

Gen Y vs Gen Z: Generational Differences in English Slang Types and Perceived Use of Slang on Social Media

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This study explored the slang usage of Generation Y and Generation Z, focusing on slang types and the perceived use of English slang on social media, and examined the significant mean difference in slang usage between the two generations. It employed a causal-comparative design to compare the generational differences between Generation Y and Generation Z, utilizing central tendency and independent sample t-test methods. A convenience sampling method was used to select employees to represent the two groups from one private company. The findings indicate that Initialism is the most prevalent slang type among both Gen Y and Gen Z, with Gen Y showing broader engagement in nuanced forms and Gen Z favouring concise expressions. Perceptions of slang use were generally positive, with Gen Z viewing it as a more effective and socially empowering communicative tool than Gen Y. These results highlight a clear generational gap in both usage patterns and attitudes toward English slang in digital contexts. The study advances insights into generational language practices in online communication on slang to enhance engagement, identity expression, and social connection in digital environments.

Keywords: slang types, perceived use, generational difference, Gen Y, Gen Z

INTRODUCTION

Background

In the rapidly evolving communication landscape, social media has become a crucial platform where Generation Y (Gen Y) and Generation Z (Gen Z) express themselves, gain connections, and create linguistic trends. Born as digital natives, Gen Y (1981-1996) and Gen Z (1997-2012) (Giancaterino, 2023) have mainly used TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook as communication platforms (Rezeki & Sagala, 2019). Their pattern of social media use differs, but in subtle ways. While Gen Y often engages more with Facebook and LinkedIn for networking and information sharing, Gen Z prefers fast-paced, visually stimulating platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (Pew Research Center, 2023). These, among others, define their preferences and differences in terms of technological familiarity and distinct social priorities

The informal and fluid nature of online communication facilitates dynamic language practices, including the emergence of slang among social media users. Social media users, particularly young adults and adolescents, often use informal language or slang in casual or informal communication (Rusfandi, 2020). They intentionally use slang to break the seriousness of the conversation and foster congeniality between them. The use of this informal language, or slang, enables the implementation of social functions like instilling humour, fostering closeness between users, easier social interaction, and creating relaxed communication atmospheres (Budiasa et al., 2021; Haris et al., 2023; Josea et al., 2025). Slang therefore, can serve as a bridge between individual expression and collective culture (Josea et al., 2025).

Problem Statement

Being overexposed to social media may lead to a significant influence from the content displayed, the language

used, or the communication within the platforms. Budiasa et al. (2021) state that the frequent use of slang on social media may negatively impact users' formal communication skills, academic writing abilities, and create intergenerational communication barriers. This is because the informal nature of social media, according to Ogheneakpobor (2023) encourages a relaxed approach to grammar, spelling, and punctuation, resulting in linguistic evolution and confusion with traditional norms. The use of slang may also exclude those unfamiliar with its meanings, especially across generations. The rapid spread of slang through social media accelerates language change, making it both a unifying and divisive force in digital discourse.

Besides, communicating in an informal social atmosphere has brought negative impacts on language development. Since younger generations habitually refresh social media feeds, they become more creative and relentlessly create new ideas. Saputra and Marlina (2019) argue that, due to their creativity, especially in using language, they tend to ignore language structure, and a new style of language, known as slang, was created. As English slang is not a standardised and structured language, overusing it may ruin their grammar and linguistic skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing, especially when the English language is not their first language. For instance, language learners tend to use slang in the academic writing context and thus can confuse the readers' understanding of their writing content (González & Chang, 2024; Gusnayetti, 2021).

To exacerbate the situation, Rezeki and Sagala (2019) found that Gen Y may not significantly improve their language skills in the future due to their habit of using slang rather than standard language. It was also found that the younger generation spoke the standard English language less slowly, which potentially threatens to replace the standard language with slang (Hendrajati et al., 2023; Sardiyah, 2020; Za et al., 2023). These can lead to a lower language attitude toward the use of standard English.

For people who are not familiar with the slang, it can be a challenge to understand it, as English slang is not standard English. A qualitative study by Olobia (2024) found that using English slang, such as abbreviations and acronyms, led to issues in word manipulation and sentence distortion. Those unfamiliar with slang, especially second-language speakers, are likely to make mistakes in interpreting and using English slang.

Many previous studies have specifically focused on either Gen Y (Hendrajati et al., 2023; Pongsapan, 2022; Rezeki & Sagala, 2019; Rusfandi, 2020; Sardiyah, 2020) or Generation Z (Budiasa et al., 2021; Padohinog et al., 2020; Za et al., 2023). Most of the time, the sampled population was from school or university students. Comparative studies investigating slang usage within generational differences were limited. This research gap is substantiated by Vacalares et al. (2023), who suggest further research to explore linguistic patterns and impacts of slang, taking into consideration perceptions of Gen Y and Generation Z. Furthermore, this comparative research has been understudied in the local setting.

As highlighted in the above studies, conducted in Indonesia (Budiasa et al., 2021; Hendrajati et al., 2023; Pongsapan, 2022; Rezeki & Sagala, 2019; Rusfandi, 2020; Sardiyah, 2020; Za et al., 2023), the methods employed were either qualitative or quantitative. Thus, the study employed a combination of both approaches to determine the perceptions of Gen Y and Generation Z regarding the use of English slang in social media communication within the Malaysian context, specifically among employees from a private company in Kuala Lumpur. This study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

- (a) What is the most frequently used slang type by Gen Y and Gen Z?
- (b) What are Gen Y's and Gen Z's perceptions of the use of English slang in communication on social media, and
- (c) Is there a significant mean difference in the perceived use of slang between Gen Y and Gen Z?

Thus, understanding how Gen Y and Gen Z differ in their perceptions and uses of slang is essential. This study addressed that gap by providing empirical evidence that can guide balanced approaches to language use in Malaysia's evolving digital communication landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

CAT was developed by sociolinguist Howard Giles (1973) to comprehend and understand the reasons why people shift the way they talk, including the languages, accents, and dialects, when communicating with others. Giles analyzed the speech variability used by the addressee, which results in the shift of speech style through interpersonal and intergroup accommodation processes, regardless of the interaction context. He also considered the receiver characteristics as a factor influencing the communication adjustment of the speakers. The theory has been applied in communication to include intergroup interactions between different social groups such as cultures, generations, genders, and professions, and within and between organizations, either through physical interactions or via various media in varying countries and by researchers with different cultural and language backgrounds (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

According to Giles (1973), there are three conceptualized adjustments: convergence, divergence, and maintenance. This study focused only on two types of adjustments, which are convergence and divergence. Convergence is the first form of speech accommodation where people modify their communication style when interacting with others as a strategy to enhance similarities between them (Zhang & Giles, 2018). To simplify, a party makes their speech more similar to that of the other party, either by switching the language, adopting a different speaking style, or adjusting their accent. This type of adjustment is usually perceived as a sign of liking by trying to fit and be as similar as possible to the other party (Giles, 1973). This behaviour is perceived positively as it shows the motives for respect and friendliness. Usually, people make this adjustment to seek approval, affiliation, and to instill interpersonal similarity, thereby reducing social distance (Soliz & Giles, 2014). It also improves the effectiveness of communication as it highlights mutual understanding and lowers uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1995).

Divergence is a communication strategy where the speakers emphasize the differences in their speech patterns and accentuate the language differences between themselves and others. In other words, one party distinguishes itself from the other by emphasizing its language, speaking style, or accent. When using divergence as the adjustment of communication, people will assume the motive of the party as disliking the other group, as it perceives the motive negatively, as they want to be as distinctive from the other party. The adjustment of divergence leads to emphasising the speech and nonverbal differences between a party and the other party to express contrasting group identities (Soliz & Giles, 2014). People adopt this type of communication to preserve their pride in their social identity.

The study employed the theory as it discusses the association of language use, specifically English slang, and communication in social contexts, particularly on social media. The use of English slang on social media may be influenced by one's social circle or environment, such as their interactions with people of the same age, which then impacts their linguistic trends and preferences. The exposure of the social context may influence the way people communicate with one another. Therefore, this theory is very helpful in analysing and exploring Gen Y's and Gen Z's perceptions of the use of English colloquialisms in communication on social media.

Slang and Its Typologies

Lutfiah et al. (2024) refer slang as “non-standard lexical items and expressions, typically ephemeral, that arise within specific communities to convey shared identity, humor, or solidarity, and which frequently employ processes such as clipping, blending, and semantic shift” (p. 785) while Chumok and Lerdpaisalwong (2025) define slang as “a dynamic, informal subset of language characterized by creativity, reduced formality, and group-specific usage, often emerging in response to cultural trends and technological change” (p. 44). These definitions highlight the role of slang as a social function (group identity) and the linguistic innovation of online platforms, especially on social media.

Slang typologies classify the ways slang terms are formed, offering a systematic framework for analyzing informal language. Foundational work on word-formation processes by Hans Marchand (1969) and Laurie Bauer (1983) has been widely applied in sociolinguistics to categorize slang into types such as clipping, initialism, acronym, blending, and compounding. Within this typology, clipping shortens a longer word without altering its meaning, e.g., exam from examination or fridge from refrigerator. Initialism forms a term from the first letters of a sequence of words, pronouncing each letter separately, as in LOL (“laugh out loud”) or OMG (“oh my God”). Acronyms are similar but pronounced as words, such as YOLO (“you only live once”) or NATO. Blending merges parts of two or more words into a new form, e.g., brunch (breakfast + lunch) or smog (smoke + fog). Compounding joins two whole words to create a new term, such as hashtag or keyboard.

Recent digital communication research shows that these processes are especially common in online slang, where brevity, creativity, and group identity are valued. Clipping and initialism often serve efficiency, while blending and compounding can be more playful or expressive. By identifying which types dominate in Gen Y and Gen Z discourse, the study would reveal each linguistic preference. This study adopted the Marchand–Bauer typology because it provides a linguistically rigorous way to categorise Gen Y and Gen Z slang on social media, enabling both quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative interpretation of cultural trends. The study’s focused typology (clipping, initialism, blending, etc.) can be mapped onto CAT’s framework by examining which slang types are used to converge with a group (e.g., adopting popular abbreviations to fit in) and which are used to diverge (e.g., creating novel blends to stand out).

The Role of Social Media in the Younger Generations’ Lives:

Regularly scrolling social media has become a habit among younger generations, as they have realised its importance in many aspects of their daily lives. Vacalares and Cagalawan (2023) state that the use of social media by young people is increasing, influencing their daily lives and communication structure, and this has been highlighted by Grau et al. (2019), who state that Gen Y and Gen Z spend most of their time online socializing with other users.

Social media has often been used as a strategic medium for managing perceived self-identity deficiencies. Dwivedi and Lewis (2021) reported that Gen Y used social media as a ‘mask’ or coping mechanism to overcome their self-identity issues. They used them to escape from the reality of their personal life and problems by socializing online with their friends (Grau et al., 2019). Gen Y and Gen Z, accustomed to technological communication, tend to be more confident interacting online than face-to-face as they are more familiar and comfortable with the digital platform (Li & Jing, 2018). Hence, their reliance on it is so great that they find comfort when using it.

Previous Studies:

In sociolinguistic research, slang typologies (initialism, clipping, connotation, compounding, euphemism, and spelling distortion) have been widely described (Eble, 1996; Allan & Burridge, 2006; Mattiello, 2008). Earlier studies by Crystal (2011) and Tagliamonte and Denis (2008) linked the popularity of abbreviation-based slang to the speed and convenience of digital communication.

In recent years, more attention has been given to how different generations, for example, Gen Y and Gen Z, use these forms online. For instance, Silalahi (2023) found that how Gen Z used slang was determined by fast-changing technology, particularly when they were on popular platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and internet memes, where new slang emerges persistently. On the same note, Jeresano and Carretero (2022) qualitatively reported that Gen Z’s linguistic style was closely tied to short-form video culture, while Gen Y tends to blend long-established abbreviations with newer, trend-driven slang. Notably, in their quantitative study, Vacalares and Cagalawan (2023) found that although Gen Y’s and Gen Z’s familiarity with many internet slang terms, Gen Z was more adept at understanding creative spelling variations. These studies have so far successfully mapped the slang usage patterns; however, the area where a direct comparison of how often each slang type appears in Gen Y and Gen Z speech using both descriptive and inferential statistics was

limited. Even less is known about which slang types are rarely used by either generation in online contexts. Hence, this study addressed these gaps by analysing the frequency of slang use between Gen Y and Gen Z and quantitatively investigating the most significant differences in the perceived use of English slang on social media.

Many studies have demonstrated that both Gen Y and Gen Z had constructive perceptions towards slang on social media (Budiasa et al., 2021; Padohinog et al., 2020; Pongsapan, 2022; Rusfandi, 2020). Exploring the use of slang on Instagram, Rusfandi (2020) found that most participants thought positively of using Instagram as a casual language learning resource. They agreed that they could practice and improve their vocabulary and writing skills through communicating using slang on social media. Similarly, Padohinog et al. (2020) revealed that the use of slang facilitates better communication for faster and easier message interchange. Prayudha and Pradana (2023) corroborated this in their study as the participants felt that slang words have helped them become trendier, making it easier to chat as they only use abbreviations, allowing them to become more comfortable chatting with people who use the same slang. Furthermore, Budiasa et al. (2021) found that slang serves as a mechanism to enrich new vocabulary, reduce the seriousness of conversation, and enhance creativity in communication across various social functions. Thus, slang has helped them become more engaged and more confident in the conversation, according to Jeresano and Carretero (2022).

However, the use of slang that deviates from the English standard can create barriers when interacting with people outside the group or generation. A study by Neshkovska (2020) revealed that many English major students in his research did not agree to include slang in their academic syllabus because it is not a standard language. Another study by Rezeki and Sagala (2019) also presented similar findings. It was found that by overusing slang, the young generation has ignored the standard language, which may lead to low proficiency. Olobia (2024) and González and Chang (2024) address how the normalization of English slang usage can be controversial when communicating with people from different age groups and cultural backgrounds. Miscommunication may occur when this type of English variation is used with people who are not acquainted with the slang.

METHOD

This research used a comparative-causal design to explore Gen Y's and Gen Z's perceptions towards the use of English slang in establishing effective communication on social media, as well as to examine the significant mean difference of their perceptions based on the generations. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires to address the research questions, which explored perceived usage and generational differences in mean and standard deviation values.

The participants were selected using the convenience sampling method. The sampling method was employed because the inclusion criteria included two generations – Gen Y and Gen Z, who were the users of English slang on social media. Only those aged 39 to 43 were included as participants to represent Gen Y, and those aged 23 to 27 represented Generation Z. The restricted age of the participants was to ensure that the age gap is still large between the two generations. Sampling involved a private company in Kuala Lumpur, and the selected sample comprised the users of the chosen social media. The sample size was determined based on the Raosoft sample size calculator. The sampled population was 84 employees of the private company who were aged between 23 and 27 to represent Generation Z and 39 and 43 to represent Gen Y.

The study setting focused on social media, specifically concentrating on Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok. The selection for these social media platforms was based on their popularity and the percentage of users from Gen Y and Gen Z using the platforms in 2024 (Dixon, 2024a; Herd Digital, 2024). The 2024 statistics show that Gen Y and Gen Z spent their time using these four social media platforms.

The research instruments used were an online questionnaire. The three sections in the 21-item questionnaires were demographic information (Section A), types of English slang on social media (Section B with 7 items), and perceptions towards the use of English slang on social media (Section C with 14 items). The study used 5-point Likert scale questions. Section B used the rating from very frequently to never, while Section C used a

rating that ranged from strongly agree to disagree. The questionnaire was adapted from previous research, from Charkova (2007), Padohinog et al. (2020), and Jeresano and Carretero (2022) to address the research objectives.

An ethics approval application was submitted to the Faculty Ethics Review Committee for the purpose of gaining approval to conduct the study and to protect the rights of the respondents, which included anonymity and confidentiality. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted via Gmail, WhatsApp, and Telegram to reach the sampled population. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and correlational analysis to address the research objectives. The study utilised the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis purposes to generate mean scores and standard deviation for the first research objective, and to perform a t-test to examine the mean differences in the use of English slang in communication between Gen Y and Gen Z.

To ensure the questionnaire's validity, face validity was assessed with selected participants to examine their comprehension of the questionnaire items, including the language used in the questions, the format, and readability (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). It was conducted to confirm that the questionnaire format and items were appropriate and unambiguous. The Cronbach alpha value of the 7-item subscale on slang types was .867, and for the 14-item subscale of the perceived use of slang was .868. The results indicated a very high internal consistency for each subscale. The values indicate that the subscales (slang types and perceived use) were measuring the underlying intended construct.

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

Demographic Profiles

The descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic profiles included gender, generation groups, education levels, and their job designations as displayed in Table 1.

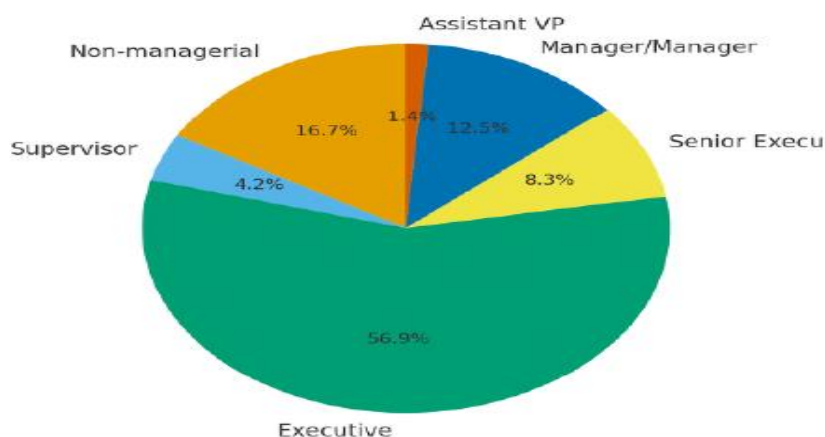
Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profiles in Frequency and Percentages

Demographic Variables	Frequency (N=72)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	29	40.3
Female	43	59.7
Types of Generation		
Gen Y	30	41.7
Gen Z	42	58.3
Age Group		
Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	5	6.9
Diploma	7	9.7
Degree	57	79.2
Master	3	4.2
Job Designation		
Non-managerial	12	15.6
Supervisor	3	4.2
Executive	41	56.9
Senior Executive	6	8.3
Assistant Manager/Manager	37	12.5
Assistant Vice-President	1	1.4

Females accounted for 59.7%, while males represented 40.3% of the total. While 41.7% were Gen Y, aged between 39 and 43, 58.3% were Gen Z, aged between 23 and 27 years old. Moreover, educational level revealed that the majority (79.2%) had a bachelor's degree, followed by 9.7% with a Diploma, 6.9% with a master's degree, and 4.2% with a Malaysian Education Certificate or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM).

Figure 1 shows that more than half were Executives (56.9%), followed by non-managerial staff (15.6%) and Managers (12.5%). Smaller groups include Senior Executives (8.3%), Supervisors (4.2%), and Assistant Vice President (1.4%). This indicates that most respondents work at the Executive level, with fewer in higher managerial roles.

Figure 1 Distribution of Respondents' Job Designations in Percentages



Research Question 1: What is the most frequently used slang type by Gen Y and Gen Z?

The research question addressed the types of slang used by Generations Y and Z. Figure 2 presents a summary of the frequency of slang types used by both generations cumulatively, showing the overall picture of slang type usage and preference across the generations diagrammatically.

Figure 2 Frequency of Types of Slang Usage among Gen Y and Gen Z

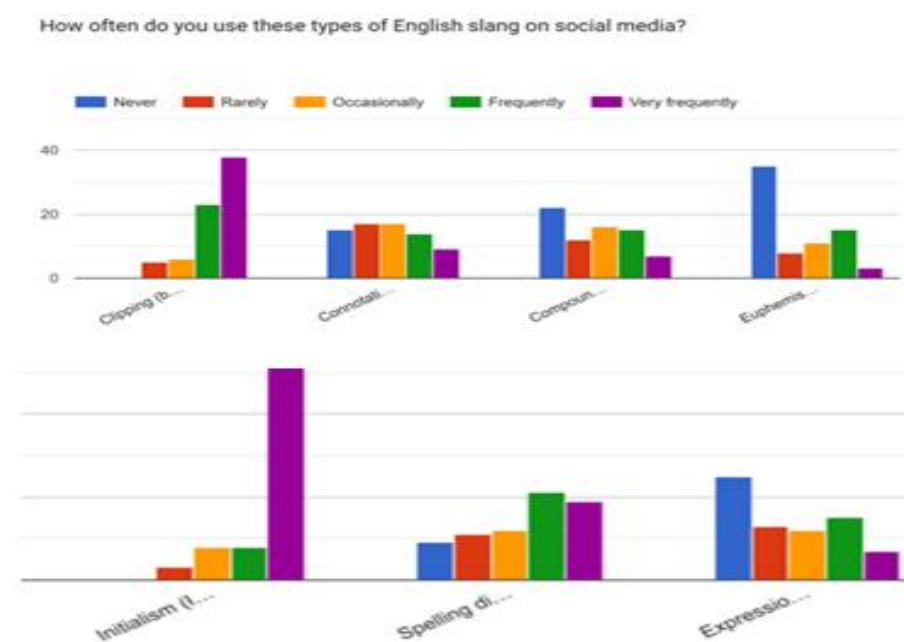


Figure 2 indicates that Clipping and Initialism were the most frequently used slang types in the surveyed sample on social media for communication purposes. At the same time, Euphemism was recorded as a slang

type that was never used on social media. The Connotation type was almost spread out evenly, as respondents rated from never to very frequently, suggesting that this slang type was not a favourable one. Compounding and Expression types had the highest 'Never' rating, with some respondents answering that they rarely and occasionally used them. This indicates that these types were uncommonly used in their online communication.

In the meantime, Table 2 depicts a comparison of generational differences in slang type usage between Gen Y and Gen Z using mean scores. Overall, the results indicated an overlap and a divergence in slang use between generations. The analyses indicated in Figure 2 and Table 2 revealed similar findings.

Table 2 Comparison of Mean Scores of Generational Differences in the Slang Type Usage between Gen Y and Gen Z

Types of Slang		Clipping	Connotation	Compounding	Euphemism	Initialism	Spelling Dist.	Expression
Type	Gen Y	3.64	2.71	2.38	1.95	4.33	3.21	2.33
	Gen Z	3.70	1.97	1.97	1.57	4.30	2.30	1.80
Overall Mean		3.66	2.40	2.21	1.80	4.32	2.83	2.11

From the table, Initialism was the most used slang type by Gen Y and Gen Z. This was observed through a small difference in the mean scores (Gen Y's $M = 4.33$; Gen Z's $M = 4.30$), followed by Clipping which was occasionally used by both generations (Gen Y's $M = 3.67$; Gen Z's $M = 3.70$). Spelling Distortion (Gen Y's $M = 3.21$; Gen Z's $M = 2.30$) recorded a .91 mean difference between Gen Y and Gen Z, demonstrating the strongest generational difference. where Gen Z did not favour its use, but was occasionally used by Gen Y. Interestingly, the Euphemism usage for Gen Y and Gen Z was almost similar, as the means scores for both were 1.97 and 1.57, respectively. This slang type was unlikely to be favoured by them as it was rarely used.

In addition, it was found that Gen Y and Gen X had lower usage in Connotation, Compounding, and Expression slang types, which were within the rarely–occasionally range. This suggests that these slang types were uncommon in their digital communication

Research Question 2: How do Gen Y and Gen Z perceive the use of English slang in communication on social media?

To address the second research question above, the section reports the results of a pooled descriptive analysis of the perceived use of English slang in digital communication using a composite mean and SD values across the generations. Table 3 shows the composite mean scores and SD of 14 items without the generation category since the overall mean scores for Gen Y's and Gen Z's perceived use of slang were calculated when performing an independent t-test and were reported in Table 4.

From the table, Item 6 ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.76$) recorded the highest mean value, followed by Item 12 ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.73$), and this finding revealed that English slang helped improve communication skills and helped fit in the age group and get accepted by peers, respectively. In third place was Item 2 ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.74$), which demonstrated that using slang with people on social media was appropriate. The high mean score of Item 11 ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.78$) indicated that using English slang made them look cool. Item 14 ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.27$) and Item 13 ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.31$) reported the appropriateness of using slang in any context or situations.

Table 3 Summary of Descriptive Analysis on Gen Y's and Gen Z's Perceptions of the use of English slang on social media

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1.	I am interested in English slang because most of my friends are interested.	3.82	0.94
2.	It is appropriate to use slang with people on social media.	4.15	0.74
3.	I am more engaged in communication when using slang on social media.	4.06	0.82
4.	Slang does not create barriers in the communication process in social media.	3.24	0.91
5.	I can engage with people on social media more confidently when using slang.	4.08	0.78
6.	English slang helps me improve my communication skills.	4.24	0.76
7.	English slang helps me improve my vocabulary.	3.81	0.83
8.	English slang helps with my language fluency.	3.74	0.75
9.	English slang helps in improving my spelling.	2.81	1.06
10.	English slang influences my writing style positively.	3.11	0.99
11.	Knowing and using English slang makes me look cool.	4.14	0.78
12.	Knowing and using English slang helps me fit in mv	4.17	0.73
13.	It is inappropriate to use slang in any context, whether it is formal (academic, business, political) or informal (communicating with friends, etc).	4.10	1.31
14.	It is inappropriate to use slang with anybody, regardless of their age, social status or other differences.	4.13	1.27

Items 5 ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.78$) and 3 ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.82$) had similar mean scores, indicating that both respondents agreed they could engage with people more confidently and be more engaged in communication when using slang. Item 1 ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.94$) and Item 7 ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.83$) only have a 0.01 difference in mean score, indicating that respondents were interested in using slang because of their friends, and it also helped them improve their vocabulary, suggesting that English slang could help broaden their lexicons. Items 8 and 4 had mean scores below 4.0 ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.75$; $M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.91$, respectively), showing that the respondents disagreed that English slang helped improve language fluency, but it did not hinder the users from communicating on social media. Items 10 ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.99$) and 9 ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.06$) scored the lowest, indicating that they were either neutral or sceptical about English slang influencing writing style positively, and that they felt that slang was a helpful tool for spelling.

Research Question 3: Is there any significant mean difference in the use of English Slang on social media across the generations?

To address the third research question, a t-test was run to examine the significant mean differences between Gen Y and Generation Z's perceptions on the use of English slang on social media, as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 Analyses of Group Statistics of Independent Samples T-Test

	Generation type	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error Mean
The Use of English Slang	Gen Y	30	3.68	.39202	.07157
	Gen Z	42	3.93	.51313	.07918

The preliminary analyses of group statistics of an independent samples t-test revealed that Gen Z participants ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.51$) scored slightly higher than Gen Y participants ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.39$) on perceptions of English slang use, $t(70) = -2.33$, $p = .023$, $d = 0.55$. However, the difference was minimal (.35), indicating both generations had a similar range of agreement toward the perceived use of slang. To determine whether the mean difference in the perceived use of slang by Gen Y and Gen Z was significant, the subsequent results of the independent samples t-test were presented below in Table 4.

Table 4 Analyses of Group Statistics of Independent Samples T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. Two-Sided
Perceptions of English Slang	Equal variances assumed	6.245	.015	-2.271	70	0.26
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.374	69.641	.020

In Table 4, a Levene's Test significance value of 0.015 signifies the assumption of equal variances was violated ($p < .05$). An independent samples t-test showed that Gen Z respondents ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.51$) scored significantly higher than Gen Y respondents ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.51$) on perceptions of slang use, $t(70) = -2.37$, $p = 0.02$. A p-value < 0.05 can be concluded as 'significantly different' (Boscardin et al., 2024). In other words, there was a significant mean difference in the perceived use of slang between Gen Y and Gen Z. This significant difference suggests that Gen Z perceived slang as more positive and effective for communication compared to Gen Y. This indicates that Gen Z reported significantly higher agreement with the use of English slang than Gen Y, with a moderate effect size that the generational gap in perceptions was meaningful.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed interesting findings of slang types of usage and the perception of slang use. The results confirm earlier observations (Mattiello, 2008; Silalahi, 2023) that initialism and clipping dominate across generations, reflecting efficiency-driven communication norms. The near-identical mean scores for initialism align with Vacalares and Cagalawan's (2023) finding of shared comprehension for abbreviation-based slang. However, the higher spelling distortion usage among Gen Y contrary to claims by Jeresano and Carretero (2022) that Gen Z favoured playful orthography, may indicate a shift toward multimodal expression (GIFs, emojis, short-form video) among Gen Z. These findings contribute to the literature by quantifying both convergence and divergence in slang usage. The result also complemented the frequency analysis in this study: while both generations favoured certain slang types (e.g., initialism, clipping), Gen Z were more positive which may encourage broader and more confident use across contexts. This suggests that attitudes toward slang are not merely a reflection of usage patterns but may actively shape them, reinforcing generational differences in linguistic behaviour.

The findings showed that both Gen Y and Gen Z had positive perceptions of the use of English slang on social media, but Gen Z favoured using slang. Notably, they used slang to connect with their friends to feel included in their age groups. Slang is mainly used by the same age group as a secret code or the 'inside jokes' within the specific community. This corroborates Giles' proposition (1973), which is that people adjust their language to match the group they're talking to. Padohinog et al. (2020) in their study revealed that slang helped build a sense of belonging, even across age groups, provided that there was some effort to understand each other. Furthermore, these findings align with earlier research showing that Gen Z tends to view slang as a natural and effective component of digital communication (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022; Silalahi, 2023). Their higher

scores may reflect greater immersion in online environments where slang is not only common but also functions as a marker of in-group identity and cultural fluency. In contrast, Gen Y's slightly lower agreement could indicate a more selective or context-dependent acceptance of slang, consistent with studies noting Gen Y's tendency to balance informal and formal registers (Vacalares & Cagalawan, 2023).

Next, it was also found that slang contributed to a more relaxed and natural tone in conversations. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that slang enhances conversational ease and informality (Li & Jing, 2018; Lutviana & Mafulah, 2021). Being able to switch between slang and more formal language depending on the situation seemed to help communication flow better (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022). Still, there's awareness that slang can sometimes cause misunderstandings between age groups (Dwivedi & Lewis, 2021) or carry negative or inappropriate meanings (Karimah, 2021; Rezeki & Sagala, 2019). Most agreed that it's best kept for informal settings, maintaining a clear distinction between casual and formal use (Padohinog et al., 2020).

Other research (Hendrajati et al., 2023; Pongsapan, 2022; Rusfandi, 2020) has suggested slang could boost informal fluency and vocabulary, but it was not by everyone as instrumental for language development, as reported by Jeresano and Carretero (2022). The patterns in participants' responses suggest some uncertainty about whether English slang genuinely supports the development of formal writing skills, particularly in areas like style and spelling. This reflects earlier concerns in the literature that while slang can enrich informal expression, it may not always transfer positively to academic or professional contexts (Hendrajati et al., 2023; Vacalares & Cagalawan, 2023).

At the same time, generational differences in attitudes highlight the impact of social and digital environments on language perceptions. Younger participants, who are more immersed in online spaces where slang is common, appeared more open to embracing it as part of their everyday communication. This reinforces the idea that attitudes toward slang are shaped not only by linguistic norms but also by identity, community belonging, and the communicative habits of different age groups (Pedro, 2022; Pongsapan, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This causal-comparative study explored generational differences in slang type usage and the perceived use of English slang on social media, with a special focus on Gen Y and Gen Z. It mainly examined the most frequently used slang types, the perceptions of slang use across generations, and whether meaningful differences exist between the two cohorts. The findings of this study successfully addressed all three research questions, offering clear insights into generational slang usage, perceptions, and differences in online communication.

Descriptive analyses of the types of slang usage revealed that Initialism is the most frequently or commonly used slang type among both Gen Y and Gen Z, while Clipping was moderately used. Spelling Distortion showed the greatest generational divide, with Gen Z showing notably less preference. Euphemism, Connotation, Compounding, and Expression were infrequently used by both groups, suggesting these forms are less relevant in their online interactions. Overall, Gen Y demonstrates broader engagement with nuanced and indirect slang forms, whereas Gen Z leans marginally toward concise, shortened forms. These patterns may reflect differences in digital environments, communication norms, and the linguistic affordances of the platforms each generation uses most.

Descriptive analyses of the perceived use of English slang on social media uncovered several key insights. First, slang is widely endorsed as having communicative and social benefits because it enhances communication skills, helps individuals fit in with their age group, and fosters peer acceptance. Second, slang is deemed appropriate for social media interactions and as a marker of social appeal, boosting users' confidence in using slang across diverse contexts. Thus, slang is not only functional but also socially strategic, contributing to both linguistic effectiveness and identity construction

Inferential analysis of the generational differences in the use of slang revealed that Gen Z participants expressed a more favourable perception of its use than those of Gen Y, even though both generations engage with English slang in social media communication. Hence, it concludes that slang, to Gen Z, serves as a more effective and positive communicative tool compared to Gen Y. It was sufficient to state that there is a generational gap in how slang is perceived and valued in digital contexts. Overall, the study underscores the evolving nature of language in online spaces and highlights the importance of considering generational perspectives when analyzing linguistic trends in social media communication.

These findings carry several implications that highlight the practical applications and relevance of these research findings. The use of English slang could become a valuable tool in boosting engagement and confidence among employees in their social media interactions. Organizations may find that encouraging the use of slang can make digital communications engaging and livelier. Next, communication training programs or workshops incorporating contemporary slang usage should be organized to improve employees' communication skills, vocabulary, and language fluency, ultimately leading to better overall communication within the organization. Furthermore, encouraging the use of slang may help create a more inclusive and cohesive work environment. Employees who feel cool and accepted by their peers when using slang are likely to experience better social integration and teamwork. Organizations may need to develop communication strategies that cater to the preferences of different generations. This would ensure that both younger and older employees feel comfortable and confident in their use of language on social media.

For future investigations, it is suggested to include a wider range of generations to compare, such as Baby Boomers and Generation Alpha. The additional generations may help in exploring a wider generational contrast in English slang perception. Another improvement that can be done for further research is to explore the differences in English slang used by social media users based on specific platform slang. As this study generalizes the English slang used via four platforms, which are Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok, future research could focus on how slang differs across these platforms, as different social media platforms may contain different English slang trends.

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