

EXAMINING THE MEANING OF GEN ALPHA SLANG: A PRAGMATIC REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The use of Gen Alpha slang on social media is feared to have an impact on formal contexts. As a result, previous generations may not understand the meaning of these slang expressions. As a consequence, the use of good and correct Indonesian language in formal contexts may be neglected. This research aims to analyze the meaning and purpose behind the use of Gen Alpha slang words on social media, and to increase the understanding of the meaning of Gen Alpha slang in social media interaction and communication. The research data was collected from social media platforms such as Instagram, X, and TikTok. The method used is content analysis with a qualitative approach. The research object is Gen Alpha slang words, while the subject is social media users who use these slang words in comments or posts. Of the 15 purposes of using slang that has been identified, 6 dominant purposes were found in this research, with sarcasm being the most common purpose. The use of slang out of context can be a source of miscommunication and misperception among users.

Keywords : Slang, Alpha Generation, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Language is a variety of sounds or noises produced by living creatures, especially humans, which contain specific meanings and intentions to convey information or to express oneself to an individual or group. A communication system that uses symbols such as words or signs is called language, which functions to convey meaning between individuals or groups. Language is vital for interaction between people, and it also facilitates the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions (Purba & Sidebang, 2023). Over time, language has undergone rapid development. Language is dynamic; it will continue to produce variations created by each generation. Starting with the most popular generations, namely Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha, which have given rise to new vocabulary in the realm of social media communication.

The emergence of a generation born in the digital era, where technology developed rapidly between 2010 and 2025, has dominated the role and existence of language, especially Indonesian, in everyday use. This generation is known as Generation Alpha, defined as individuals born between 2010 and 2025 who were born in an era where technology and social media play a dominant role in human development and everyday life. Children of this generation are described as a generation that can creatively produce unique characteristics, especially in language communication, in line with the times. Currently, the language used can

be categorized as acronym vocabulary, pun vocabulary, and term vocabulary (McCrindle, in Cindana & Sutarini, 2022). According to (Tasyarasita, et al., 2023), new slang vocabulary is the result of sound and alphabet games that can be created through expansion, condensation, and transposition of sounds. Slang vocabulary is commonly used not only in verbal communication but also in written communication on social media, such as Instagram, X, and TikTok.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, X, and TikTok are the most influential means of disseminating information. Features such as comment sections and posts are used by various generations, especially Generation Alpha. Users of these three social media platforms can freely create and upload videos, photos, and even messages to other users of the same social media platform. This is what makes the use of slang on social media so influential, as social media has become a way of life and a necessity for communication and information dissemination for the general public. This, of course, affects many people besides young people who want to appear “trendy.” According to (Susilawati & Salsabila, 2024), the emergence of slang poses a challenge in communicating with previous generations. As a result, there is concern that the use of Alpha generation slang will spill over into formal contexts, so that other generations will not understand the context of Alpha generation slang and the proper use of Indonesian in formal contexts.

The findings of Alpha generation slang originated from trends that developed on social media, memes, new terms used by internet streamers, online games, and interactions within specific online communities (Hariadi, 2024). The use of Alpha generation slang will spread easily because the current generation has been facilitated by gadgets or other electronic devices that support this from an early age. This causes all information, especially new languages or terms, to spread quickly.

Based on finds of Alpha slang from various sources, one example comes from social media, namely “skibidi.” The word ‘skibidi’ is an onomatopoeia from the lyrics of the song “give it to me, give it to me,” which is sped up and sounds like “skibidi.” Then, an animator named Alexey Gerasimov created an animation of a man's head coming out of a toilet bowl and lip-syncing to the remix of “Dom Dom Yes Yes” by Biser King and “Give It To Me” by Timbaland (Rahmia, 2024).

The slang term “Fanum tax” originated from a streamer named Fanum. Fanum often demanded food from his friends (forcing them) to share their food with him. Therefore, his fellow streamer named Kai Cenat popularized the term “Fanum tax” when Fanum began his actions (Abdulhakim, 2024). Additionally, Alpha generation slang spread rapidly due to the online games widely used by the Alpha generation, namely Minecraft and Roblox, and many other Alpha generation slang terms began to emerge from these online games.

The process of language development can be considered a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it indicates that the younger generation have the ability to creatively process language or vocabulary, which provides space for self-expression and enriches communication variety. Furthermore, it shows that they can quickly adapt to new circumstances. Conversely, this phenomenon can have negative impacts on the proper and correct usage of Indonesian. The increase in new vocabulary and languages can lead to the displacement of proper and correct

Indonesian. Furthermore, the use of slang in a context where it is not fully comprehensible or carelessness can result in a misinterpretation of the intended meaning.

The development of slang usage has led to a decrease in the knowledge of proper Indonesian vocabulary. This statement is supported by research findings from Bintarawati et al. (2023), which state that proper Indonesian usage is gradually being replaced by slang. Research by (Anggini et al., 2022) lends further support to this condition, as the use of slang can contribute to the extinction or death of standard Indonesian language, a language that is no longer actively spoken. Furthermore, as the modern era continues to evolve, generational shifts are inevitable, resulting in the emergence of numerous new languages that reflect the creativity and characteristics inherent to their generation. This phenomenon has contributed to the increasing acceptance and use of slang in daily life, particularly among younger generations who are more active in using social media.

According to (Okma, 2023), research on slang is important as a learning tool related to slang that affects the existence of proper and correct Indonesian. Therefore, the aim of this research is twofold: first, to analyze the meaning and purpose of the context of Alpha generation slang vocabulary used by social media users. Second, to improve understanding of the meaning of Alpha generation slang in interacting and conveying messages on social media. The use of standard Indonesian language rules is important in facilitating clear communication and ensuring effective communication. This will facilitate understanding of the slang vocabulary employed by the Alpha generation, which is frequently utilized in today's social media communications. Conversely, the inability of the younger generation to differentiate between formal and informal language may result in an expanded communication gap. Therefore, it is important to identify the optimal balance between linguistic creativity and efforts to preserve the proper and correct Indonesian language.

Research on slang has been extensively conducted, as evidenced by the research by (Budiasa et al., 2021) which focused on slang language in social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and YouTube. Additionally, (Zahra et al., 2024) also conducted similar research on slang language variations on Twitter (now X) among Generation Z. The research conducted by (Zahra et al., 2024) focused on Generation Z slang on Twitter (now X), however, in this research the subjects were expanded to include Instagram and TikTok, and the object was Alpha generation slang.

Furthermore, previous research on the purpose of slang use on social media has been conducted by (Fitri, 2023) and found that slang on social media is widely used for various purposes, namely as a form of self-expression to be more relevant and feel up-to-date in using language, as well as to build a more attractive image in front of the audience. Based on relevant studies, this research provides new insights into analyzing the meaning and purpose of using Alpha generation slang as the object of research and the subject of research in the form of comments or posts on Instagram, X, and TikTok social media. The subject matter of this research is noteworthy due to the absence of prior studies addressing the subjects and objects discussed in this research. Specifically, the research explores the meaning and purpose of using Alpha generation slang.

The data obtained is primary data in the form of direct observations through several social media platforms, i.e., Instagram, X, and TikTok as research subjects, these platforms can

provide authentic data in the form of posts or video descriptions containing Alpha slang or comments expressed by social media users containing at least one Alpha slang. The specific criteria for selecting data from the targeted social media are as follows: (a) The following data were retrieved from Instagram comments containing Alpha slang, (b) The following data were retrieved from X tweets containing Alpha slang, (c) The following data were collected from TikTok comments appearing in posts containing Alpha slang. All data collected for analysis is authentic text from the speaker, not manipulated or fabricated, because the authenticity of sources on social media is crucial to ensure that this analysis reflects the actual use of slang in everyday life.

The secondary data utilized in this research were obtained from multiple relevant sources, including selected academic journal articles published between 2021 until 2024, webpages, and references from Eric Partridge's book published in 1950. The journal articles utilized in this research offer valuable insights into the use of slang, particularly in the context of social media. Other journal articles discuss the slang of the previous generation, specifically Generation Z. In addition to journal articles, several webpages are referenced in this research that discuss the origins of Alpha generation slang. Finally, a book by Eric Partridge entitled *Slang To-Day and Yesterday* discusses the purpose and function of slang from a historical and sociolinguistic perspective, this book was initially published in 1950 and served as the primary theoretical foundation for the present research.

In this research, the meaning of Alpha generation slang is identified based on Partridge's 1950 theory, which focuses on the meaning and context behind the use of slang that encourages people to use slang (Budiasa et al., 2021). This theoretical framework is employed to examine the purpose of Alpha generation slang on social media platforms such as Instagram, X, and TikTok. Partridge has identified 15 primary functions of slang, which he has outlined as follows:

1. Slang for jokes
2. Slang based on the creativity of the user
3. Slang to differentiate oneself from others
4. Slang to embellish language
5. Slang to attract attention
6. Slang for superiority
7. Slang to enrich language
8. Slang for concise and concrete language
9. Slang to soften words
10. Slang for communication across social classes
11. Slang for familiarity
12. Slang for negativity/sarcasm
13. Slang to show characteristics
14. Slang to keep something secret
15. Slang for recognition or membership.

RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing the meanings of gen Alpha slang terms, there are several limitations or scope established in this research, namely the type of research conducted using linguistic theories that examine meaning. The research method used was content analysis with a qualitative approach. In addition, this research examines gen Alpha slang as an object, while the subjects were limited to social media users who posted and commented using at least one gen Alpha slang on Instagram, X, or TikTok platform. The primary instrument in this research was the researcher, who acted as the main participant in observing and experiencing the phenomenon directly as a source of information and data collection. The supporting instruments included a mobile phone or other electronic devices used to collect research data.

The choice of content analysis method with a qualitative approach in this research was based on the need to examine in detail how gen Alpha slang has developed on social media. This method helps to identify the patterns and trends contained in each slang word or expression without altering or interpreting their original meanings. A qualitative approach is more appropriately used because it can explore deeper context and nuances that are often not captured in a quantitative analysis. In addition, through direct observation of data collected from platforms such as Instagram, X and TikTok, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how slang is used in the daily lives of Gen Alpha, as well as how its meanings evolve over time.

The research procedures were carried out through direct observation on several social media platforms such as Instagram, X and TikTok which served as the subjects of the research and provided authentic data in the form of posts or comments made by social media users. The observed data were then identified and classified according to patterns of meaning and utterance context and then compared with the corresponding meanings in proper and standard Indonesian. The data were presented in tabular form to facilitate comparison between Gen Alpha slang terms and their Indonesian equivalents. After all stages of the method were completed, the data analysis process continued, leading to the discussion and conclusions of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language is flexible and dynamic shaped by various contexts and differences in interpretation. Along with the times, slang emerges as a form of language variation. Slang is an informal language that reflects cultural influences and communication styles, and may be used by groups or individuals to express themselves, whether in spoken interaction or in written exchanges on social media. Below are the data findings and the discussion on the use of slang on social media:

Table 1. Analysis of Gen Alpha Slang on media X

Slang	Meaning	Standard Language	Utterance Context
Rizz	Charismatic	Something that has appeal/charisma.	Benar benar laki-laki full of <i>rizz</i> . (Truly a man full of rizz)
Alpha	Leader	Someone who is dominant, powerful, or assertive in a group.	Auranya <i>Alpha</i> woman banget Karina. (Her aura is really Alpha woman, Karina)

Fanum tax	Taking without permission	Refers to the action of taking without asking permission first.	Semoga elit elit itu kena <i>fanum tax</i> . (Hopefully those elites get hit with fanum tax)
Looks maxing	Appearing attractive	Someone who attracts attention through maximal outer appearance.	Usahakan <i>looksmaxxing</i> itu 2024. (Try to do looksmaxxing in 2024)
Big L	Big loss/failure	Loss from something desired.	Stream Speed di jogja itu <i>Big L</i> . (The Speed's stream in Jogja was Big L)

In the research on Gen Alpha slang on social media X, three purposes of using Gen Alpha slang were found along with their contextual meanings for: (a) Differentiating from others: (1) ‘Rizz’ which means that the ‘man’ has super charisma, different from other men. (2) ‘Alpha’ means leader, functioning to inform that ‘Karina’ has a strong female leadership aura. (b) Enriching language: ‘Looksmaxxing’ means expressing something that looks attractive because the sentence presentation has a positive connotation and includes motivation for self-development. (c) Sarcasm: (1) ‘Fanum tax’, means an action of taking a small part of something without permission, expected to befall the elite. (2) ‘Big L’ means that there is a loss/chaos that occurred in Jogja.

Social media X is a platform that can be used for discussions, sharing information, ideas, short posts, aimed at reaching audiences. On social media X, users can freely express utterances through uploads and comments. Therefore, users often use Gen Alpha slang to express themselves through communication and comment interactions in uploads, with a dominance of purposes to convey sarcasm creatively and differentiate from others.

Tabel 2. Analisis Slang Gen Alpha Media Instagram

Slang	Makna	Bahasa Baku	Konteks Tuturan
Sigma	Cool/awesome	The most cool/awesome person among others.	Pria <i>sigma</i> tidak akan mengaku seorang <i>sigma</i> . (Sigma man won't admit himself as sigma)
Big W	Winning/Succeed	Winning something that will be achieved.	<i>Big W</i> untuk kemenangan bola malam ini. (Big W for tonight's football winner)
Brainrot	Useless	Referring to obsession over things that have no value or education in it.	Indonesia <i>Brainrot</i> 2045.
Minus aura	Negative energy	Referring to a person who made a mistake	<i>Minus Aura</i> -5000.
Ohio	Unusual	When something unusual happened.	Bocil <i>Ohio</i> . (Ohio kids)

On social media Instagram, three types of purposes for Gen Alpha slang were found along with their contextual meanings: (a) Superiority: (1) 'Sigma' is used to describe a cool man who doesn't like to brag. (2) 'Big W' means that there is a victory in the soccer match that occurred. (b) Sarcasm: (1) 'Brainrot' means sarcastically referring to Indonesian society being obsessed with things that have no important value. (2) 'Minus aura' means sarcastically referring to the appeal or aura of someone who has made a mistake or chaos, thus bringing excessive bad energy. (c) Joke: 'Ohio' means to label (as a joke) the activities of a kid (little boy) who is always involved in weird, absurd, and illogical actions.

Social media Instagram has various functions, such as sharing photo and video uploads, interacting with other users through exchanging messages, liking features in an upload, and comments. In addition, Instagram can also be a place to express life. Therefore, unlike social media X, Instagram users tend to dominantly use Gen Alpha slang with the purpose of superiority to brag or give praise about something and as sarcasm to sarcastically criticize something through upload comments.

Tabel 3. Analisis Slang Gen Alpha Media TikTok

Slang	Makna	Bahasa Baku	Konteks Tuturan
Skibidi	Bad/terrible	Something/someone that bad/terrible.	Hatiku berubah jadi <i>skibidi</i> . (My heart changed into skibidi)
Mewing	Slim face	Activities for a sharper jawline.	Menuju Indonesia <i>mewing</i> . (Into Indonesia mewing)
Yapping	Chatter	Talkative person.	Raja <i>yapping</i> . (King of yap)
Gyatt damn	God Damn It	Something that unexpected or beyond reason happened.	<i>Gyatt damnn!</i>
Mog	More classy/superior	Feeling confident and comparing one's attractiveness to others.	Mamah aku <i>mogger</i> . (Mom I'm a mogger)

On social media TikTok, four purposes of using Gen Alpha slang were found along with their contextual meanings: (a) Joke: 'Skibidi' has the meaning of expressing someone's feelings when they are sad. (b) Sarcasm, namely: (1) 'Yapping' has the meaning in this context uttered by someone when there is someone who talks too much. (2) 'Mewing' has the meaning of expressing an expression to silence the interlocutor. (c) Attention-grabber: 'Gyatt damn' has the meaning of showing something that happens until it makes one amazed or shocked. (d) Superiority: 'Mog' has the meaning of showing someone's self-confidence and comparing their appeal with others.

Social media TikTok has various functions, including creating and uploading videos, interacting with other users by exchanging messages, like and comment features in an upload, sharing videos, watching videos, information media, and developing creativity. Similar to users on social media X, users on social media TikTok also use Gen Alpha slang as creative communication, and what becomes the dominance of slang language on this platform is commonly used with the purpose of sarcasm through upload comments intended to sarcastically criticize someone about something. In this way, TikTok can be assessed not only

as an entertainment platform, but also as a place to express opinions, criticisms, or social views on certain issues.

Based on research findings, a total of 15 slang terms were identified, each serving a purpose within its context use. The predominant function identified in the findings was sarcasm, with 6 slang terms serving this purpose. It shows that users of social media such as Instagram, X, and TikTok frequently use gen Alpha slang as a medium for expressing sarcasm toward certain groups or individuals in relation to a particular issue. Research on slang has been conducted by previous scholars, such as (Fitri, 2023) who examined the use of slang on social media. The researcher found that slang serves as an expression, enriches vocabulary and for enhancing social presence. Meanwhile, in this research, it was found that Gen Alpha slang is frequently used on social media with the primary purpose of delivering sarcasm.

In addition, (Budiasa, et al., 2021) conducted research on the use of slang on social media and found that users frequently used slang on social media depending on the context such as humor, differentiate oneself from others, enrich language, familiarity, embellish language and other purpose such as sarcasm, soften words, communication across social classes, superiority, show characteristics, and recognition. In contrast, this research found that gen Alpha slang that is frequently used on social media is dominated by the purpose of sarcasm. It proves that use of slang on social media will be different depending on the utterance context and its intended purpose. It also shows how slang reflects the social and cultural issue among social media users, with each generation tends to have their own unique characteristics in its usage.

This variation is influenced by various social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and X, which have their own communication cultures. Thus, slang serves as a means of communication and a tool for self-expression and the formation of social identity that continues to evolve over time.

The research of slang use in social media is not new. Previous research has examined related topics, like (Sulaeman, 2019) research that found that the slang used by millennials in social media often goes against linguistic ethics in the general guidelines for using Indonesian. However, this research found that the slang language that is used in social media is meant to be sarcastic.

Based on its existence, slang is frequently regarded as a phenomenon that reflects the social dynamics, group identity, and the rise of cultural change. Slang is also shaped by adaptation of local linguistics elements, foreign language, and creative innovation that reflects popular culture trends. Therefore, slang is associated with language and cultural social dynamics in formal environment communication. The function of slang as sarcasm has advantages, such as being used to critique individuals or groups indirectly and reducing tension when delivering criticism. However, it is important to consider the context and interlocutor, because improper use of slang can lead to misunderstanding, complicate communication or be perceived as impolite in several situations, potentially causing conflict due to differences in perceived meaning.

The use of slang in social media could create a gap between various age groups or generations, because not everyone has the same understanding towards the meaning of slang used. Therefore, there needs to be greater awareness of the importance of using language wisely, especially on social media, because social media is easily accessible to all groups and can reach

a wide variety of audiences. According to (Azizah et al., 2021), social media itself is one of the main platforms contributing to the presence of slang in everyday life.

Thus, it cannot be denied that the slang use is replacing the role of proper and correct Indonesian language in communicating in social media. If slang language is used continuously, it can lead to a change in the proper and correct use of Indonesian. This can result in differences in perception among individuals who are unfamiliar with the meaning and purpose of using Alpha slang. Over time, there will be a shift in the Indonesian language, as well as in the meaning and context of speech, which could result in the extinction of the language. The solution to the problems caused by the use of slang is to promote the use of proper and correct Indonesian by sharing and creating educational content on social media. In addition, the use of Alpha slang in formal environments should be minimized and adjusted to the context in which Alpha slang can be used.

CONCLUSION

According to a final analysis with 15 slang vocabulary that are widely used to convey messages in social media such as Instagram, X, and Tiktok, six main functions were found in this research. There are 6 slang terms that were identified as serving a sarcastic function, 2 slang terms were used to differentiate from others, 1 slang terms to attract attention, 2 slang terms for humor, 3 slang terms to express superiority, and 1 slang terms served to enrich language. This indicates that the majority of Gen Alpha slang functions to deliver sarcastic utterances. Although the use of slang on social media is unrestricted, attention must be paid to the context and communicative purpose of the slang itself. This is to ensure that its meaning does not lead to misinterpretation, especially when used in formal contexts or in communication with generations who are unfamiliar with the meanings of Gen Alpha slang or with the appropriate and standardized use of Indonesian in formal settings.

There are two research recommendations that are expected to be carried out in future studies that focus on the same object, gen Alpha slang. First, due to limited research on the meanings of gen Alpha slang, especially when comparing it with the slang of other or previous generations, such as Generation Z, Millennials, and so on. Furthermore, it may also use other and different theories from Eric Partridge's theory, which explains the purposes of slang usage. Second, similar research on the use of gen Alpha slang by adding further steps in research methodology or employing different research methods, such as interviews to obtain information directly or distributing questionnaires to collect data regarding slang usage.

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