twenty percent of students associated it with social bonding and identity formation, while 25% cited expressiveness and time-saving benefits. These findings support Eble's (1996) claim that slang serves as both a linguistic shortcut and a mechanism for community identity. For Gen Z students, slang is not simply a vocabulary choice; it is embedded in their identity, humor, creativity, and social values. As Wardhaugh (2010) and Spolsky (2010) argue, language functions as a social code, often reflecting group affiliations, power dynamics, and cultural values. The participants' motivations reflect precisely this: a deliberate or subconscious effort to align with peer groups, express individuality, and communicate efficiently within a digital context.

But the language-academic tradeoff can still be observed. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were of the view that slang has negative effect on the quality and discipline of their scholarly writing. This supports what Malik, Amin, and Inam (n.d) have proposed as far as the question of ability to write formally with time is concerned since use of SMS and chat language formats is actually habitual. Moreover, the information reproduces what Dumas and Lighter (1978) referred to as doubleness of slang: it is sometimes playful, creative, although sometimes it is an obstacle to clarity and academicity. This stress poses doubts on whether existing teaching methodologies are well prepared to deal with the changing language culture of students. In the wake of these realizations, there is need to create changes in educational institutions in terms of their pedagogical techniques. Those who teach may also consider an awareness-based approach where they teach the students when and how to alternate registers, which has been endorsed by both Spolsky (2010) and Cottrell (2005), instead of trying, and probably failing, to suppress slang. E.g., digital literacy units may be involved in university writing courses, and students may start thinking over their language options and may learn the genre conventions. On the one hand, Tufail et al. (2024) indicate that the same interventions should apply, including the introduction of awareness programs that would guide the students in the informal and formal language situations better.



Another process derived out of this study is the necessity of assessment reform in which changing linguistic norms are taken into account. There has been a trend of changing language over the years, however, the academic requirement must be rigorous yet flexible. Those instructional strategies which involve genre analysis, reflection writing about language use and classroom peer feedback might enable students to gain a better understanding of and the ability to apply academic conventions. With such reforms, there would be an acknowledgement of the sociolinguistic reality that Gen Z students find themselves in which is that of rapid in expression both digital and slow in changing academic expectancy.

Conclusion:

This study was conducted to explore the usage of slang in everyday life as well as academic level. How it affects the formal language and exploits the standard language. Initially it was rare but gradually it becomes the part of everyday speech. While many students are aware of the difference between formal and informal language. Some of them still use slang consciously and unintentionally. Slang is taken as a tool for social bonding and self-expression, but Quality and discipline of standard writing can negativity affect by excessive use of slang. The findings show a need high awareness and guidelines on accurate language use in formal contexts. Reinforce students to code switching efficiently while with honoring regard to their social language practices. So, this study concludes that even though slang is central part of Z's social identification it must be intentionally managed within academic contexts. Raising awareness of formal language norms and stimulating code switching can provide students with the ability to communicate efficiently across various contexts without compromising academic morality.

Recommendations:

This study recommends:

1. To help the students assume the difference between formal academic language and informal slang Universities should arrange seminars and workshops.
2. Code switching should be taught to the students, how informal and formal language shifts according to setting. This thing helps them to express themselves confidently maintaining academic standards.
3. Valuate peer review among students can help recognize slang usage in academic writing.
4. Slang is widely spread by social media integrating digital literacy in university courses can help students become more aware of how online language habits influence their academic writing.
5. Feedback on students writing should provide by instructor which is helpful for them especially highlighting incorrect slang usage in academic contexts and guiding them to more accurate formal alternatives.

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