

- Nur Farisya Hafiz, Nur Syazwanie Mansor, Berlian Nur Morat 153–173
Students' Perceptions of Slang Use on Social Media and Perceived Impact on Communication Skills: A Preliminary Study
<https://doi.org/10.24191/r8mb9278>
- Shabina Kumari Subramaniam, Siti Syairah Fakhruddin, Nur Ashiquin C. Alih, Nabila Eizati Komarudin 174–193
Navigating Anxiety in Oral Presentation: Understanding Communication Strategies and Fear Causes
<https://doi.org/10.24191/r8mb9278>
- Razanawati Nordin, Rofiza Aboo Bakar, Aini Akmar Mohd Kasim, Nur Husna Serip Mohamad 194–218
Context Matters: An Autoethnographic Study on Scaffolding Approach to Improving Pragmatics in Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder
<https://doi.org/10.24191/26jgd141>



Students' Perceptions of Slang Use on Social Media and Perceived Impact on Communication Skills: A Preliminary Study

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has contributed to the rapid growth of slang. This linguistic phenomenon is reshaping how individuals communicate, particularly among young people, thus creating research opportunities. This study aims to (1) examine university students' perceptions of the impact of slang on their communication abilities, (2) analyze the reasons behind students' use of slang on social media, and (3) identify the types of slang most frequently used by the university students. This preliminary study was carried out at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Kedah, Malaysia, employing a mixed-methods study. A quantitative survey was conducted through social media platforms, targeting 55 respondents selected through random sampling, while qualitative interviews were conducted with five participants to provide deeper insights into the study. IBM SPSS software was used to analyze the data. The study was also guided by



Holmes' theory of sociolinguistic variation and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which together provide a framework for exploring why students use slang (e.g., peer influence, motivation) and how they perceive its effects, whether positively or negatively. The results of the questionnaire survey indicate that students use slang to speed up communication and that this usage enhances confidence in communication. Meanwhile, the interview outcomes show two major patterns that emerge, which are social influence and convenience and speed. In conclusion, this study helps in providing insight that can contribute to the body of knowledge in identifying the linguistic trend that is rapidly growing and spreading among youth.

Keywords: Slang, Social media, Communication, University students

INTRODUCTION

Slang is a linguistic trend that has existed for generations, with different twists and styles emerging over time. According to Brdar (2024), new slang words are continuously introduced into daily communication. Slang does not have a specific definition; however, according to Muhartoyo and Wijaya (2014), slang is widely understood within social contexts as language used often during informal communication. Various studies (Hendrajat et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2023; Pongsapan, 2022) highlighted that individuals use slang to express unity and a sense of belonging. Slang is frequently used on social media, which is often associated with youth. According to Inayah et al. (2024), social media plays a crucial role in spreading slang among teenagers as they allow the teenagers to adapt quickly to the slang use among peers and to form their identity. Nuraeni and Pahamzah (2021) found that students use slang to be more friendly, to ease social interaction, and for the fun factor. Despite slang being known to have positive benefits, such as creating a sense of belonging or identity among peers and being a fun way to communicate, it is also noted that the excessive use of slang will negatively impact students. According to Namang et al. (2024), slang can reduce proficiency in formal language, especially in grammar and word choice. The same finding can be found in Sangco and Protacio's (2025) research. Furthermore, according to Shcherba (2022), excessive use of slang will increase the risk of a decline in overall literacy levels. Thus, it can be concluded that slang is a language phenomenon that is not only embedded in the youth but also brings about positive and negative effects to the users. The question that might emerge is whether the negative effects outweigh the positive effects among the users. Studying this language phenomenon will help to fill in the research gap. In the Malaysian context, the past research trend usually focuses on technical linguistic aspects such as syntax and morphology, with comparatively less attention given to the use of slang in social media. Previous research yields limited insight into how slang influences students' communication and how they perceive the effect of slang usage on their communication abilities. Besides that, there is also a methodological gap within the Malaysian context, whereby they rely on a single method approach, specifically on a quantitative survey with limited insight into the qualitative aspect. As a result, there is a lack of insight into the students' personal perception and experiences of their slang usage. Therefore, this study is crucial to investigate the perception and effects of slang usage among university students on social media to better understand its implications on communication today.



Problem Statement

Slang usage may have some beneficial effects, such as making conversation easier, more fun, more relaxed, and enjoyable. This is highlighted in previous studies (Fransisca, 2023; Mohd Ghazali & Abdullah, 2021; Pongsapan, 2022). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that excessive use can also create challenges, especially in formal and educational contexts. Despite the reported benefits of slang usage, there are some negative effects that are concerning. These concerns are primarily related to the potential impacts on linguistic competence, written communication skills, and overall academic performance. Previous research noted that excessive use of slang can affect and reduce users' language proficiency (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022; Maqsood et al., 2025; Bardi et al., 2024). A more significant issue emerges when slang is used by students in classes and academic settings, that ends up affecting their academic performances. This concern has been raised by researchers who noted that slang that students use in class activities or in academic setting have a negative effect on their academic performances (Sangco & Protacio, 2025; Ochonogor et al., 2010; Usiono et al., 2025; Owen & Charles, 2025). There is a research gap in Malaysia on the topic; hence, the research is needed to contribute to the body of knowledge and to provide a crucial insight into slang usage and its impact on communication skills. The findings will be useful for educators, researchers, and educational organizations in understanding the slang phenomenon and how it affects students' communication abilities.

Given these concerns that emerged, the research aims are

1. To examine university students' perceptions of the impact of slang on their communication abilities
2. To analyze the reasons behind students' use of slang on social media,
3. To identify the types of slang most frequently used.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slang and Communication

Slang plays a vital role in informal communication, particularly among youngsters. Slang is often described as a creative, fun, and relaxing form of language, which explains why youth favour slang (Nuraeni & Pahamzah, 2021). Unlike formal language, slang is related to strong emotional and social meaning for the youth. In several previous studies, the researchers found that one of the reasons the youth use slang is to show a sense of belonging to a certain group (Fajardo, 2018; Zia et al., 2024; Madani et al., 2025). This indicates that slang itself is a mark of identity among the youngsters. In many interactions, youngsters use slang to reduce social distance and create a relaxed communicative atmosphere. This finding is aligned with Lubis and Bahri (2021), who stated that the students used slang because it was more relaxed and creative. Slang usage renders communication not only efficient, but also creates familiarity with the people they communicate with. Through these functions, slang has become an important part of how youngsters communicate in their daily interactions, especially on social media.



Slang as Identity and Belonging

Slang is a vital aspect of communication, especially among the youth. The youth not only view slang as a tool to communicate in fun ways, but it also becomes an identity mark for them. According to Damirjian (2024), people use slang to infer a speaker's group affiliation and social positioning. This indicates that slang is a powerful tool that fosters a sense of belonging to certain groups. This is happening due to the nature of slang, whereby it is known to be used by certain groups. It is a unique language that only certain groups will understand; hence, it strengthens their bonds and creates clear division between the group members and other people. This is in accordance with Shamne and Titarenko (2024), who mentioned that slang is involved with social inclusion and social exclusion among group members and outsiders. Besides that, youth utilize slang because it creates a sense of belonging among them and their peers due to the shared language. Researchers claim that the reason people use slang in their communication is that it fosters a sense of belonging, strengthens peers' bonds, and expresses solidarity towards their group (Manurung et al., 2022; Wahyuna et al., 2025; Evizariza et al., 2025).

Social Media and Slang

The rapid growth of social media has led to a widespread evolution of slang usage among youth. Platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp, X, and Instagram tend to encourage the youth to use slang to be more playful, creative, and rapid in their communication; thus, these platforms become the ideal spaces to develop and spread the language trend. According to Owens (2025), the youth are usually considered as the active users of social media, slang, and colloquial speech. This can be seen in that usually the youngsters are those who engage in content like meme videos and brain-rot videos. These engagements have contributed to the rapid popularisation of slang itself. The daily exposure to these contents will eventually cause the active users to incorporate slang as part of their daily online communication. Furthermore, it is quite hard to separate the youngsters from social media, so the trend kept on growing. According to Rawath et al. (2019), social media is an integral aspect of life for the youngsters. Hence, it can be said that the youngsters, social media, and slang are connected with one another, which may lead to positive or negative outcomes in the future.

Positive Effects of Slang

Slang has several benefits for youngsters, such as an enjoyable means of communication and ways to express themselves. According to Usiono et al. (2025), being able to express themselves more clearly, might strengthen the social bond between the peers. According to Nashrudina et al. (2025), this occurs due to the nature of slang, as only members of a group will understand the slang that is used among themselves. The use of slang can strengthen their sense of belonging. Besides that, slang also fosters creative interaction. According to Budiasa et al. (2021), slang is used by youngsters in social media to have more fun and relaxed communication, especially in creating new slang terms. The informal nature of slang enables youngsters to communicate in a more relaxed manner, especially when they communicate with their peers online. With these positive attributes, slang has become a meaningful tool for young people in communication.



Negative Effects of Slang

Despite its benefits, slang may have drawbacks when used excessively. One concern is that frequent exposure to slang may lead to difficulties in formal writing. When students use informal language such as slang, which often involves word shortening and deviations from standard language forms, it can lead them to struggle with grammar and writing proficiency. Several studies reported that youngsters have difficulties with their formal writing, especially if they use slang excessively (Owen & Charles, 2025; Latif & Rofiq, 2025; González & Chang, 2024). Besides that, the bigger issue arises when students use slang in classroom settings, which affects their overall academic performance. According to separate studies, it shows that students started to use slang in assignments, tasks, and examinations, which leads to a decline in academic performance (Taludjog, 2025; Lenard & Silliman, 2025; Bälter et al., 2023). This issue is concerning for educators because excessive usage of slang may affect the students' future academic performance. Therefore, further research is needed to further understand the rise of slang usage among the youngsters and the impacts it may have on communication among the youth community.

Linguistic Change and Educational Concerns

The increasing use of slang in social media reflects the linguistic shift that exists nowadays, particularly among the youth. Language is a component that changes throughout the years. Slang is one of the language trends that also evolves along with language itself. Youth prefer this language trend usually due to the creativity and adaptability that come with slang. However, this language trend has raised an educational concern about the abilities and performance of the students, especially in the classroom settings. According to studies, excessive slang usage in social media not only leads to reduced mastery of standard vocabulary but also leads to difficulty in distinguishing between formal and informal language in certain settings (Haq, 2025; Holis, 2024; Agustiani et al., 2023). When students face difficulty in mastering the basic vocabulary, language problems emerge, and this will affect their academic performance as a whole. This issue was raised by Maqsood et al. (2025) and Wahyuna et al. (2025), whereby they discovered that the students subconsciously started to incorporate slang into the classroom setting and academic task thus affecting their overall academic performance. This issue is concerning since excessive slang usage may affect the academic performance of students in Malaysia in the future.

Theoretical Framework

Holmes' social factor theory explains language choice and how it is influenced by participants, the topic of conversation, and the setting. According to Suhardianto and Ambalegin (2017), this theory is relevant in this research because it explains how young people use slang depending on whom they are communicating with and the platform that they use to communicate. This research also adopts Accommodation Theory (CAT). According to Zhang and Giles (2018), this theory focuses on how people adjust their language style to fit in or distance themselves from the people with whom they are communicating. This theory is relevant to the research in the sense that students use slang as a form of convergence in order to make themselves sound similar to their friends when communicating, and they may also avoid slang as a form of divergence to avoid sounding similar or belonging to certain groups.



METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Slang is a crucial tool for youngsters in communicating with their peers, especially on social media. With the existence of social media, the slang has evolved significantly. Slang is often associated with informal interaction that reflects social identity and a sense of belonging to certain groups. However, increasing use of slang has raised concern regarding the impact on students' communication abilities, which might hinder their communication skills in the future.

As previously discussed, we can see that past studies have shown the negative impact of slang usage on youngsters, especially in terms of their communication abilities, especially in formal and academic contexts. Despite the positive effects of slang usage, the drawbacks, such as the gap across generations, effects on their communication skills, and their basic language skills, such as grammar structure, are still often highlighted by previous studies. Hence, this preliminary study was conducted to provide a base for further research.

Research Design

This preliminary study employed a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative component, a questionnaire survey was conducted; meanwhile, for the qualitative component, a series of interviews was conducted to get more in-depth insights. The quantitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data using statistical techniques. A questionnaire survey was selected due to its cost-effectiveness, efficiency in reaching a large population, and ease of data collection (Borgobello et al., 2019). In addition, the qualitative data were gathered through interviews to obtain deeper and more holistic insights into students' perspectives. The mixture of both methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of slang usage among students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study to allow the participants to share their in-depth insight into their slang usage and their perception of the usage of slang. According to Ahmed et al. (2025), Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is the most widely used and best method for analysing qualitative data since it has structured yet flexible framework for identifying and analysing the data, making it a suitable method to be used in analysing the use of slang among Malaysian university students and their perception of the impact of slang on their communication abilities.

Target Population

The target population for this study consists of male and female undergraduate students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah. Participants include students from Semester 1 to Semester 6 across various courses, levels, and modes of study. This inclusive sampling approach ensures adequate representation of diverse students' backgrounds within the university. The sample size for the qualitative interview is determined based on Creswell (2018), as cited in Sharma et al. (2024). Creswell suggested the sample size of 5-25 interviewees for qualitative interview which allow a detailed insight into the participants' perspectives. Despite having a small sample size of five interviewees for this pilot study, the data saturation was reached when



the students shared similar findings and insights on the slang usage, and no new themes emerged from the participants; hence, the researcher considers the data to be sufficient for the pilot test.

Research Setting

The pilot study was carried out in Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah (UiTM). The respondents consisted of students from UiTM Kedah. This location was selected because the researcher is a current student at UiTM Kedah and has direct access to participants, facilitating the data collection process.

Research Sampling

Quantitative Study: Questionnaire Survey

For the quantitative study, a sample of 55 participants was selected. This follows the previous expert studies by Bujang et al. (2024) that suggested 30 participants for a pilot study are sufficient in analysing the data for reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher decided to include 55 participants as a good measure in getting a better outlook of the result and ensuring the reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher employed a random sampling technique for the pilot study.

Qualitative Study: Interview

Meanwhile, for the qualitative component, the researcher interviewed several participants until the data were saturated. In this pilot study, the researcher interviewed five participants and reached data saturation when the same theme emerged from each of the participants. This research employed purposive sampling for the qualitative aspect of the research. According to Ahmad and Wilkins (2025), purposive sampling can result in very profound insights, which is why it was selected for this research. Despite only five participants being involved, the data is considered sufficient since there are no new themes that emerged from later interviews; hence, it was sufficient enough for the researcher to address the research objectives using the data that were collected.

Questionnaire Instruments and Interview Protocol

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher following the relevant literature and past studies involving slang usage on social media, and was also aligned with the theoretical framework used. These instruments were reviewed by supervisors and two additional experts from two different universities in Malaysia.

Validity

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, both questionnaire instruments and interview protocol were submitted to the experts in the language field, who are: Dr. Suhaida Omar from Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and Associate Professor Dr. Ina Suryani from Universiti Malaysia Perlis. Correction and modification were made after the review based on the experts' suggestions and feedback to improve the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire and instruments.



Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The result indicated that the instrument has acceptable reliability with a value exceeding 0.70.

Data Collection Process

Quantitative Phase: A questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections and 25 questions adapted from previous studies and modified following expert and supervisor review to align with the research objectives. The Google Form was shared via social media platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah students. The data were collected and analysed using statistical analysis software (IBM SPSS). 45 3.5.2

Qualitative Phase: Semi-Structured Interviews. For the interview session, five participants were selected voluntarily from respondents of the previous questionnaire survey. The interview sessions lasted approximately 20 minutes each and were conducted via the online platform Google Meet. After the data collection and transcription process, the interview data were analysed using thematic analysis following the Braun and Clarke (2006) steps. The coding process was done manually by the researcher through analysing the transcription to generate a pattern and themes, and was checked multiple times throughout the analysis process by the supervisors in order to ensure the accuracy of the themes that emerged.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Study

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the reasons for using slang

Items	N	Mean	Standard
I use slang when talking to my friends via social media.	55	3.69	0.858
Using slang online feels casual.	55	3.65	0.927
My friends influence my use of slang on social media.	55	3.56	0.856
Slang on social media is used to accommodate my ideas in a limited space.	55	3.51	0.791

I use slang on social media for faster communication.	55	3.95	0.780
I use slang to keep up with trends on social media.	55	3.55	0.978
I use slang on social media to save time.	55	3.67	0.904

The table above presents the results from Section 1, “Reason for Using Slang,” which consists of eight items. The item with the highest mean score is “I use slang on social media for faster communication” (M = 3.95), whereas the lowest mean score is for “I feel a sense of belonging when I use slang on social media” (M = 3.44). This indicates that the primary reason students use slang is to communicate more quickly. These findings help address Research Question 3 of this study. The other items received moderate mean scores and showed their relevance to the study’s overall findings.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the reasons for using slang

Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Slang helps me build rapport with others on social media	55	3.47	.836
Slang permits comprehensive language development	55	3.36	.825
Slang usage on social media helps in improving vocabulary	55	3.16	1.050
Slang improves my writing skills.	55	3.16	1.085
Slang improves my spelling skills.	55	3.24	1.053
Slang usage on social media helps me to speak confidently.	55	3.51	.879
Slang usage on social media helps in improving my communication skills.	55	3.47	.813
Slang language on social media helps in language fluency.	55	3.44	.938

Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication.	55	3.18	.819
Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication between me and the older generation.	55	2.82	.925
Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication between my teacher and me.	55	3.04	.881
The use of slang on social media makes me more engaged in communication	55	3.47	.879

The table above presents the results from Section 2, “Perceived Benefits of Using Slang,” which consists of 12 items. The item with the highest mean score is “Slang usage on social media helps me to speak confidently” ($M = 3.51$), whereas the lowest mean score is “Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication between me and the older generation” ($M = 2.82$). This suggests that the main perceived benefit of using slang among students is its ability to enhance their confidence. These findings contribute to addressing Research Question 1. The remaining items received moderate mean scores, indicating their continued relevance to the study’s findings.

However, it also noted that for item 18, “Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication between me and the older generation” ($M = 2.82$), and item 19, “Slang usage on social media does not create barriers in communication between my teacher and me” ($M = 3.04$), recorded only moderate agreements. This indicates that students believe the usage of slang interferes with their communication with the older generation and teachers to some extent.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of perceived challenges/barriers

Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The use of slang on social media is only appropriate for informal settings.	55	3.65	.907
I find it difficult to avoid using slang on	55	3.36	.910



social media			
Slang on social media makes it difficult for me to differentiate between formal and informal language.	55	3.09	.986
Slang usage on social media does not affect my writing skills.	55	3.25	.865
Slang does not affect me in writing grammatically correct sentences	55	3.24	.942

The table above shows the result from section 3, Perceived challenges/barriers, which contained 5 items. The highest mean score is for the item ‘The use of slang on social media is only appropriate for informal settings,’ with (M = 3.65), while the lowest mean score is for ‘Slang on social media makes it difficult for me to differentiate between formal and informal language’ with (M = 3.09). This suggested that students face issues in differentiating the appropriate settings to use slang. This provides insight into answering the research question 1 in the research. The remaining items achieved a moderate mean score, which indicates their relevance to the findings of the study.

However, it is recorded that for item 23 “Slang on social media makes it difficult for me to differentiate between formal and informal language” (M = 3.09), item 24 “Slang usage on social media does not affect my writing skills.” (M = 3.25) and item 25 “Slang does not affect me in writing grammatically correct sentences” (M = 3.24) record only a moderate agreement. This shows that students who use slang may face issues involving their writing skills and grammatical components. The result also suggested that students have difficulties with formal and informal language due to the slang that they use on social media.

Thematic Table

For the interview process, once the interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the interviews into written form. The procedure applied in the analysis is based on the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis step. There are a few important steps in doing thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006), which are Step 1: Become familiar with the data, Step 2: Generate initial codes, Step 3: Search for themes, Step 4: Review themes, Step 5: Define themes, and Step 6: Write-up. Table 4 below shows the results from the analysis of the interview.

Table 4: Thematic table

Respondent	Quotes from Interview	Code	Theme	Research Objective
Respondent 1	“I mainly use it because my friends use it. It's not really to keep up”.	Peer influence	Social influence	RO3
Respondent 2	“I use it because of others' influence. So, for example, I didn't really use the words FOMO or OOTD at first. But after my friends also said it, I also naturally said it. It naturally came out of my mouth.”	Peer Influence	Social influence	RO3
Respondent 3	“The reasons why I use it are to get along with my group	Social belonging	Social influence	RO3
Respondent 4	“To be honest, and I think it's common for Gen Z to use slang because it's easy to understand.”	Simplicity	Convenient and speedy	RO1
Respondent 5	“I think other than that, by using slang, it is even faster to communicate and even more understandable to communicate between us.”	Time-saving	Convenient and speedy	RO3

Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

A thematic analysis of the data from the interviews was conducted to understand their reasons for using slang. Two themes emerged from the analysis, which are: 1. Social influence, and 2. Convenient and speedy.

Theme 1: Social Influence

The first major theme that appeared is social influence. Three out of five respondents indicate that the reason they use slang is because of peer influence or to feel a sense of belonging. This



suggested that they mainly use slang because they are either influenced by their friends or it is shaped by their friends in order to fit in.

- Respondent 1 stated:

“I mainly use it because my friends use it. It's not really to keep up”.

This indicates that they solely use it because they follow their friends or the group without necessarily feeling the need to ‘keep up’ with any trend.

- Respondent 2 stated:

“I use it because of others' influence. So, for example, I didn't really use the words FOMO or OOTD at first. But after my friends also said it, I also naturally said it. It naturally came out of my mouth.”

This indicates that over time, certain exposure from the peers or group may alter someone’s view in accepting the slang as a norm, and they use it subconsciously.

- Respondent 3 stated:

“The reasons why I use it are to get along with my group.”

This is a clear example of the reason why someone uses slang in order to fit in and feel like they belong in a certain group by adapting the same style of communication.

Based on the data above, it can be inferred that the theme of social influence plays a role in the reason why the respondents use slang. This is aligned with Communication Accommodation theory (CAT), whereby people adjust their language style to be similar to the person they are communicating with. This can be seen from the three respondents who use slang in their communication because their friends use it and are not influenced by any trend. Besides that, we can also see Holmes theory emerging whereby the slang is used by the students as a social marker of a group to show their belonging to their friends’ group.

In comparing this data with the result from the quantitative questionnaire survey in section 1, Reason for using slang, the question (3) ‘My friends influence my use of slang on social media.’, the mean is 3.56, which highly indicates that a lot of respondents agree with the statement. This



shows that social influence is one of the major themes that emerges from slang usage among students in UiTM Kedah. Thus, it can be concluded that peer influence is one of the reasons students use slang in UiTM Kedah.

Theme 2: Convenience and Speed

The second theme that emerges is convenience and speed. Two out of five respondents indicate that slang is a tool that simplifies communication or is easy to use in making the communication much more effective among them.

- Respondent 4 stated:

“To be honest, and I think it's common for Gen Z to use slang because it's easy to understand.”

This shows that using slang is a norm that a specific group uses because it is much easier and accessible to them.

- Respondent 5 stated:

“I think other than that, by using slang, it is even faster to communicate and even more understandable to communicate between us.”

This indicates that slang is being used because it can save time, which leads to the message being conveyed much faster and more easily.

The data above shows the theme of convenience and speed, which contributes to the reason why the respondents use slang. This is aligned with Holmes' theory, which shows the social functions of language and the way it is used to convey social meaning and relationships among people. This suggests that respondents use slang for ease of communication and to make communication more effective. Besides that, CAT theory can also be seen when the respondents chose to use commonly used slang by youngsters to communicate with their friends. This falls under convergence in Communication Accommodation theory, which involves people changing their language style to sound similar to the person they communicate with.

In comparison to the result from the quantitative questionnaire survey in section 1, the reason for using slang is Question 5. ‘I use slang on social media for faster communication’ with a mean of 3.95, which is very high, indicating that a lot of respondents agree that they use slang for faster communication. This shows that speed and convenience are two of the contributors to the reasons students in UiTM Kedah use slang in communication. It can be concluded that students view slang as a tool that allows ease of communication. In conclusion, two major themes that emerge from the data are 1. social influence and 2. convenience and speed, which further support the



evidence from the questionnaire survey data gained from the respondents.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Quantitative Findings (Questionnaire survey)

Section 1: Reason for Using Slang

The findings indicate that many participants use slang for faster communication. This shows that slang is a tool that eases communication and fulfil the first objective, that is to analyze the reasons behind students' use of slang on social media. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Wahyuna et al. (2025), which indicated that the participants use slang for faster communication since slang involves abbreviations that allow faster communication. This finding is aligned with communication accommodation theory (CAT), which involves adjusting the language style in order to meet communicative needs, including to achieve efficiency.

Section 2: Perceived Benefit

The data indicate that slang helps in enhancing students' confidence. This suggested that slang contributes to enhancing participants' confidence while communicating. This answers objective 1, which is to examine university students' perceptions of the impact of slang on their communication abilities. This finding is similar to Tang (2025), who found that participants speak more confidently when they use slang when communicating with friends. This is connected to communication accommodation theory, which suggests that individuals adapt their language to gain approval and reduce social distance with the person they communicate with.

Section 3: Perceived challenges/barriers

The findings show that students are aware that slang is only appropriate in an informal context. This answers the first objective, which is to examine university students' perceptions of the impact of slang on their communication abilities. These findings are similar to findings from Holis (2024) and Sangco and Protacio (2025), whereby both researchers found that participants were aware of when to use or not to use slang. This aligns with Holmes' theory, whereby speakers use different language style depend on the context and settings when they communicate.

Discussion of Qualitative Findings (Interview)

Convenience and speed

This finding indicates that slang is a tool to ease communication and achieve faster communication. These findings are similar to findings from Lynnyk and Navrotska (2022) and Dmitrichenkova et al.'s (2020) research, whereby participants use slang to achieve faster communication. This is related to Holmes' idea, which includes language



altering according to context and purpose, particularly in fast-paced internet communication. This addresses the second purpose, which is to examine the causes for students' use of slang on social media. These qualitative findings are in line with the quantitative data, which shows that participants view slang as a tool to achieve faster communication, and it also provides clearer insight into ways that slang contributes to communication speed, especially in online communication.

Social Influence

The second theme that emerges is social influence. This indicates that participants use slang in order to have effective communication. This finding is similar to that of Mahfud and Rahmat (2024) and Lutviana and Mafulah (2021), whereby the participants indicate that they use slang with their friends because it is much easier to understand and to have quick communication. This aligned with communication accommodation theory, which explains that to communicate effectively, people modify their language style to become more similar to the person with whom they speak. This addresses the second objective, which is to analyze the reasons behind students' use of slang on social media. These findings can be seen in the quantitative findings; however, the qualitative data offer a deeper insight into how participants view and use slang as a tool to gain mutual understanding among their peers. This reasoning becomes one of the pieces of evidence that drives the youth to use slang in their daily communication.

Ethical Consideration

Before conducting this study, the researcher ensures the ethical consideration are addressed to protect the participants. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the data collection. Besides that, the participants were clearly informed regarding the purpose and their anonymous identity throughout the process. They are also informed that their data will be solely used for this research, specifically in both the survey and interviews. This measure was taken to ensure that the study followed the appropriate research etiquette.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, slang may help in improving the students' confidence in communicating with their friends; however, it was also recorded that the usage of slang creates a barrier between students and teachers, and also with the older generation. Apart from that, it was also recorded that some students who use slang face issues in differentiating formal and informal language. Lastly, slang usage in social media for some students did affect writing skills and grammatical components. This suggests that the students will need to be made aware of the inappropriateness of slang usage when it comes to academic settings. Educators can play a crucial role in creating awareness and guiding students in using the appropriate language, especially in formal settings. The approach educators can take does not have to involve eliminating slang; instead, approaching them with guidelines or discussion on formal language and social media



slang might help them use the appropriate language in the correct settings. Furthermore, when educators teach them about the language trends, it not only can boost their interest in learning but also helps them embrace a language trend and discern the appropriate language use for different settings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the university students' perception of slang usage on social media and the perceived impacts on their communication abilities. The findings showed that slang is one of the tools that youngsters use in communication, especially on social media, for social bonding, to show a sense of belonging to certain groups, and for a speedy and convenient communication process. While the majority of the students view slang in positive manners; however, it is also noted that there are rising concerns regarding appropriateness in formal contexts, and potential influence on language skills. These findings are aligned with both theories, which are Communication Accommodation Theory and Holmes theory, that involve the language variation that occurs based on social context and participants, and the reasoning behind why people choose different language styles while communicating. Based on the findings of these preliminary studies, it is suggested that future research should be conducted and focused on gaining deeper insight into the phenomena. Other considerations, like a bigger sample size, including more critical analysis of previous studies and conducting a deeper investigation on the impact of slang on their academic performance, can lead to much deeper insight, which can contribute significantly to the body of knowledge.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies

No generative AI or AI-assisted technology was used in the writing process.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Authors' Contributions

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: Study Conception and design: NurFarisya Hafiz; data collection: NurFarisya Hafiz; analysis and interpretation of results: Nurfarisya Hafiz, Nur Syazwanie Mansor and Berlian Nur Morat. All the authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.