

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into fundamental ideas that form the foundation of the thesis and how the author provides the scope of the study:

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a flexible and dynamic system that continuously transforms over time, adjusting to shifts in culture, society, and technology. As new generations emerge, they bring new perspectives and experiences that influence how they use and adapt language. In recent years, the increasing use of Generation Z slang has influenced how language is used, perceived, and shaped by its users. Slang is a type of speech variety that is informal and typically used in casual conversation. Slang as a form of people's creativity, in terms of grammar, is far from the standard language (Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). While the integration of slang into everyday speech is often associated with identity expression and social belonging, it also raises questions about the linguistic features and word formation process of those slangs.

Gen Z, known as Generation Z (1997-2012), has grown up with the internet, social media, and digital technology as an inseparable part of their lives. They have the power to affect people of other generations with their new trends, lifestyle, and linguistic innovations. Influenced by their digital upbringing and exposure to diverse cultures and ideas, Gen Z frequently invents new words and phrases, repurposes existing words, and blends languages to create hybrid words that represent the cultures and subcultures they belong to. With their domination in most digital platforms such as TikTok, X, and Instagram, Gen Z's slang can spread quickly and gain widespread adoption. One of the dictionaries that collects the Gen Z slang is Callahan's Generation Z Dictionary. This dictionary was made by James Callahan, a sociology teacher at a high school in Massachusetts. It was released in 2019 with 73 slang terms, yet it became a viral dictionary as it is mentioned in USA Today and Metro.co.uk. Furthermore, according to The Elective (2020), Callahan's mini dictionary is already valid and available online.

Generation Z's use of English slang is known for its creativity, humour, and casual tone. While this slang is widely used, there has been limited academic focus on its linguistic aspect, especially in morphological features. Most research tends to concentrate on the sociocultural or communicative roles of slang, often overlooking the structural aspects, such as how these words are formed. This study addresses that gap by examining the word formation processes of Generation Z's English slang along with their communicative functions.

The study of word formation process is a part of the Morphology field, which is internal structure of words. According to Denham & Lobeck (2010), processes include various mechanisms such as affixation, blending, formation of acronyms or abbreviations. These processes enable new lexical items that respond to communicative needs. By exploring how words are classified based on their morphological processes, people can understand the role of slang in language evolution and cultural expression.



1.2 Identification of Problem

Based on the background of the research above, the author summarizes these problems as follows:

1. It is difficult to understand the meaning of English slang used by Generation Z.
2. It is difficult to understand how English slang terms used by Generation Z formed through morphological process.
3. It is difficult to understand the communicative functions of the English slang used by Generation Z.

1.3 Scope of the Problem

The author of this study focused on analysing how English slang used by Gen Z are formed through morphological processes. In addition, the author also aims to find the communicative functions behind the slang terms.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the scope of the problem, the author formulated the main problems to be answered as follows:

1. How are the word formation processes of English slang terms used by Generation Z?
2. What communicative functions are served by the slang terms used by Generation Z?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are summarized as follows:

1. To analyse word formation processes of English slang by Generation Z.
2. To explain the communicative functions of the slang terms used by Generation Z.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it contributes to language educators, policymakers, and others. It has two major significances, i.e., theoretical and practical significances:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The writer hopes that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the word formation processes found in English slang used by Generation Z. Furthermore, the theoretical framework applied in this study may offer valuable insights for related linguistic fields, particularly morpho-pragmatics, by illustrating how morphological form interact with pragmatic functions in contemporary slang usage.

1.6.2 Practical Significance



aims to help readers gain a clearer understanding of the word processes present in Generation Z's English slang, as well as the re functions these slang terms serve in everyday interactions.

2. For Other Researchers

The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights and serve as a reference point for future studies. It may also inspire other researchers to explore unexplored areas or identify gaps in the study of slang.

1.7 Previous Related Study

The following is a concise overview of the five key studies that are crucial in enhancing the analysis of this study.

First, a study by Rahul A. Hajare (2023), entitled “*Slang Language and Generation ‘Z’: A Sociolinguistic Study*,” focused on the use of slang among Generation Z from a sociolinguistic perspective. It highlights how slang functions as a tool for identity formation and peer bonding and how the digital era has transformed the way people, especially Generation Z uses slang language as a new way of communion. The study emphasized the social motivations behind slang usage, such as creating in-group solidarity and expressing modern youth culture. However, it does not delve into linguistic structure or the word formation process of slang terms themselves. This gap further justifies the need for morphological approach to understanding Generation Z slang.

Second, Telaumbanua et al. (2024), through their research “*Analyzing the Language Style of Generation Z Teenagers in Their Instagram Posts*,” focused on the stylistic choices made by Gen Z in digital communication, particularly on Instagram. The research utilized a qualitative research approach focusing on the descriptive analysis of language styles. Their study explored how informal expressions, emojis, abbreviations, and slang were used to reflect identity, tone, and social intent in online posts. The study found out that casual language, characterized by slang, colloquialisms, abbreviations, and informal greetings is the dominant style. While the research offered insight into the language style and pragmatic functions of Generation Z communication, it did not specifically analyze the linguistic construction or word formation patterns of slang terms used.

The third is Hikma et al. (2024), with their study “*An Analysis of Word Formation Processes Found in TikTok Application*,” which explores the morphological patterns behind English terms commonly used on TikTok. The study utilized qualitative descriptive method to analyzed and explained the process of word formations found in TikTok application. Their research focuses on identifying various word formation processes such as clipping, blending, compounding, and acronym, demonstrating how digital communication encourages linguistic creativity and innovation. The study emphasizes the dynamic and fast-paced nature of language change in online environments, particularly among younger users. While it offers valuable insights into the morphological construction of slang, it focused specifically on TikTok based language and does not extend its analysis to broader generational slang trends or communication functions of slang used.



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ail et al. (2024) in their study, “*Deciphering the Digital Vernacular: A Z Slang on Social Media Platforms*,” which used a qualitative content examine a range of slang platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and of the research was limited to the Pakistani Gen Z. Their research of common slang terms according to their types and interpreting their This research combined both morphological and semantic

approaches to analyzed the data, aimed to provide insights on Generation Z's creativity in language innovations. While the study provided a strong foundation for understanding the meanings behind the slang, it did not explore the linguistic structure or word formation mechanism behind those slang terms in detailed.

Last, a study by Jabeen & Nawaz (2025), titled "*Morphological Innovation in Gen Z Language and Their Impact on English Language Usage*," employs a morphological analysis approach to investigate how Generation Z contributes to word formation and lexical innovation in contemporary English. Their research identifies patterns such as blending, clipping, compounding, and semantic shift, emphasizing how Gen Z slang reflects creativity and adaptability in language use. Unlike studies that focus solely on sociolinguistic or stylistic aspects, this work provides a deeper look into the structural process of slang creation and how Generation Z challenged the conventional word formation standards and their possible influence on the future direction of English. The present study aligns with their approach but narrows its focus specifically to slang expressions, aiming to further classify and explain the morphological characteristics of Generation Z slang.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This section explores existing literature and theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the research.

1.8.1 Morphology

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies words and how they are formed. Booij (2012) argue that in linguistics, morphology is commonly defined as the study of word formation and its morphological processes. It examines how morphemes—the smallest units of meaning—combine to create new words. According to Yule (2020), morphology involves the analysis of word structure and the patterns through which new words are created in a language. Words may be simplex, consisting of a single morpheme or complex, formed by adding one or more affixes to a base or root morpheme). These morphemes are further categorized as free morphemes, which can stand alone, and bound morphemes, which must attach to other morphemes to convey meaning.

In addition to studying how words are constructed, morphology also examines the relationship between form and meaning. As noted by Manova et al. (2020), the *form* refers to morphs or bound morphemes, which are the physical representations of morphemes, while *meaning* pertains to the grammatical or lexical information that the form conveys. Morphological analysis explores how a word's internal structure affects its function in a sentence, including changes in tense, number, possession, and degree. Furthermore, morphological processes influence lexical category or part of speech, enabling transformations such as verb to noun or adjective to adverb. This dynamic interplay between form and meaning highlights morphology's central role in language evolution, particularly in contexts where innovation and pressed through newly coined or repurposed words.



tion Process

That linguistically, word formation refers to the processes of forming formation processes create new words, thereby expanding the here are types of word formation process according to Yule (2010)

which are frequently found in informal and creative language use such as slang. Similarly, Plag (2003) aligns with this framework by offering comparable classification of word formation processes. These processes include: 1) Coinage, 2) Borrowing, 3) Compounding, 4) Blending, 5) Clipping, 6) Back Formation, 7) Conversion, 8) Acronym, 9) Derivation, 10) Multiple Processes.

1. Coinage

Coinage is the process of inventing entirely new words that are not came from existing words or morphemes but typically derived from commercial product names or other sources such as technology or music and become a common usage. According to Yule (2010), coinage is less frequent than other processes but is especially prominent in marketing, pop culture, and youth language. It represents a direct response to the need for linguistic innovation. For examples brand names such as *Google*, *Vaseline*, and *Jeep* were initially created as trademarks but have since become generic terms used in everyday language. In addition, new words based on the name of a person or a place are called eponyms. Some of the eponyms are technical terms based on the names of those who first discovered or invented things such as *Fahrenheit*, *volt*, and *watt*.

2. Borrowing

Borrowing is a word formation process in which words from other languages are adopted and integrated into English. This process reflects cultural contact and linguistic adaptation as English speakers have historically borrowed words from a wide range of languages. Borrowed words often keep their original form or slightly modified it to fit to English spelling. Borrowing continues to occur particularly in slang and pop culture especially among the younger speakers in digital contexts. Words like *"kawaii"* and *"hijab"* are now widely recognized in English speaking settings. Plag (2003) emphasizes that borrowing enriches the lexicon and allows English to remain flexible and globally influenced.

3. Compounding

Compounding is a process of word formation that combines two or more root morphemes to create a new word. The resulting compound can have a meaning related to the original words or a completely new, idiomatic meaning. In Gen Z slang, compounding is often creative and culturally driven, blending modern concepts, humour, and internet references into new terms. These compounds are typically informal, trend-based, and temporary, but they reflect the group's identity and social awareness. For instance, expressions such as *"girlboss"* from *"girl"* and *"boss"* refer to a confident, empowered woman, or the phrase *"situationship"* that comes from the word *"situation"* and *"relationship,"* which means a romantic relationship that lacks a clear definition. Lieber (2009) highlights that compounding enables speakers to create new terms that remain transparent in meaning yet carry fresh cultural connotations. There are three types of compounds: Noun compounds, Adjective compounds, and Verb compound.



Blending is a word formation process that is commonly found in the English lexicon. It involves merging parts of two or more words, usually by taking the beginning of one word and the end of another, to form a new word. According to Lehrer

(2003), blending is a creative and efficient word-formation process that condenses meaning, suggesting that it may be used to create phrases that appeal to modern audiences, especially in casual and creative circumstances.

There are hundreds of new words whose meaning is a mixture of the meaning of the original words, and eventually make their way into the standard English. In 2025, internet users used “*brunch*”, a Gen Z combination of “*breakfast*” and “*lunch*” to describe a late morning meal. Another popular term is “*workaholic*,” which comes from “*work*” and “*alcoholic*”. Nurhayati (2015) stated that blending is vital for Gen Z since digital platforms promote brevity and efficiency.

5. Clipping

Clipping is a morphological process in which a longer word is shortened without changing its original meaning or word class. It can be the beginning or the end, or both, leaving a part to stand for the whole. It is especially prevalent in informal language, where brevity and speed are valued. Plag (2003) categorizes clipping as a form of abbreviation where the shortened version functions independently and is understood without the full form.

In Generation Z slang, clipping is frequently used to create trendy, concise terms that are easy to say and remember. Types of clipping include back clipping, fore clipping, and middle clipping. Common examples include “*sus*” (from *suspicious*), “*simp*” (from *simpleton*), and “*delulu*” (from *delusional*). These clipped forms are often used in casual online communication and social media, where short, impactful expressions spread rapidly. Clipping reflects a broader tendency in Generation Z communication toward linguistic efficiency and creativity. According to Yule (2020), clipping supports linguistic innovation while maintaining intelligibility, which is important in fast-paced digital environments.

6. Back Formation

Yule (2010) defined back formation as the process when a word one of type is reduced to a shorter form. In slang, back formation is occasionally seen when new verbs are created from nouns or compound forms, especially in informal and digital context. Plag (2003) notes that back formation often results from analogical reasoning, where speakers apply known patterns to reinterpret word structure in new simplified forms. An example of back formation is the process whereby the noun *television* first came into use and then the verb *televise* was created from it.

7. Conversion

Conversion or zero derivation is a process of changing the function of a word or its word-class without the addition of an affix. This process commonly changing a noun becomes a verb but can also involve other categories such as adjective and prepositions. In Generation Z slang, conversion is often used to turn existing terms



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effective. Plag (2003) mentioned that conversion often triggered by where the same words take on different grammatical roles.

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on involves creating a new word by combining the initial letters of a re pronounced as a word or spelled out. Plag (2003) distinguishes m, which are pronounced as words, and initialism, which are er by letter. It is commonly found in both formal and informal English

and has become particularly widespread in internet-based communication. Crystal (2003) notes that acronyms serve as efficient linguistic shortcuts, especially in digital discourse where brevity is key. Among Gen Z speakers, acronyms are widely used to express emotions, opinions, and social commentary in a compact form. Examples include *YOLO* (You Only Live Once), *FOMO* (Fear of Missing Out), *TBH* (To Be Honest), and *LMK* (Let Me Know). These acronyms often go beyond their literal meanings to convey cultural attitudes, humour, or shared values within the generation. The use of acronyms allows Gen Z to maintain fast, dynamic communication while signalling in-group identity. As Rezeki & Sagala (2019) point out, acronyms in slang demonstrate how linguistic economy and social expression can work together, creating a form of shorthand that reflects both linguistic creativity and community belonging.

9. Derivation

O'Grady and Guzman (1996) mentioned that derivation involves the addition of prefixes or suffixes to a base or root word, resulting in a new word with a different meaning or grammatical category. Young speakers such as Gen Z often use suffixes to intensify or shift tone such as *cringe-worthy* or *savage-ness*. Plag (2003) emphasizes that derivation contributes significantly to the expansion of the lexicon, especially in response to sociocultural changes.

10. Multiple Processes

It is possible to have more than one process in a word. Multiple processes refer to the process when one word involved another process in the creation of a new word. For instance, term like *babysit* are the result of both compounding and conversion. Gen Z slang frequently employs multiple strategies. According to Yule (2010), recognizing these overlapping processes is crucial for understanding the dynamic of English word formation.

1.8.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies how language is used in context to convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. It focuses on the relationship between linguistic forms and their users, examining how speakers use language to achieve specific communicative goals. Unlike semantics, which focuses on the inherent meaning of words and sentences, pragmatics explores how meaning is constructed and interpreted through interaction. Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as "the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding" (p.21). This address that in pragmatics, context influences the way utterances are understood and how language reflects the speaker's intentions. It includes topics such as speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies, deixis, and conversational implicature.



of slang, pragmatics plays a crucial role in identifying the ones that slang expressions serve. Slang is often used not just for it to express emotions, signal group identity, or establish social ions heavily depend on the speaker's intent and the social context s used. Thus, pragmatics provides the theoretical foundation for operates as a functional tool in daily communication.

1.8.4 Slang

Slang refers to informal language used to convey identity and group membership, often characterized by creativity and novelty (Eble, 1996). It functions as a linguistic tool for expressing individuality and aligning with particular social groups. Unlike borrowing words, which involves incorporating words from other languages or dialects into everyday speech for specific purposes, slang emerges spontaneously within social groups to create a sense of belonging and express cultural identity (Androutsopoulos, 2006). The use of slang can influence attitudes towards standard English, either fostering acceptance of linguistic diversity or prompting concerns about language degradation. Borrowed words are often integrated into formal language use without altering standard grammar or syntax, while slang can challenge traditional linguistic norms by introducing unconventional expressions and meanings (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005). According to McCulloch (2019), generation Z's slang is heavily influenced by digital communication platforms, such as social media, where new expressions can spread rapidly and evolve quickly. Slang involves playful language use, such as shortening words, blending terms, or inventing entirely new phrases. These expressions are frequently tied to context and can change meaning over time. Although slang may be considered informal or improper in certain settings, it carries social value as it is a form of identity and cultural expressions.

Moreover, slang provide linguistic space to allow speakers to manipulate language for humour, emphasis, or rebellion. As Crystal (2003) points out, language is not static, and slang plays a vital role in showing how living languages adapt to reflect cultural change. Through slang, speakers can challenge authority, express insider knowledge, and creatively respond to the rapid pace of technological and social change. This makes slang not only a reflection of youth identity but also the marker of linguistics innovation. Even though slang may not always be welcomed in formal context, its dynamics nature highlights the flexibility of language and its power to reflect the evolving needs of its speaker. Therefore, analysing slang offers valuable insight into how language and society influence each other, especially within the context of Generation Z.

1.8.5 Communicative Functions of Slang

According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slang performs seven key interpersonal function: to address, to form an intimate atmosphere, to initiate relax conversation, to express impression, to reveal anger, to humiliate, and to show intimacy. These functions align with the broader concept of communicative functions, as they highlight how slang is used to express emotional states, manage social relationships, and influence the tone and dynamics of interaction.

1. To address



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Allan and Burridge (2006) address that one of the most basic functions of slang is to address someone in an informal or familiar way. This often replaces formal address with casual terms that reflect closeness, such as “dude”, “bro”, etc. Terms used for address typically indicate that speaker and the listener belong to the same social group or share a mutual social distance and create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Eble (1996) similarly mentions that slang is used to create and maintain in-group solidarity, especially among young

people. This function of slang is especially common among younger generations, such as Generation Z, who frequently use creative or trendy slang when addressing their peers, both in person and online.

2. To form an intimate atmosphere

Slang can be used to help create an intimate atmosphere between speakers. This function often served in close friendships or romantic relationships. This idea aligns with Crystal (2003), who argues that language choices like slang are often made to reinforce identity and emotional connection. By using slang within trusted social circles, speakers build bonds based in shared experience and mutual understanding. This is evident among Generation Z, where slang terms are not only linguistic but serve as emotional expression to create closeness and comfort within conversations.

3. To initiate relax conversation

Slang is used to initiate relaxed, informal conversation, making it easier for speakers to approach one another casually. Allan and Burridge (2006) emphasize that slang lowers the level of formality and invites spontaneous communication. This idea is supported by Dumas and Lighter (1978), who highlight that slang often serves as a tool for creating comfort and informality, especially among peers. In Generation Z communication, both online and offline, slang is often used to break the ice or to make the interaction feel less serious. This function plays a significant role in maintaining a casual and friendly social environment, especially in formal context like chatting or texting.

4. To express impression

Slang is widely used to express impressions, emotions, or opinions in creative and often exaggerated way. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), this function allows speakers to emphasize their feelings, whether positive or negative, through colourful and non-standard expressions. Mattiello (2008) support this by noting that slang carries a stylistic and expressive functions, enabling users to communicate attitudes and feelings creatively. This function makes slang appealing to younger speakers who value expressive and aesthetically style of communication in the era of digital and pop culture.

5. To reveal anger

Allan and Burridge (2006) argue that slang can be used to reveal anger or hostility, especially through swearing or derogatory terms. Thus, slang becomes a vehicle for expressing intense emotion, outside the bounds of polite conversations. Eble (1996) also acknowledges that slang may function to challenge norm and express emotional extremes, including frustration and rebellion.



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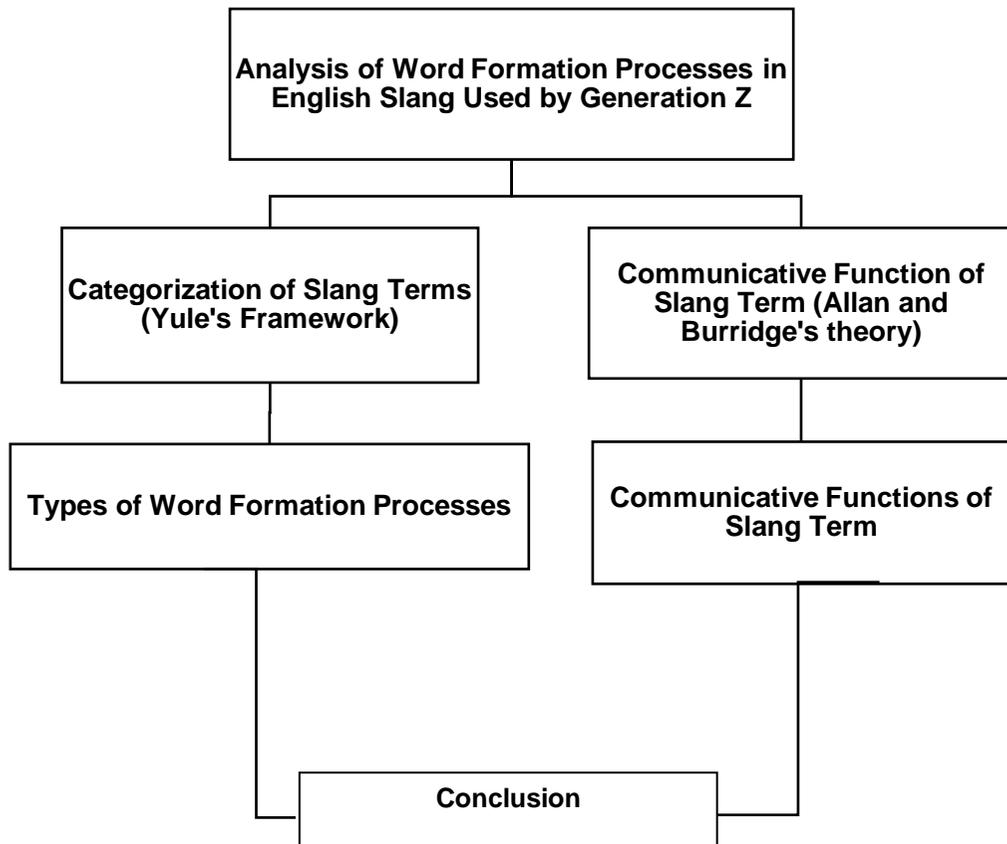
e used for negative purposes, such as humiliating or mocking lan and Burridge (2006) categorize this as one of slang's more ions, often relying on harsh, offensive terms used to insult. Dumas (1978) similarly observe that slang can be subversive, functioning to little others. This function reminded that slang can also be used to or socially excluded others.

7. To show intimacy

Allan dan Burridge (2006) state that slang can be used to express intimacy. When people use slang terms that are specific to their friendship or relationship, it becomes a marker of shared experience and trust. For instance, inside jokes, nicknames, or shortened terms signal a bond that is not shared with outsiders. Crystal (2003) mentions that language serves as a badge of identity, and slang in this context becomes a personal linguistics code. For Generation Z, it can take the form of TikTok trends, inside jokes, or casual expression unique to a friend group. Slang, therefore, operates as both an emotional and social connector that signals closeness and trust.



1.9 Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the writer presents the methods and procedures used in conducting the research.

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyse the word formation processes found in English slang used by Generation Z. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena rather than measure or quantify them. According to Cresswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore how people construct meaning, which aligns with the aims of this study to understand how Gen Z used morphological creativity to full fill communicative needs. This methodological design was chosen to ensure that the research objective could be addressed clearly and systematically, with findings that are relevant to the defined scope.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Data Sources

Data Type	Sources	Description
Primary Data	Social Media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (posts, comments, memes, digital chats)	Selected utterances of English slang terms used by Generation Z that exhibit identifiable morphological processes, collected directly from social media content.
Secondary Data	Online slang dictionaries (e.g., Urban Dictionary), and academic sources (articles, journals, and research publications)	Used to verify meanings, usage, and theoretical context of slang terms, and to support the morphological and functional analysis.

2.2.2 Data Collection Techniques

The data for this research were collected through several systematic steps, using documentation as the primary technique. The process is outlined as follows:

1. Selecting Social Media Platforms

The researcher selected TikTok and Instagram as the main sources of primary data. These platforms were chosen due to their widespread use among Generation Z and their role as dynamic spaces where new slang expressions frequently emerge and circulate. The content on these platforms provided authentic and up-to-date examples of slang usage in real contexts.

2. Observing and Browsing Content

rch researcher browsed various forms of content on TikTok and Instagram, video captions, comment sections, memes, and casual digital ion. Attention was focused on posts created by Generation Z.

g Slang Terms

ē observation, researcher identified and collected English slang appeared frequently or were notably creative. Special attention was



given to terms that reflected contemporary usage trends and cultural relevance within the Generation Z community.

4. Filtering the Data

The slang terms were filtered to include only those that could be analyzed morphologically. The researcher selected terms that were clearly formed through identifiable word formation processes such as clipping, blending, compounding, and acronyms. Unclear formations were excluded from the final data set.

5. Documenting the Data

Each selected slang terms was documented along with its contextual usage. This included capturing screenshots or noting the source of the term. This step ensured the authenticity and traceability of the data.

6. Cross-Checking Meanings and Usages

To validate the meaning and usage of each slang term, the researcher consulted online slang dictionaries such as Urban Dictionary, as well as relevant academic sources. This step helped confirm the intended meaning of the slang in context and ensured the accuracy of the morphological and functional interpretation.

7. Organizing the Data for Analysis

Finally, the researcher organized the data into a structured format. Each slang term was categorized based on its word formation process and communicative functions to facilitate a clear and systematic analysis in the findings and discussion chapters.

2.3 Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis for this study follows the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The following steps outline how this framework was applied to the data analysis:

2.4 Data Reduction

This stage focused on selecting, simplifying, and organizing the raw data. From the larger pool of slang terms found in various sources (Urban Dictionary, TikTok, X, etc.), a total of 30 representative slang terms were deliberately selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to morphological analysis.

2.5 Data Display

The second step involved organizing and presenting the processed data in a structured format. The slang terms were displayed in tables and categorized tables that include columns for slang term, morphological process, and communicative function.

2.6 Conclusion Drawing and Verification



Interpreted the findings by drawing patterns, connections, and the displayed data. The researcher analysed the existing data used by Plag (2003) and Plag (2003) about word formation processes as well as the work of Burridge (2009) about communicative function of slang. Themes identified, such as the dominance of clipping and acronym in digital communication. Additionally, the analysis was verified through cross-checking of the data sources.