

# Students' Use of Generation Alpha Slang in Academic Discussions: A Discourse Analysis on Junior High School Classroom Interactions

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## ABSTRACT

Generation Alpha, born into a digital and social media-driven environment, frequently integrates slang terms in academic discussions, which creates both opportunities and challenges for English language learning, particularly for English teachers and other learners. This study explored the academic responses of junior high school teachers to the students' use of Gen Alpha slang in academic discussions. Using a qualitative phenomenological design and discourse analysis, the study examined the teachers' lived experiences in private junior high schools across Region XI and Region XII in Mindanao. Findings reveal that teachers interpret slang as a multifaceted communicative tool for humor, identity, and peer connection, they also discover its potential to disrupt academic rigor and cause miscommunication. Academic responses include modelling academic language, guided reformulation, scaffolding slang into academic concepts, and establishing contextual boundaries to balance student expression with formal standards. Teachers effectively acknowledge students' linguistic creativity while guiding them towards academic standards, utilizing slang as a means to foster engagement and sociolinguistic significance. This research finds that although Gen Alpha slang presents difficulties in maintaining academic conversations and discussions, it can be used as a scholarly tool when framed correctly, thereby promoting students' active involvement, engagement, focus, and language awareness in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Academic Discourse, academic responses, junior high school teachers, Generation Alpha slang, qualitative phenomenology.

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second language is a challenging task for English teachers, from teaching word pronunciation, to its meaning, and how this word may be used in a sentence. In today's generation, this task becomes more challenging for high school teachers with the emergence of Gen Alpha slang, which is popularly used by JHS students on the internet (Rachmijati & Cahyati, 2024), and now in classrooms. Generation Alpha slang is a language used by students born in 2010-2025. They, who have grown up with technology and social media, use language that reflects their unique experiences, identities, and the digital platforms they frequent, such as TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook. It has emerged as a distinctive mode of verbal communication, highlighting the evolution of communication patterns in contemporary contexts (Subramaniam & Thangavelu, 2025). These slangs can affect how students understand grammar, spelling, and other components of language learning, making it more challenging for ESL teachers to reinforce formal writing and academic communication.

Gen Alpha slangs such as *rizz*, *skibidi*, and *sigma* are terms popularized in social media and have become part of Gen Alpha's vocabulary. For instance, students use the word *skibidi* (a word that originated from a YouTube video, though its meaning remains unclear) as an adjective to describe something positively. This shows that the usage of this language disrupts students' learning of correct grammar and language use (Subhan et al. 2025). Similarly, Fatmasari et al. (2025) added that Gen Alpha slang is only accessible to those who are part of the digital communities, which may lead to exclusion or miscommunication. One of its examples is the

Indonesian students' use of the term "*fanum tax*," which may appear cryptic to listeners outside the TikTok culture. Each generation has its own slang that people outside their group find it hard to comprehend. This is evident in the study of Vacalares et al. (2023) in Misamis Oriental, which revealed that Millennials face challenges in understanding the language of Gen Zs, such as *fitspiration* and *choz*. Meanwhile, Jeresano and Carretero (2022) highlighted that internet slang helps in improving the communication skills of Grade 10 students in Pamurayan Integrated School, but it creates a language barrier between them and their teachers, as well as negatively impacts their writing skills, thus it is not encouraged to use in class discussion and essay writing.

On the other hand, in one of the studies on Internet languages, especially in the utilization of English language, a study among SHS students from Laguilayan National High School revealed that students' internet language contains non-standard spelling, incorporates emojis, words are clipped and shortened, deviates standard punctuation rules, language blending, omitted letters, and capitalization concerns (Fragio & Protacio, 2025). In addition, the study of Tambagahan et al. (2024) argued that students' technological use, such as the use of the internet, has a significant relationship in English language learning. Although existing literatures have already explored the influence and relationship of the internet and Gen Alpha slangs to students' English language use and proficiency, the focus remained on the students, rather than the perceptions of the teachers, especially in the Junior High School. Thus, this study will mainly focus on the perceptions of Junior High School teachers in the classroom. This study will explore their experiences, challenges, and strategies in amidst students' use of informal language such as Gen Alpha slang. This study will address this gap in the literature by shifting the focus from students to teachers' perspectives.

### Research Questions:

1. How do junior high school teachers describe students' use of Generation Alpha slang during academic discussions?
2. How do teachers interpret the communicative functions of Generation Alpha slang in classroom interactions?
3. How do teachers respond pedagogically to students' use of Generation Alpha slang in academic discussions?

### Generation Alpha Slang

Generation Alpha is widely recognized for its frequent use of internet slang, memes, and digital expressions. As noted by Nabilah (2025), video games and YouTube play the most significant role in shaping the language of this generation. Constant and unrestricted exposure to these platforms blends different forms of communication and results in the emergence of a new digital language, particularly visible on social media. Notably, this trend has attracted public interest and motivates people to understand and follow these language practices in order to keep up with the trend. This includes terms such as *aura*, *ate*, *bet*, *while* some of these words are not in the Oxford English Dictionary, such as *delulu* and *fannum tax*, which mean *delusional* and *a food thief*, respectively. On the other hand, some terms are in the Oxford English Dictionary but carry different meanings when used by Gen Alpha, such as the term *ate*, which means to take a meal but is now used to express something impressive and exceptional.

On the other hand, Simanullang (2025) added that slang expressions can be classified into five categories: *Fresh and Active*, *Flippant*, *Imitative*, *Acronym*, and *Clipping*. Among these, *Fresh and Active* forms were found to be the most frequent, followed by *Imitative*, *Acronym*, and *Clipping*, while *Flippant* forms appeared only in limited numbers. The study also revealed that many slang terms undergo semantic shifts, blending, and metaphorical extension, illustrating the highly dynamic and creative nature of language in fast-paced digital communication. In addition, Lupanda (2025) examined the meanings and formation processes of Generation Alpha slang on TikTok. Drawing on Barseghyan's model of slang formation, the study identified six major processes: derivation, compounding, shortening, blending, conversion, and sound imitation. Among these, conversion and shortening were the most dominant.

## Slang Languages

As cited by Niswa et al. (2023), slang is a form of informal language that is commonly used within a limited social group and often contains expressions that may be considered offensive. Although each generation develops its own distinctive way of speaking, slang typically emerges and remains relevant only for a specific period. For this reason, being aware of contemporary language use and cultural trends can be beneficial in everyday life. In addition, Rohman (2026) argued that students use these slang terms during interactions with their peers.

Beyond Generation Alpha slang, Sabillo (2025) reveals that “gay lingo,” another type of slang, promotes collaboration, leadership, and conflict resolution among students by reflecting their social relationships and cultural contexts. Teachers have observed that the use of expressive and flamboyant language captures learners’ interest and helps make classroom activities more engaging and relatable. The results suggest that code-switching can function as an effective pedagogical strategy and should be applied thoughtfully to support learning, social interaction, and more inclusive language policies in diverse classrooms.

## Gen Alpha and Gen Z Slang in Academic Discussions

The language practices of Generation Alpha and Generation Z are no longer limited to casual interactions and online spaces where these expressions originally emerged; they are now increasingly evident in classroom communication. This is supported by the study of Suyitno, Fawzi, and Arista (2025), which found that Generation Z students in Indonesia frequently answer teachers’ questions using informal Indonesian, slang, regional languages, and mixed language forms. These patterns reflect students’ preference for familiarity and self-expression rather than strict formality during classroom interactions. Students also employ a range of communicative strategies, including brief responses, humor, metaphorical expressions, and even challenges to ideas. On the other hand, Paoletti and Mujahidah (2025) reported that youth slang facilitates informal communication; however, Generation Alpha continues to face difficulties in balancing the use of slang with the development of traditional literacy skills.

This global linguistic shift is also manifesting within the Philippine educational setting through the digital linguistic adaptations of Filipino students. For instance, Belinario (2025) observed the unstructured interactions of Grade 10 students at Tangalan National High School. Consequently, this creates a distinct communication gap between learners and millennial teachers, forcing educators to develop new strategies to decode social media slang during daily interactions. In contrast, Lorenzo (2025) reported a significant relationship between students’ familiarity with and use of Generation Z vocabulary and the English language proficiency of Grade 11 students at CCNHS. The findings suggest that learners who are more exposed to and comfortable with contemporary slang tend to demonstrate stronger English skills.

Shifting focus to the pervasive nature of Generation Alpha's lexicon and its intersection with formal educational environments, Arciaga (2025) revealed that contextualizing social media slang improves students' vocabulary, contextual appropriateness, code-switching, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Furthermore, it positively impacts literacy development by enhancing digital literacy engagement and awareness. Arciaga found a significant correlation between students’ academic language proficiency and their literacy development when social media slang is effectively contextualized. Similarly, Akhir et al. (2025), students' use of slang is highly context-dependent, showing their developing metalinguistic awareness, as they demonstrate the ability to switch language when necessary.

## Teachers’ Interpretation of the Communicative Functions of Generation Alpha Slang

Several studies have examined teachers’ perceptions of and responses to students’ use of slang and internet-based language. Duran (2025) reported that internet language can benefit students by evoking emotional engagement and enhancing creativity. However, the study also identified key challenges, such as the presence of multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings, as well as the overuse of internet expressions in academic contexts. To address these challenges, teachers employ various strategies, including engaging students in both digital social communication and formal academic discourse, expanding learners’ vocabulary and sentence

construction skills, and providing continuous feedback on language use. In addition, insights from educational management based on teachers' experiences indicate that internet language can increase student motivation, support language development, and contribute to teachers' professional growth. Overall, he recommends that school principals encourage teachers to integrate awareness of internet language into communication-related subjects so that students can learn to use it appropriately and effectively.

### **Teachers' Pedagogy to Students' Use of Generation Alpha Slang**

Given the widespread use of slang in academic discussions, teachers are developing strategies and classroom practices to guide its appropriate use. Salvador, Parrar, and Yapiso (2024) emphasized that although slang plays an important role in students' identity formation and social interaction, its use in educational settings must be carefully regulated to maintain clear and effective communication. To address this concern, they proposed that schools incorporate discussions on the sociolinguistic implications of slang into the curriculum, establish guidelines for its proper use, and encourage cross-generational dialogue to reduce communication gaps.

Moreover, Pillai's (2025) suggested that educators expand literacy teaching to include multimodal fluency, helping students interpret visual, textual, and memetic cues simultaneously. Providing safe digital spaces for observation can further promote cross-generational understanding. In addition, Arciaga (2025) recommended that teachers incorporate relevant social media slang into their lessons to make learning more engaging and relatable. To maintain the rigor of academic writing, teachers must emphasize the distinction between formal academic language and informal slang, ensuring students know when and where each is appropriate. Additionally, designing activities that require students to analyze, interpret, and appropriately utilize slang across various contexts can foster comprehension and critical thinking.

A study by Mardideo (2025) indicated that learners use these words for self-expression, social connection, knowledge sharing, and entertainment. To decode this slang effectively, millennial teachers utilized strategies such as digital literacy, contextual understanding, active listening, and questioning.

Collectively, the reviewed literature establishes that the sociolinguistic landscape of education is undergoing a fundamental transformation due to Generation Alpha's communicative habits. However, a critical review of these studies reveals a distinct research gap. While existing literature successfully categorizes the morphological processes of youth slang in casual settings and identifies the resulting communication gap between students and educators, there is limited research observing the spontaneous application of this language during formal academic instruction. The exact functional mechanisms of this slang within the formal teaching-learning process remain underexplored.

### **Theoretical Lens**

While Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) emphasizes how speakers adjust their language to either converge with or diverge from their speakers in order to manage social distance, translanguaging offers a broader cognitive and pedagogical perspective. García & Wei (2014) argue that translanguaging is not simply about adjusting speech patterns to fit social dynamics, but about strategically mobilizing the full range of linguistic resources available to a speaker. In this view, the use of Generation Alpha slang alongside formal English is not treated as a deviation from academic standards, but as a purposeful and creative practice that enhances meaning-making and comprehension.

Unlike CAT, which frames language shifts as either alignment (convergence) or resistance (divergence), translanguaging highlights the strategic use of all available language resources such as formal language, slang, idioms, and even digital expressions within a single communicative act in order to communicate effectively. For example, students may explain a complex academic concept using formal English, then reinforce it with slang or meme-based expressions to ensure peer understanding and engagement. This practice reflects metalinguistic awareness, as learners demonstrate the ability to switch registers depending on context and audience.

From a pedagogical standpoint, translanguaging encourages teachers to view slang not merely as a barrier to academic rigor but as a bridge to deeper learning. By acknowledging students' linguistic repertoires, educators can scaffold lessons that integrate slang into academic discourse, thereby fostering confidence, critical thinking, and inclusivity. Whereas CAT often positions teachers as regulators of linguistic boundaries, translanguaging positions them as facilitators who harness students' diverse language practices to promote comprehension and participation.

In summary, CAT explains the social motivations behind language adjustment, while translanguaging emphasizes the cognitive and educational value of fluid language use. Together, these frameworks provide complementary insights in which CAT clarifies why teachers may accept or reject slang in certain contexts, while translanguaging shows how slang can be strategically leveraged to enhance classroom learning and student engagement.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative research design**, specifically **discourse analysis**, in exploring junior high school teachers' experiences and challenges regarding students' use of Gen Alpha slang in academic discussions. The researchers employed the qualitative design since it studied the experiences, emotions, and insights of the participants, as stated by Ugwu (2023). In particular, the researchers made use of discourse analysis. According to Johnstone and Andrus (2024), discourse analysis is useful in analyzing the body of data being gathered through language and creating meaning. In this study, the researchers aimed to analyze the reactions and experiences of the participants in making meaningful conversation and class discussion with students who are using Gen Alpha slang in academic discussions in the classroom.

### Research Participants

The participants of this study were the private junior high school teachers who encounter students using Gen Alpha slang in their academic discussions. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique is based on the purposive sampling method of Patton (2002), in which the participants were deliberately chosen based on their importance to the research objectives in order to gain in-depth insights to analyze complex phenomena. According to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024), utilizing purposive sampling allows researchers to acquire targeted data, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of their studies. In line with this sampling technique, participants were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) currently employed as a Junior High School teacher in a private school, (b) must have at least one year of professional teaching experience, (c) must be actively teaching at the Grade 7 or Grade 8 level, (d) must have firsthand experience encountering and managing students who use Generation Alpha slang in an academic setting.

### Research Instruments

In this study, the instrument the researchers used was a semi-structured interview guide, which was carefully designed to align with the research objectives. The interview guide contained open-ended questions that encouraged the teachers to share their experiences and challenges, as well as the strategies in facing students who use Gen Alpha slang during academic discussions. In addition, the research, too, had a set of questions validated by the panel of experts in order to attest to the questions' reliability and validity. According to Demirci (2023), to conduct a better interview, the researchers need to spend more time and thought in planning the questions to be asked.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews used a set of guiding questions, but at the same time allowed the participants to explain and elaborate their ideas freely, and eventually enabled the researchers to probe deeper into emerging themes. Before the implementation, the

researcher prepared structured interview questions that were asked during the interview of the participants to gain deeper qualitative insights. The researchers then submitted the instrument to the designated expert for validation. Once the instrument was approved, the researchers asked for approval and permission from the school heads of the identified school, as well as from the research committee. Once approved, the consent forms were distributed to the participants. Upon approval, and ensuring the reliable instrument and target participants, the researchers scheduled sessions with selected participants and recorded responses with consent. In recording the data being gathered, the researchers transcribed the interview responses and organized them via themes for analysis. For data analysis, the researchers performed a thematic analysis in order to analyze the data gathered from the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis Framework to analyze the qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic method that allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns based on the gathered answers in the interview. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2013) framework, in performing Thematic Analysis, the researchers underwent these six phases in analyzing data.

The first step was the familiarization of the data, second was the coding of the data through highlighting the sections of the text and labelling these with the codes, third was generating the themes from the codes, fourth step was reviewing the themes and identifying the useful and accurate representations of the data, fifth was coming up with the name of the themes and defining these, lastly was the writing up of the analysis of the data from the themes. This framework was relevant in ensuring that the identification and analysis of the themes were grounded in participants' voices while uncovering deeper insights into this phenomenon.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

In qualitative research, the researchers relied on the trustworthiness of the data gathered compared to the statistical validity in quantitative research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness allows the researchers to have confidence in the findings of their study, as it parallels the reliability, validity, and objectivity in the study, just like in a quantitative study.

**Trustworthiness.** It is the degree to which findings accurately represented the participants' realities. In this study, the researchers embodied trustworthiness in a way that the data presented truly came from the answers of the participants in the interview.

**Credibility.** Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the data presented in the study. Therefore, to ensure credibility, the researchers in this study employed prolonged engagement with the participants through in-depth interviews. Moreover, in transcribing the data, the researchers allowed the participants to review the transcripts and the summary to confirm their accuracy.

**Transferability.** Transferability is the extent to which findings in the study can be applied to other contexts. Therefore, the researchers in this study provided rich descriptions of the research locale and participants in order for the readers to verify whether the study is relevant into their current setting.

**Dependability.** Dependability is the manner of maintaining consistency of the findings over time. To achieve this in this study, the researchers carefully documented all the decisions, procedures, and changes in the study, as these will allow future researchers to mirror and emulate such transparency.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability ensures that there is no bias in the study. That is why, in this study, the researchers performed reflexivity. This means that the researchers set aside their own perspectives and insights in interpreting the data.

In adhering to these strategies, the study being conducted was both trustworthy and credible. In combining careful checking, rich description, careful record of data process, and reflexivity, the findings reflect the junior

high school teachers’ experiences, challenges, and strategies in facing Gen Alpha slang in their academic discussions.

**Ethical Considerations**

In conducting a qualitative study, protecting the privacy and welfare of the participants is the top priority. Therefore, the researchers valued the ethical key principles in conducting research. According to Hecker and Kalpokas (2026), considering the ethical considerations in research not only protects the rights and privacy of the participants but, at the same time, it enhances the quality of the study since it promotes a careful thought process and respectful engagement towards the participants of the study as well as its stakeholders. The following are the key principles the researchers in this study considered in conducting the research.

**Informed Consent.** The researchers sought approval from their target participants. In doing so, the researchers carefully elaborated the purpose of the consent and the rights and privileges of the participants and explained in detail the rationale of the study. In being part of the study and signing the consent, the participants did it voluntarily and wholeheartedly, without feeling violated or threatened.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** In conducting a study, the researchers ensured that the information of every participant would not be shared not disseminated, and their rights would be protected. In ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of each participant, the interviews were done in a private and secure place where participants were comfortable expressing their experiences and ideas, and the researchers only asked questions relevant to the study.

**Beneficence.** Denison (2025) highlighted the importance of beneficence in conducting a study. As a researcher, the study being conducted would not bring harm to an organization or to society. Hence, it would bring benefits to society, and this benefit must not be limited to a certain group; it must benefit everyone concerned.

**Integrity and Scientific Validity.** Denison (2025) also highlighted the relevance of honesty and transparency in a study. Therefore, data collection was treated objectively, and researchers avoided influencing the results of the study.

**Justice.** In conducting research, the study provided fairness in burdens and benefits. The group that is at risk did not receive more risk, and the group that is at an advantage did not receive more benefits.

**Ethical Approval.** The researchers were aware and knowledgeable of the specific guidelines and procedures of their institution’s review board in order to ensure that the review of the research proposal was done smoothly. This involved a critical thought process on the potential risk to the participants, how these were alleviated, and how unexpected ethical issues would be handled.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 presents the theme generated from the data gathered in the in-depth interview with the participants, focusing on their description of students' use of Generation Alpha slang during academic discussions.

Table 1. Teachers’ Descriptions of Students’ Use of Gen Alpha Slang in Academic Discussions

Significant Statement	Code Name	Formulated Meaning	Theme Clusters
<i>“Students’ use Gen Alpha slang naturally and spontaneously. It often appears in casual responses, reactions, and peer-to-peer exchanges of communication. Sometimes they use it as to express excitement, humor,</i>	Teacher A	Teachers describe students’ use of the language as something that naturally emerges during discussions, rather than being	Spontaneous and Expressive Use of Generation Alpha Slang in Classroom Discourse

<p><i>agreement and also to put emphasis to their claim.”</i></p>		<p>intentionally planned.</p>	
<p><i>“Sometimes it makes discussions more engaging because students feel comfortable, uh, speaking, uh, especially when we are exchanging, uh, conversations during the teaching and learning process.”</i></p>	<p>Teacher F</p>	<p>Teachers describe students' use of slang as a way of making them comfortable in conversations.</p>	<p>Comfort-Based Communication in Academic Discussions</p>
<p><i>“I often hear expressions commonly, since we are talking about numbers, the six, seven, sheesh, slay, rizz, or that's giving”</i></p> <p><i>“I often hear expressive reactions like basic, savage, internet-based terms and gaming-related slang.”</i></p>	<p>Teacher C Teacher E</p>	<p>Teachers heard the familiar trendy slang from their students.</p> <p>Teachers recognize that students' use of slang originates from online environments as social media and gaming communities.</p>	<p>Digital Culture as a Source of Classroom Slang</p>
<p><i>“Students overusing slang and the difficulty in maintaining academic rigor. As well as slang replacing proper terminology, and students thinking that informal language is always acceptable.”</i></p>	<p>Teacher A</p>	<p>Amidst the positive impact of slang on academic discussions, teachers observe that students' overreliance on slang use weakens formal academic vocabulary during discourse.</p>	<p>Slang-Related Academic Discourse Challenges</p>
<p><i>“The challenges I personally experience are that I oftentimes have a hard time, uh, understanding or deciphering these, um, slangs being used since I am not quite familiar with the trends because, as I have observed, the ongoing trends when it comes to slangs and words being used online are quite dynamic. And I haven't had enough time to read into each one.”</i></p>	<p>Teacher D</p>	<p>Teachers believe that excessive use of slang and students' use of unfamiliar slang creates confusion among classmates and the teacher.</p>	<p>Communication Barriers Arising from Slang Usage</p>
<p><i>“It actually has a, a great shift, especially when we are doing graded recitations, for example. I always tell them to be more careful with their language, especially if we will have graded recitations or oral presentations. I expect them to reduce their use of slang during graded activities, and so they follow.”</i></p>	<p>Teacher F</p>	<p>Teachers highlight that the presence of slang in discussion shows students' ability to adapt their language depending on the academic context.</p>	<p>Developing Language Awareness in Academic Contexts</p>

### Spontaneous and Expressive Use of Generation Alpha Slang in Classroom Discourse

Junior high school teachers described Generation Alpha slang as naturally emerging during classroom interactions, particularly in informal exchanges and collaborative discussions. Rather than being deliberately planned, slang appears as an expressive linguistic resource through which students communicate emotions,



reactions, and peer alignment. Teachers recognized that this spontaneous use reflects students' tendency to employ familiar linguistic forms to sustain interaction and social connection within learning environments.

This observation aligns with Suyitno et al. (2025), who noted that youth slang functions primarily as a medium for humor and metaphorical self-expression rather than formal communication. From the perspective of the Communication Accommodation Theory of Giles (1973), students' shared use of slang demonstrates convergence, where speakers adjust language to align with peers and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Rohman (2026) emphasized that slang commonly emerges in peer interaction contexts, including classroom discussions, indicating its integration into students' communicative practices. Teachers therefore recognized slang not as disruption but as a natural extension of students' social communication patterns within academic spaces.

### **Comfort-Based Communication in Academic Discussions**

Teachers associated the presence of Generation Alpha slang with increased student comfort and participation during discussions. Familiar linguistic expressions appeared to reduce communication anxiety, allowing students to articulate ideas more confidently and participate actively in exchanges. The relaxed communicative atmosphere supported engagement and encouraged learners to express viewpoints without hesitation.

This finding corresponds with Sabillo (2025), who argued that relatable language enhances classroom participation by making interactions more accessible to learners. Lorenzo (2025) further identified a relationship between familiarity with slang and language proficiency, suggesting that students communicate more effectively when academic discourse connects with linguistic forms they regularly use. Jeresano and Carretero (2022) likewise emphasized that internet-based language practices may contribute to the development of communication skills. Teachers thus interpreted slang as contributing to an environment that promotes participation while supporting oral communication development.

### **Digital Culture as a Source of Classroom Slang**

Teachers consistently attributed students' use of Generation Alpha slang to digital environments such as social media platforms, online content, and gaming communities. These digital spaces function as primary sources of vocabulary formation and linguistic innovation, shaping the expressions students bring into classroom discussions. Teachers recognized that slang terms follow identifiable linguistic processes rather than emerging randomly.

Nabilah (2025) highlighted the influence of video games and online media on students' acquisition of contemporary slang, while Lupana (2025) explained that slang formation follows systematic linguistic processes such as shortening, blending, and conversion. Subramniam and Thangavelu (2025) further argued that digitally immersed learners naturally transfer online language practices into academic contexts. Similarly, Adhi and Masykuroh (2025) described digital platforms as environments that accelerate the spread and evolution of youth expressions. Teachers' observations therefore position classroom slang as a reflection of broader digital culture, demonstrating how technological exposure reshapes students' linguistic repertoires.

### **Slang-Related Academic Discourse Challenges**

Despite recognizing positive aspects of slang use, teachers also identified challenges related to maintaining academic rigor. Frequent reliance on informal expressions was perceived to weaken students' use of precise academic vocabulary and reduce the formality expected in structured discussions. Teachers observed that excessive slang may blur distinctions between conversational and academic registers, affecting clarity and depth of discourse.

Bocaya et al. (2026) described this phenomenon as academic interference, where informal language replaces discipline-specific terminology. Within the framework of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), such linguistic divergence may create distance between teachers' expectations for formal language and students' informal communication preferences. Fragio and Protacio (2025) further noted that nonstandard

features of slang pose instructional challenges, particularly in grammar and writing conventions, while Paoletti and Mujahidah (2025) emphasized teachers’ difficulty in balancing linguistic flexibility with the development of traditional literacy skills. Teachers therefore viewed moderation and guidance as necessary to sustain academic standards while acknowledging evolving language practices.

**Communication Barriers Arising from Slang Usage**

Teachers also described communication difficulties arising from unfamiliar or rapidly evolving slang expressions. Differences in generational linguistic knowledge occasionally produced misunderstandings between teachers and students, limiting clarity during academic interaction. The fast-changing nature of online language required teachers to continuously interpret new expressions, creating challenges in shared understanding.

Belinario (2025) identified a communication gap between Generation Alpha learners and millennial educators due to differing linguistic exposure. Fatmasari et al. (2025) similarly argued that digital-community language may exclude those unfamiliar with its meanings, potentially leading to miscommunication. Vacalares et al. (2023) further connected these barriers to generational differences in linguistic experience. Viewed through Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), these differences highlight how contrasting linguistic repertoires can emphasize social distance within classroom communication.

**Developing Language Awareness in Academic Contexts**

Teachers observed that students demonstrate awareness of language appropriateness by adjusting their speech according to academic context. While slang appears during informal interaction, students generally shift toward formal language in graded or professional tasks when expectations are clearly established. This adaptive behavior reflects developing metalinguistic awareness and sensitivity to communicative context.

Akhir et al. (2025) emphasized that slang use is context-dependent and signals growing linguistic awareness among learners. This observation also aligns with Translanguaging Theory (García & Wei, 2014), which views movement between language varieties as a strategic cognitive practice rather than linguistic deficiency. Teachers therefore interpreted students’ ability to regulate language choice as evidence of emerging communicative competence and contextual understanding.

Overall, teachers described Generation Alpha slang as simultaneously supportive and challenging within classroom discourse. While it fosters engagement, peer connection, and participation shaped by digital culture, it also requires instructional guidance to preserve academic clarity and shared understanding. Teachers recognized students’ growing ability to navigate between informal and formal language as part of their developing communicative competence.

Table 2 presents the themes generated from the participants' responses on their interpretation of the communicative functions of Generation Alpha slang in classroom interactions.

Table 2. Teachers' interpretation of the communicative functions of Gen Alpha slang in classroom interactions

Significant Statement	Code Name	Formulated Meaning	Theme Clusters
<i>"The common communicative functions that we encounter when we interpret as teachers their way of communication is first as form of humor, agreement, put emphasize or emphasis to their claim, the social bonding and the identity expression."</i>	Teacher A	Teachers view slang as a social instrument used by students to foster a sense of belonging, express their unique generational identity, and establish peer solidarity.	Slang as a Multi-Faceted Tool for Social Connection and Identity

<p><i>"Informal group work allows more flexibility, while formal assessments require stricter language expectation."</i></p>	<p>Teacher C</p>	<p>Teachers adjust their level of tolerance for slang based on the classroom environment, showing more leniency during collaborative or informal tasks. However, there is a firm expectation for students to transition to formal, precise language during assessments and professional discussions</p>	<p>Contextual Flexibility and the Expectation of Code-Switching</p>
<p><i>"some teachers I believe they try to take these slangs as as literal as in the literal sense and that is one of the challenges because some of these slangs may come off as commonly used terms and they are quite unfamiliar"</i></p>	<p>Teacher D</p>	<p>The rapid evolution of slang creates a "knowledge gap" that can lead to confusion or literal misinterpretations by teachers and peers who are not familiar with the terms.</p>	<p>Linguistic Barriers and the Risk of Misinterpretation</p>
<p><i>"I respond by acknowledging that the humor or enthusiasm is there, but I also use the I understand this balanced response maintains classroom control while keeping students comfortable enough to participate."</i></p>	<p>Teacher C</p>	<p>Teachers employ a balanced management style by acknowledging the enthusiasm or humor behind the slang to maintain student comfort while immediately rephrasing the content into formal academic terms.</p>	<p>Strategic Remediation: Validating Intent While Modeling Standards</p>
<p><i>"The teachers can use it to their advantage to further enhance or deepen the learning um comes to students because when it comes to relatability, uh some students may become more attentive to discussions"</i></p>	<p>Teacher D</p>	<p>Teachers identify an opportunity to use students' natural communication styles as a starting point for deeper learning and relatability. By integrating slang into sociolinguistic discussions, teachers can help students understand the nuances of language and when it is appropriate to use specific terms.</p>	<p>Using Slang as a Bridge for Pedagogical Relevance</p>

### Slang as a Multi-Faceted Tool for Social Connection and Identity

Teachers interpreted Generation Alpha slang as a social mechanism that enables students to express identity, reinforce belonging, and strengthen peer relationships. Slang functions beyond vocabulary choice, serving as a marker of group membership and interpersonal alignment during classroom interaction.

Fransisca (2025) described slang as an indicator of social inclusion that reinforces interpersonal bonds and generational identity. Teachers therefore viewed slang as an affiliative communicative strategy through which students negotiate social positioning and participation within classroom communities.

### Contextual Flexibility and the Expectation of Code-Switching

Teachers demonstrated flexibility toward slang use depending on instructional context, allowing informal language during collaborative activities while expecting formal academic discourse during assessments. This practice reflects recognition of code-switching as a necessary communicative skill rather than a linguistic error.

Kipchoge (2024) identified code-switching as a strategy for negotiating identity across contexts, while Ibañez (2025) emphasized broader sociocultural influences shaping students’ linguistic behavior. Barroga and Tampus (2023) further explained that translanguaging practices enable teachers to balance inclusivity with academic expectations. Teachers therefore framed language adjustment as part of students’ communicative development and classroom professionalism.

**Linguistic Barriers and the Risk of Misinterpretation**

Teachers acknowledged that the rapid evolution of slang increases the risk of literal interpretation and misunderstanding among individuals unfamiliar with emerging expressions. Lack of shared linguistic knowledge may reduce communicative clarity and create interactional difficulties.

Salih (2024) associated language barriers with misunderstandings and weakened interaction, while Buarqoub (2019) emphasized that colloquial expressions often generate communication gaps. Teachers’ interpretations indicate that evolving slang requires continuous negotiation of meaning to maintain effective classroom communication.

**Strategic Remediation: Validating Intent While Modeling Standards**

Teachers adopted a balanced response by acknowledging students’ communicative intent while modeling formal academic language. This approach maintains student participation while simultaneously reinforcing appropriate linguistic standards.

Southam (2024) noted that students tend to imitate teacher language models, and Matiso (2024) emphasized modeling and scaffolding as essential instructional strategies for improving learning outcomes. Teachers’ practice demonstrates how validation combined with corrective modeling supports both engagement and academic language development.

**Using Slang as a Bridge for Pedagogical Relevance**

Teachers recognized students’ everyday language as a resource for enhancing instructional relevance and engagement. By connecting slang with academic concepts, educators created pathways that link familiar communication practices with formal learning objectives.

Salvadora (2024) described slang as facilitating social cohesion and efficient communication among younger generations, while Chuks (2025) warned that excessive reliance may limit expressive precision. Teachers therefore positioned slang as a transitional tool that supports learning when guided toward academic discourse rather than eliminated entirely.

Collectively, teachers interpreted Generation Alpha slang as a communicative resource that strengthens participation and identity expression while requiring contextual regulation to prevent misunderstanding and maintain academic clarity.

Table 3 presents the pedagogical strategies of teachers when they handled Generation Alpha slang in the classroom. The results showed that the participants practiced active facilitation and used a deliberate effort to use slang not as a punishable offense but as a teaching transition toward formal discourse.

Table 3. Teachers’ Pedagogical Responses to Students’ Use of Gen Alpha Slang in Academic Discussions

Significant Statements	Code Name	Formulated Meanings	Emergent Theme
<i>"For example, if a student says, 'Ma'am, that answer slayed,' that is various- that is not formal answer when you ask students in a formal form. Now in, I</i>	Teacher A	Teachers utilize code-switching, model academic vocabulary,	Modeling and Redirecting towards

<p><i>respond or the student will respond, 'Yes, that answer was well explained and accurate.' That's it."</i></p> <p><i>"I model proper vocabulary and gently rephrase students slang based responses into formal explanations. For example, if they say a solution slayed, I guide them to explain why it works using correct terms like distributive property or elimination method. This turns enthusiasm into deeper understanding."</i></p> <p><i>"So, I usually acknowledge the response and then rephrase it to using academic language. This validates the student's contribution while modeling appropriate vocabulary."</i></p>	<p>Teacher C</p> <p>Teacher E</p>	<p>rephrase student answers for clarity, and establish norms to differentiate between academic and social language.</p>	<p>Academic Language</p>
<p><i>"Sometimes I connect slang to vocabulary lessons. I compare informal versus the formal expressions and it and I use it as examples when teaching discourse. For example, instead of saying delulu, but what formal word can we use about that one. The students may might answer unrealistic. So that's it."</i></p> <p><i>"So, in terms of scaffolding in the slang academic language, the teacher itself could use as entry point to connect it to the subject specific vocabulary or it could be sometimes as a comparative exercises by expressing the academic equivalence reinforcing the semantic precision."</i></p>	<p>Teacher A</p> <p>Teacher B</p>	<p>Slang is used as an entry point for subject-specific vocabulary, serving as a comparative tool to teach semantic precision and academic equivalents.</p>	<p>Scaffolding and Bridging Slang to Academic Concepts</p>
<p><i>"So, I clearly explain to them that slang is acceptable in brainstorming only because brainstorming is an informal form of gathering information, while formal language is required in graded tasks. Now, respectful language is always expected... I reinforce this through rubrics and classroom policies."</i></p> <p><i>"So, at the beginning of the term or at the beginning of the class, I explain expectations for academic discussions and clarify when informal language is acceptable and when it is not. So, in informal discussions, I allow moderate slang so I allow them to use slang but during graded class, graded formal discussions, I require them to use formal language and remind students of assessment criteria."</i></p>	<p>Teacher A</p> <p>Teacher E</p>	<p>The teacher enforces language boundaries based on the setting, allowing relevant slang in informal practice but requiring strict formality in academic discussions.</p>	<p>Establishing Contextual Boundaries and Professionalism</p>

### Modeling and Redirecting towards Academic Language

Teachers actively guided students from informal expressions toward academic discourse through modeling, rephrasing, and explicit explanation of language expectations. Rather than prohibiting slang, teachers redirected student contributions into formal vocabulary to strengthen conceptual clarity.

For instance, during an academic discussion, a student might spontaneously use a trendy term to evaluate a peer's contribution. Instead of using formal academic language, the student relies on trendy terms like "slay"

to express their approval of the response. Rather than simply agreeing, the teacher responds: “Yes, that answer was well-explained and accurate.” This response gently guides students to understand that “slayed,” in an academic setting, translates to a well-explained and accurate answer. As stated by Participant 3: *“If they say a solution slayed, I guide them to explain why it works using correct terms like distributive property or elimination method. This turns enthusiasm into deeper understanding.”* This practice reflects the use of proper terminology to ensure conceptual clarity and mathematical precision.

Through the lens of Translanguaging Theory (García & Wei, 2014), this practice validates students’ meaning-making processes while guiding them toward academic registers. Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973) further explains this strategy as accommodative behavior that fosters rapport while maintaining instructional authority. Ji, Giles, and Hu (2025) found that such accommodation lowers affective barriers and improves learning effectiveness, supporting teachers’ flexible yet structured responses.

### **Scaffolding and Bridging Slang to Academic Concepts**

Teachers used slang as a scaffold to introduce subject-specific vocabulary and clarify abstract ideas. Familiar language served as an entry point that reduced cognitive load and increased accessibility to complex concepts.

For instance, participants noted that students use slang terms like “delulu” or “slay” to describe a concept or a character’s action. Instead of simply correcting the student’s error, the teacher pauses the lesson to address the use of slang by asking for a formal synonym or equivalent of the slang to build the student’s vocabulary. The teacher facilitates a comparative exercise where students suggest words like “unrealistic,” “delusional,” or “unsupported assumption.” This bridging technique allows the teacher to bridge the gap and scaffold the students’ knowledge to the expected level. It serves as an anchor for a more sophisticated use of language within the formal classroom setting.

This approach reflects translanguaging pedagogy (García & Wei, 2014), where learners draw upon existing linguistic resources to construct new knowledge. Damayanti and Ekawati (2025) similarly found that slang can enhance vocabulary acquisition and cultural understanding when strategically integrated into instruction. Rohman (2026) further reported that acknowledging students’ linguistic practices increases engagement and willingness to communicate, supporting deeper learning processes.

### **Establishing Contextual Boundaries and Professionalism**

Teachers emphasized the importance of clear linguistic boundaries distinguishing informal interaction from formal academic performance. By setting expectations based on context, teachers maintained professionalism while allowing limited flexibility in appropriate situations.

For example, the participants set clear expectations regarding the appropriate register for different activities, distinguishing between social collaboration that allows slang and formal graded assessments that do not. The use of slang helps students build peer rapport and lowers speaking anxiety during the creative phase. However, the teachers reinforce strict boundaries as well. As noted by the participants: *“So, I clearly explain to them that slang is acceptable in brainstorming only because brainstorming is an informal form of gathering information, while formal language is required in graded tasks. Now, respectful language is always expected... I reinforce this through rubrics and classroom policies.”* The participants teach students the professional skill of code-switching, thereby helping them understand that while their linguistic identity is important and respected, there is an academic standard that must be followed in formal evaluations.

This reflects strategic divergence within Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), where teachers maintain formal language standards to model academic discourse. Efendi, Amrullah, and Susanti (2024) highlighted that guided integration of slang enhances pragmatic competence, while Rohman (2026) noted that digital exposure increases engagement but complicates language boundaries. Teachers therefore structured classroom language practices to develop situational communication skills and professional awareness.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the use of Gen Alpha slang in academic discussions poses both opportunities and challenges to English teachers and to the learners. While it promotes social connection and identity, and active classroom participation and attention, it also risks for elicit miscommunication and reducing formality in academic discussions. Teachers address this by adopting strategies of modelling and guided reformulation, redirecting students toward academic language while establishing contextual standards that reinforce professionalism. Teachers emphasize modelling academic language, guided reformulation, and redirection as major strategies in sustaining rigor in classroom discussions. This approach reflects an effort in scaffolding the students' expression, bridging informal slang with academic concepts in order to maintain a deep and clear communication. Moreover, teachers acknowledge the use of slang as a relevant tool in order for the students to build communication, such as having humor, identity formation, and peer connection. The result also describes slang as "a multifaceted tool for social connection and identity", emphasizing its sociolinguistic relevance as a means of active engagement and participation in class.

In general, the findings suggest that Gen Alpha slang should not be viewed mainly as a barrier in achieving a holistic academic discourse but rather as a linguistic resource that can enhance engagement and sociolinguistic integration. In this matter, teachers play a pivotal role in conducting language awareness and encouraging proper code-switching between formal and informal registers.

### Implication for Teaching and Pedagogy

The result highlights the challenges and benefits of integrating Gen Alpha slang in classroom discourse. Teachers can leverage students' familiarity with Gen Alpha slang to create lessons that are more relatable and engaging. As facilitators of learning, they must act as language mediators who will validate student contributions while modeling the academic register. They must set clear expectations as to when and where slang is appropriate to prevent miscommunication and maintain classroom professionalism. In addition, slang can serve as a scaffolding tool to teach semantic accuracy and academic terminology. Teachers should strategically use slang to enhance classroom social dynamics, such as establishing strong peer and student-teacher relationships, making students feel heard and validated. The positive contributions of slang in academic discourse recognize that teachers should embrace rather than suppress Gen Alpha slang as a bridge to academic language.

### Implications for Transferability

Although this study is situated within a private junior high school context, particularly among Grade 7 and Grade 8 learners, the findings indicate strong potential for transferability across different educational settings. The core pedagogical insight, that Gen Alpha slang can be utilized as a scaffold toward learning academic language, shows that it can be applied beyond this study's context. Teachers in larger classes, like public schools, can use students' familiarity with Gen Alpha slang to support engagement and understanding, while ensuring clear boundaries to maintain academic rigor.

Across grade levels, there may be varying applications, such as in lower levels, where teachers may introduce simple distinctions between informal and formal language. In the applications in the lower levels, on the other hand, there should be a greater emphasis on precision and academic vocabulary. Thus, this highlights that slang can serve as a bridge to academic language across different contexts when used strategically by teachers.

### Implications for Future Research

Since this study focused on the students' use of slang through the perceptions and descriptions of teachers, further research that is focused on the researchers' actual observation of the students' use of their Gen Alpha slang in academic discourse that can only be observed through the researchers' point of view, may be done.

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