

GETTING THE HANG OF GEN Z SLANG: CONVO AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING LUNCH BREAK

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z is the youngest generation in the world. These individuals were born between the years 1996 and 2009. They are also known as digital natives because they are the first generation to have grown up with and be accustomed to technological advances. As they interact within their social groups, their language and behavior begin to develop in a manner that is distinct from that of previous generations. These differences occasionally cause communication gaps among other generations. Hence, understanding how Gen Z learners communicate and interact is helpful for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in designing more effective instructional settings. Moreover, it provides insight into their preferences, challenges, and strengths as learners.

This is a descriptive study that used the qualitative method. Discourse analysis was used to determine the common Gen Z slang used by Grade 10-Junior High School students of Tangalan National High School, S.Y. 2022-2023. Student conversations during lunch break were used as the corpora for this study. Meanwhile, observation and audio recording were employed to collect data and examine the meanings and functions of slangs. The study also identified patterns in how slang evolves within peer groups.

This study revealed that Generation Z's slang has undergone specific and multiple morphological processes that reflect its digital culture. It was also determined that although using these slangs helps students speak a language with confidence, it does not guarantee improvements in language fluency, communication skills, or vocabulary. These slangs may hinder effective communication, especially between students and teachers of older generations. However, teachers may utilize these slangs creatively to bridge generational gaps and enhance student engagement.

Keyword: - Gen Z, digital natives, digital culture, slangs, morphological processes

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in human lives because it is a medium of expression through which people communicate. It is subject to change and evolution as it reflects our changing culture and society and allows us to accommodate innovations through people's creativity. As a result of the of innovations and social interactions, language evolves and new words emerge. During the pandemic, many words were officially added to the Oxford Dictionary, including COVID-19, WFH, frontliners, lockdown, and many others which were commonly coined by the current generation. Martini (2015, as cited in Jeresano and Carretero, 2022) stated that generation by generation, pronunciations evolve and new words are borrowed or invented [1].

1.1 Characteristics and Communication Trends of Generation Z

As one of the technological changes in a rapidly developing world, the internet's creation in 1995 led to the birth of a new generation [2], which has been named Generation Z (Gen-Z), with the characteristics of being digital natives, fast decision-makers, and highly connected [3] Sladek and Grabinger (2014) defines Gen Z as those born between 1996 and 2009. The most significant distinction for Gen Zers is that they are the first generation to have grown up with and be accustomed to technological advances [4]. Maghirang (2019) stated that Filipino Gen Zers are characterized as cognizant of the power of technology. They are adept at using smartphones, gadgets, and social media to communicate. They have also come up with their own slang, much of it tied to the social media they have grown up with [5].

1.2 The Role of Gen Z Slang in Bridging and Hindering Intergenerational Communication

As observed by the researcher, there are many unfamiliar or newly coined terms and phrases created by them which are called "Gen Z slang." Despite the advancements, these slangs sometimes unintentionally create a communication barrier when younger generations use slangs during conversations or even during class discussions. Generations outside Gen Z need to ask what these slangs mean to establish understanding.

In response to the growing use of social media slang and the potential language barrier, the current study was conducted to identify the slangs commonly used by Gen Z in informal conversations, become more familiar with Gen Z slang's underlying meanings, and bridge the communication gap between different generations in this institution to facilitate effective communication.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the slangs commonly used by Gen Z?
2. How do these slangs function and what do they mean?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study determined the slangs used by Gen Z in informal situations. It focused mainly on the slangs used by Grade-10 Junior high school students of Tangalan National High School (SY 2022-2023) during lunch break. The respondents of this study are the Grade 10 students who belong to the Generation Z. A qualitative method was used in the study and is descriptive in nature. Qualitative research is intended to deeply explore, understand, and interpret social phenomena within their natural setting [6]. According to Arora and Stoner (2009), by using a qualitative research methodology, researchers want to collect richer information and get a more detailed picture of issues, cases, or events [7]. The students' conversations during lunch breaks were the corpora used. Discourse analysis was used to determine the common Gen Z slangs. Meanwhile, observations and audio recording were the tools utilized to gather the data and investigate the meanings and functions of these slangs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Gen Z Slangs used in an informal setting

It is observed that there are some Gen Z slangs that occurred in students' conversations during lunch break. Each slang was used in different situations or contexts.

Table 1 shows the seven common Gen Z slangs that were used by the students in informal conversation and their functions (see Table 1). The data shows that these slangs are: *OMG*, *tea*, *stan*, *dasurv*, *sana all*, *forda ferson*, and *lodi*. It shows that there are several Gen Z slangs used more in an informal setting due to the influence of social media and digital innovations.

Table -1: Gen Z slang used during lunchbreak and their function

Gen Z slang	Function
OMG (Oh my Gosh/ Oh My God)	to express the feeling of surprise and excitement
tea	a term for 'news', 'scoop' or 'gossip'
stan	a term for obsession over a celebrity or famous individuals
dasurv	something that happened to someone is well-deserved
sana all or sanaol	an indirect way of showing envy
forda ferson	used to tell that someone is into a certain thing
lodi (idol)	to express awe and admiration for someone

The next discussion would be the in-depth analysis of the different Gen Z slangs in terms of their meaning, function, and how they were used in students' conversations.

3.2 Gen Z Slangs and their Function

Transcription conventions

Horizontal sequencing of utterances represents their relative arrangement in time.

Other symbols used:

= latching

[turn onset overlaps previous turn

[] turn is completely contained within another speaker's turn

? rising intonation on utterance

(.) short pause

(indeciph) indecipherable speech

OMG (to express the feeling of surprise and excitement)

OMG stands for Oh my God or Oh my gosh which seems to be one of the slang used by Generation Z in their interactions. It is formed using the initial letters of a set of words – *Oh my God* or *Oh my gosh*. This word is not pronounced as a single word but separately [8]. "*Oh My God*" is often used to indicate surprise, embarrassment, enthusiasm, and contempt in discussion. According to Jeresano and Carretero (2021), the use of initialism suggests that Gen Zers are more comfortable shortening words or phrases to quickly convey the message and to adapt to the fast pace communication, especially online [9].

Consider the context in which the slang is used (see Excerpt 1). In this conversation or context, OMG was used to express the feeling of surprise. As expressed in lines 1 and 2, the students were surprised because their classmate, who had been absent for quite some time, went to class. In the same conversation, as shown in lines 3 and 4, both of the speakers were also astonished by the new look of their classmate as she arrived in class with shorter hair.

EXCERPT 1: to express the feeling of surprise and excitement

- 1 Student A: OMG! Is that Cj? =
 2 Student B: =yeah, when did she come (to class)?
 3 Student A: just now, I think (.) OMG! she's pretty
 4 Student B: [wow, she cut her hair short
 5 Student A: it's cute.

Tea (a term for 'news', 'scoop' or 'gossip')

The term "tea" originates in drag culture, notably black drag culture. When it first appeared in the paper, it might have been spelled T or tea and did not allude to the beverage. John Berendt's nonfiction bestseller *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* contains one of the earliest examples of T in print. In it, he interviews The Lady Chablis, a popular Savannah drag performer, on her dating life, and she reveals that she avoids some men because they are violent when they "find out her T":

"Your T?"

"Yeah, my T. My thing, my business, what's goin' on in my life."

— Lady Chablis quoted in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, John Berendt, 1994

In this interview, Lady Chablis referred to *T* as the "Truth" which means the truth about herself is that she is a transsexual at that moment. It appears that the word may alternatively be spelled "tea," which has a double-edged connotation that may allude to one's own concealed truth or to gossip (another person's concealed truth). Today, the word "tea" can be used without the idiomatic expression 'spill the tea' in the same manner and have the same meaning. According to Nordquist, 2019, lexical borrowing is a process by which a word from one language is adapted for use in another [10]. "Tea" is usually about someone you know, but it may also be about celebrities, random internet scoops, and so on. Khalis and Rifhan (2019) stated that people who are linked via internet possess their own culture and are therefore generating a new form of language [11].

Consider the context in which the slang is used (see Excerpt 2). In this conversation, Student A asks her classmates if they have seen the new post in Facebook about a Korean boyband. As expressed by Student B in line 2, it shows that she is asking for the "tea" which in this case means "news", "scoop", or "gossip" about the said boyband. This was then followed by Student C where the speaker asks Student A to share what she knows about the said topic (Korean boyband) as shown in line 3.

EXCERPT 2: a term for 'news', 'scoop' or 'gossip'

- 1 Student A: have you seen the new facebook post?
 2 Student B: about what? what's the tea?
 3 Student C: share it to us!
 4 Student A: about a (.) new Korean boyband=
 5 Student C: =ooh
 6 Student A: let's stan them, I think they're handsome. (giggles)

Stan (a term for obsession over a celebrity or famous individuals)

The term 'stan' originated as a namesake of an Eminem song, which mainly depicted the story of a violent fan named "Stan"[12]. However, due to the dark nature of the song, the term became a negative description for people who intensely follow and obsess over their idols. According to Lacasa et. al. (2017), this term is a combination of the words 'stalker' and 'fan'[13]. These words were clipped and combined to form a new word. Clipping occurs when a word with more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form [14].

'Stans' can be considered as people who have a positive emotional relationship with something or someone famous, such as a celebrity, through expressing their admiration by recognizing the celebrity's style or creativity within the

framework of popular culture. This slang also follows the word formation process of compounding. Compounding is a way of creating new words by joining two separate words into a single form to describe something new [15].

Take for example the context in which the slang is used (see Excerpt 3). Refer to line 1, as expressed by Student A where she asked if her friends know about the new k-pop boy group. This indicates that the speaker could be a fan or has an idea about the said boy group. As expressed by Student B in line 2, the slang “*stan*” was used in the question where the speaker is asking if Student A has a new k-pop boy band that she is obsessed with or is admiring. Student A confirms that she is “*stans*” the boy group, “*Seventeen*” shown in line 5.

EXCERPT 3: a term for obsession over a celebrity or famous individuals

- 1 Student A: hey, do you know (.) the new boyband now the k-pop (.) I mean the k-pop boygroup?
- 2 Student B: do you have (someone) new that you stan?
- 3 Student A: (indeciph) they’re just so handsome=
- 4 Student B: =who is it? tell us!
- 5 Student A: it’s Seventeen!
- 6 Student B: Oh my (.) I think I saw them (.) on facebook.

Dasurv (something that happened to someone is well-deserved)

This Filipino slang is simply a fancier version of “*deserve*.” It is used to say that something that happened to someone was well-deserved, whether good or terrible. When used positively, it suggests you are happy or pleased with someone. When used negatively, it suggests you're glad that “*karma*” got that individual, or, in Filipino, “*buti nga sayo/sa kanya*.” This simple slang word can alternatively be written “*dasarb*” or “*dasurb*”.

Excerpt 4 shows how the slang word “*dasurv*” was used (see Excerpt 4). In this context, Student A congratulated Student B on a perfect test result. Student B informed Student A that she had thoroughly prepared for it. As demonstrated in line 3, Student A responded with the slang “*dasurv*,” indicating that she is happy for Student B and that Student B deserves a perfect score for studying and doing well in the test.

The slang “*dasurv*” shows that Gen Zers tried to distort the spelling of the original word to express a twist on the word. This implies that they also spell the words as they sound without altering the definition. Nazman et al. (2020 as cited in Jeresano & Carretero, 2021) stated that younger generation distorts the spelling to appear trendy. However, it may have a negative impact on students' language development if they are not completely aware of its correct spelling [16].

EXCERPT 4: something that happened to someone is well-deserved

- 1 Student A: congratulations for getting a perfect (score) earlier
- 2 Student B: I studied (.) very well=
- 3 Student A: = yeah, *dasurv*!
- 4 Student A: thank you.

Sana all or sanaol (indirect way of showing envy)

“*Sana all*” and its distorted form “*sanaol*” are Gen Z slangs in which two terms from different languages are combined to form a new word. “*Sana*” is a Filipino term that indicates wishful thinking, and “*all*” is an English word that literally means “*everyone*.” When both of these words are combined, it becomes a new word. It is considered an indirect way of showing envy or being resentful, or an expression used to wish or hope for an individual's accomplishment or success. It is also commonly understood to mean, “*I'm glad for you, but it would be preferable if all of us had the benefit, luxury, or privilege that you have*.” According to Pontillas et al. (2020), “*sana all*” is an indirect jargon. It illustrates Filipinos' collectivist conduct, in which the welfare of the group at large takes precedence over the benefit of the individual [17].

Consider the context in which the slang is used as an example (see Excerpt 5). In this scenario, Student A displays her brand-new, high-end smartphone to her classmates. “*Sana all*,” as expressed by Student D in line 5, indicates

that the student is envious of her classmate's brand-new phone upon hearing the phone's brand (refer to line 4). In addition, Student D reacted the same when Student A was asked if the phone was paid in full, as mentioned in line 7 which illustrates that "*sana all*" is a slang term that can be used to indirectly express envy.

According to Swain (2020, as cited in Jeresano & Carretero, 2021), Gen Z is viewed as the most innovative generation compared to previous generations [18]. Therefore, it demonstrates the inventiveness of the current generation in developing new words by combining two distinct languages.

EXCERPT 5: indirect way of showing envy or being resentful

- 1 Student A: so, guys I have a new phone
- 2 Student B: OMG!=
- 3 Student C: =no, what unit is that (phone)?
- 4 Student A: Iphone (.) 14!
- 5 Student D: wow! sana all
- 6 Student B: [is that fully paid?] (giggles)
- 7 Student D: sana all

Forda ferson (used to tell that someone is into a certain thing)

Chrishanna Luisa Olavidez Austria, a Tiktok user, created the meme after she shared a video of herself after drinking, and her candor swept the web. Chrissy had used the word in her previous TikTok videos since March 2022, prior to her viral video [19]. According to Lariosa (2022), the slang "*forda*" is shorthand for "*for the*," and "*ferson*" means, "*person*." The phrase basically means that someone is into a certain thing, classifying themselves as that type of person, or the person (or "*ferson*") you are referring to is into something. Even though it may seem third-person, "*the person*" is still the one you are directly talking to [20].

Take for example the context in which the slang is used (see Excerpt 6). In this context, Students A and B are discussing about how someone (a third person) answers the question in their class. As stated by Student B in line 2, "*forda beauty pageant ang ferson*", indicates that the manner the individual answers the question makes her appear to be in a beauty pageant. Furthermore, Student B added, "*forda Q and A ang ferson*," which suggests that the individual is into Q and A (Question and Answer portion), which is also referred to as a category in beauty pageants.

Similar to the slang "*sana all*," the slang "*forda ferson*" can be utilized in numerous contexts. They can be twisted and turned into an infinite number of various configurations, and it is up to the speaker to decide on how to use the term. "*Forda*" is typically one of the few slang terms that speakers can freely mix and use in their sentences.

EXCERPT 6: used to tell that someone is into a certain thing

- 1 Student A: did you hear her answer to the question?
- 2 Student B: yes (.)=forda beauty pageant ang ferson!
- 3 Student A: true (.) forda Q and A ang ferson.

Lodi (to express awe and admiration for someone)

The term "*lodi*" is a reversed form of the word "*idol*." This reversed form only recently resurfaced in the 1960s [21]. *Lodi* is mostly used to refer to entertainment celebrities such as singers and actors, although this is now more often used to refer to a familiar person who just did something impressive. The Tagalog language, "*binaliktad*" points out that speakers use this speech disguise in daytime conversations for amusement, as a test of their ability to avoid or obscure direct statements, especially in the presence of eavesdropping kinsmen. Nowadays, Tagalog slang from the 1960s is making a comeback and being popularized by the Filipino Gen Zs through social media. It only explains that Gen Zers were adoptive of the trend before and are even popularizing it today [9].

Consider the context in which the slang is used (see Excerpt 7). In this dialogue, Students A and B ask Student C why she is good at playing badminton. As indicated in line 2 when the speaker used the slang term "*lodi*" during their conversation, Student B expressed her admiration for Student C and referred her as an "*idol*" in the game due to her badminton skills. In this context, "*lodi*" can be used as an adjective to describe an outstanding individual.

EXCERPT 7: to express awe and admiration for someone

- 1 Student A: why are you so good at (playing) badminton?
- 2 Student B: yeah, you're a lodi.
- 3 Student C: I was taught by my friend.
- 4 Student A: teach us too
- 5 Student B: [teach us too]
- 6 Student A: yeah, sure.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Slang is widely used, particularly among Generation Z students. These slang phrases and words have also become a part of their identity, reflecting the culture, technology, and environment in which they have grown up. The following ten slangs were discovered to be regularly used in this study: *OMG, tea, stan, dasurv, sana all, forda ferson, and lodi*. Furthermore, it was discovered that these Gen Z slangs have undergone numerous morphological processes including initialism, spelling distortion, compounding, fancy formation, clipping, reversed form, borrowing, and multiple processes.

In addition, these Gen Z slangs indicated the present generation's digital culture, which involves a high rate of typing speed or the capacity to express things quickly, coining new terms, and changing word meanings to demonstrate that they are part of a certain group or to pioneer new trends. Although using Gen Z slangs help students speak a language confidently, it does not ensure that it improves language fluency and communication skills. Even if it does not create barriers amongst students or peers of their age, it does impede efficient communication between students and teachers particularly those born in prior generations. Hence, it is recommended that these slangs be utilized to get a better grasp of the current generation's behavior and culture. Additionally, teachers may use these Gen Z slangs to pique students' interest in their classes, but as educators, they must establish and define parameters for their use, especially in the classroom.

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