

## LINGUACULTURAL ANALYSES OF ENGLISH SLANG

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**Abstract.** This research examines the intersection of language and culture in modern English slang based on linguacultural approaches. The research presented in this article analyzes the sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions of slang terms that became popular in the 2010s and 2020s, especially through online platforms and small subcultural groups, and explores how slang encodes identity, community, and other meanings. By selecting and studying six modern slang words from contemporary English, it proves that informal language units are interpreted not only as linguistic units but also as cultural symbols

**Key words:** *Slang, linguacultural, sociolinguistic patterns, offensive, identity*

### Introduction

Slang has long functioned as a dynamic component of informal language, reflecting cultural shifts and social identities. According to Merriam Webster dictionary slang is a) a type of language peculiar to a particular group such as argot or jargon sense; b) an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced or facetious figured of speech [4]. In a number of other explanatory dictionaries, we can also find information that the term slang is the same phenomenon as jargon. However, linguist Elise Matiello does not agree with this opinion. She says: “Slang is not jargon, a widely used term referring to the specialized vocabulary and phraseology of a set of people sharing a trade or profession. Nevertheless, slang may be a choice within jargon. For instance, musicians employ specific slang terms to refer to different music styles (*e.g. funk, grunge, handbag, hardcore, house, jazz, jungle, ragga, techno, etc.*), doctors use medicine slang terms to describe the diseases or physical conditions of their patients (*e.g. O sign orig. and chiefly U.S. ‘the open mouth of a patient who is in a coma, dying, or dead’*) [1, 36]. While slang has been analyzed from semantic and social perspectives, there is less focus on its linguacultural implications in the digital age.

The objective of this article is to analyze how selected modern English slang terms function linguistically and culturally, using a linguacultural and sociolinguistic lens. Understanding slang through a linguacultural lens enriches our grasp of language change, identity, and online discourse.

Research Questions:

1. How do selected slang terms function as tools of cultural expression and identity construction?

2. What are the sociolinguistic and pragmatic features of these terms?

### Methods

In this article, the following methodological tools were used for the linguocultural study of slang language units: Six widely used English slang terms were selected based on their frequency and cultural prominence between 2019–2024. Sources include social media platforms (TikTok, Twitter), linguistic corpora and online dictionaries (Urban Dictionary). The study employs qualitative discourse analysis and linguacultural analysis informed by: Sociolinguistic theories, pragmatic analysis and cultural semiotics. The terms were chosen based on semantic uniqueness, popularity across platforms, and cultural resonance.

### Results

Each term is analyzed for linguistic structure, meaning, sociocultural context, and pragmatic function. We will begin with the slang word “to slay” in English. The word “*slay*” has undergone a dramatic transformation in English, evolving from a literal term for killing to a vibrant slang expression of excellence, confidence, and style. This analysis explores its linguistic evolution, cultural significance and sociolinguistic impact in modern discourse. Its linguistic form is verb. It derives from African American Vernacular English (AAVE). This slang word’s linguacultural function is to convey confidence and celebration of identity, often within marginalized communities.

Our next slang word is “no cap”. The use of the phrase “no cap” is meant to convey authenticity and truth [5]. Contextual usage is assertion of truthfulness. Cultural peculiarity of this word is associated with hip-hop and AAVE, now widely used online. Its function is to enhance authenticity in digital interactions.

The third example is “based”. It is used when you agree with something; or when you want to recognize someone for being themselves, *i.e. courageous and unique or not caring what others think*. Especially common in online political slang [5]. Semantic evolution is seen from the fact that it came from “drug-based” to “unapologetically true”. This slang word is often used to express controversial or confident statements without apology. Its function to signal ideological stance and detachment from “mainstream” narratives.

The fourth slang word is “*Sus*”. This word gives the impression that something is questionable or dishonest [5]. It is the abbreviation of “suspicious”. It became well-known through video game called *Among Us*. *E.g.*: “He’s acting sus.”. It suggests untrustworthiness, often humorously.

The fifth example is “*Rizz*”. It means Charisma, flirtation ability. This Slang word was innovated and spread on TikTok. Sociocultural Relevance of this slang is tied to youth dating culture and male performance of charm.

The last slang word is “*I’m dead*”. It is in the form of hyperbolic phrase. This slang is widely used in an extreme laughter or shocking situations. Its function to exaggerate emotional reaction; frequently used online with emojis.

One consequence for language has been the fairly rapid spread of innovation. Some changes, for example, new slang words, are ephemeral. Others, like accent change, produce more lasting effects. In England the old regional dialects have been much affected [2, 216]. This perspective connects slang to broader sociolinguistic patterns - language innovation often reflects social changes and power dynamics. Some linguistic changes are superficial and fleeting, while others represent deeper shifts in how communities identify themselves and communicate.

### **Discussion**

These slang terms illustrate how modern speakers embed cultural values and social signals into concise expressions. Language here is both indexical and performative, reinforcing group identities. Social media accelerates both the lifespan and reach of slang, making it a transnational phenomenon. Slang functions as an in-group marker. Users can affirm cultural belonging or create distinction. For example, “based” might mark alignment with counter-mainstream ideologies. Many slang terms are context-sensitive, ironic, or polysemous—requiring shared cultural knowledge to decode.

Offensiveness: as a consequence of the previous property, slang may be offensive. Many slang derogatory words characterizing certain groups of people on the basis of negative stereotypes are inherently offensive [1, 52]. This perspective connects to broader discussions about language as a tool for both inclusion and exclusion. Slang can create in-group solidarity but sometimes at the expense of out-groups. The offensive terms you mentioned often serve to dehumanize their targets (comparing women to animals) or reduce people to single characteristics. The evolution of these terms is also interesting - some slang terms that were once widely acceptable have become recognized as harmful, showing how language norms shift alongside social attitudes. Some previously derogatory terms have even been reclaimed by the communities they were used against, though this reclamation is complex and contested. Styles of this type in English are for the most part characterized by vocabulary differences (tired as opposed to fatigued; trip as opposed to journey) but also, as the last pair of sentences shows, by syntactic differences - the passive voice is more frequent in formal styles in English. Vocabulary which is at the extremely informal end of the continuum is known as slang. For example, we could make the second sentence even more informal by substituting slang words such as bushed or whacked for tired [3, 83]. The point about slang occupying the "extremely informal end" of this continuum is spot-on. Slang terms like "bushed" or "whacked" for "tired" represent language at its most casual and often most creative. These terms tend to be more expressive and emotionally charged than their neutral counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

Modern English slang, when analyzed through a linguacultural lens, offers insight into how language reflects and shapes sociocultural identities. The

examined terms demonstrate the interwoven nature of language innovation, identity construction, and digital culture. As slang continues to evolve rapidly, especially via online media, ongoing linguistic attention is necessary to understand its broader implications.

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