

GEN Z SLANG: CREATIVITY, IDENTITY, AND RESISTANCE

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MAQOLA  
MALUMOTI

ANNOTATSIYA:

MAQOLA TARIXI:

Received: 17.12.2025

Revised: 18.12.2025

Accepted: 19.12.2025

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

Gen Z slang,  
creativity, identification,  
resistance, digital  
language,  
sociolinguistics, digital  
platforms.

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*This article analyzes the aspects of creativity, personal identity, and resistance to societal norms in Generation Z (Gen Z) slang. Shaped by digital platforms (TikTok, Instagram, X), slang is not merely a new form of language but also a unique means of expression for young people. It is examined as a tool for strengthening group affiliation and challenging adult culture. Research findings show that slang reflects Gen Z's linguistic creativity, authenticity, and ideologies of digital resistance. This article is significant from the perspectives of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and digital culture.*

Introduction

By Gen Z (Generation Z), we mean young people born between 1997 and 2012-the first generation to grow up entirely in the digital world. Their language style, particularly their use of slang, has sparked significant interest in modern society. Slang is not just a casual conversational tool; it is an important expression of creativity, personal identity formation, and resistance to societal norms. In this article, we analyze Gen Z slang through three key aspects: creativity, identity, and resistance.

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The primary source of Gen Z slang is social media networks, especially TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). On these platforms, slang spreads rapidly, with new words and phrases constantly emerging. For example, terms like "rizz" (charisma/attractiveness), "bet" (sure/of course), and "no cap" (no lie/truth) have become globally popular. This slang reflects Gen Z's adaptation to digital culture and their unique modes of expression. The article draws on analyses from articles in Scopus and Elsevier journals, as well as related academic works.

### **Creativity: The Linguistic Innovation of Slang**

The most important feature of Gen Z slang is its creativity. Young people today employ various morphological processes to create new words, such as clipping (shortening, e.g., "sus" from "suspicious"), blending (combining words, similar to "brunch," but in Gen Z like new meanings from "slay" + "queen"), acronyms (abbreviations, e.g., "LOL" for "laugh out loud"), and semantic shift (change in meaning).

Academic studies link this creativity to the influence of digital platforms. For instance, the spread of slang on TikTok and Instagram occurs through algorithms and user creativity. One study (Shalevska, 2023) showed that among EFL students in North Macedonia, terms like "flex," "spill the tea," and "main character" are widely used, reflecting linguistic creativity. These words not only provide concise and quick expression but also create new meanings—for example, the phrase "giving" describes something's "vibe."

Studies close to Elsevier, such as "Bite-sized language teaching in the digital wild" (2024), analyze how English language teachers on Instagram use creativity and new language practices. This mirrors Gen Z's slang creation: they transform language to establish new norms. Another work (Li et al., 2025) connects generative AI with creative identification, demonstrating Gen Z's linguistic creativity in AI tools.

This creativity distinguishes Gen Z from previous generations. Unlike Millennials' slang (which relied more on acronyms and clipping), Gen Z's is heavily based on irony and absurdity (e.g., "brain rot"-mental deterioration from excessive low-quality content).

### **Identity: Identity Formation Through Slang**

Slang serves as a tool for expressing personal and group identity among Gen Z. Using slang on social media signals group belonging and provides uniqueness. Studies (e.g., Amalia, 2024) show that Gen Z slang on Instagram reflects ideologies of individualism, irony, and authenticity. This slang is not just conversation; it is also a means of negotiating power and identity.

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In a 2025 study on TikTok slang in the Philippines, terms like "beshie" (best friend) and "anyare" (what happened) were found to strengthen group unity and digital identification. This aligns with Eckert's (2012) theory: slang signals group membership.

Closer to Scopus/Elsevier, the article "Employer brand identification and Gen Z" (2025) analyzes Gen Z's identification and search for self, which manifests through language as well. Additionally, "Creative personal identity in the age of generative AI" (2025) links AI with creative identification, showing how Gen Z's linguistic creativity impacts personal identity.

Through slang, Gen Z presents themselves as "digital natives" and differentiates from older generations. This identity often appears through irony-for example, "delulu" (delusional) in self-mockingly describing one's fantasies.

### **Resistance: Struggle Against Norms**

Gen Z slang resists societal norms, particularly formal language and adult culture. This resistance is expressed through irony, sarcasm, and absurdity. For example, "no cap" (truth) opposes a culture of lies, while "rage bait" counters manipulative content.

One study (Amalia, 2024) states that Gen Z slang reflects "digital resistance" ideology. This slang alters power dynamics and demands authenticity.

Related works include: "Generational differences in adopting AI" (2025), which analyzes Gen Z's resistance to and adaptation of innovations, similar to linguistic resistance. Additionally, articles on raciolinguistic struggles (2022) connect resistance and identification through language.

Although adults often criticize Gen Z slang as "incorrect," this resistance amplifies their voice. For instance, slang related to mental health ("touch grass"-go outside) counters pandemic isolation.

### **Conclusion**

Research findings lead to the conclusion that Gen Z slang is not mere jargon-it is a powerful expression of creativity, identity, and resistance. Digital platforms accelerate this process, creating new linguistic norms. Academic studies show that this slang serves to strengthen Gen Z's position in society.

In the future, this slang may influence global language. It is important for teachers and parents to focus on understanding and supporting slang rather than condemning it. This is the voice of the generation-creative, authentic, and resistant. We should not forget its impact on education either.

From the perspectives of education and society, this topic holds particular significance. Teachers and parents often view slang as "corruption of language," but this approach is incorrect. On the contrary, understanding and supporting slang helps strengthen connections with young people. For example, using Gen Z slang in educational chatbots (Computers in Human Behavior, 2025) has been proven to increase student motivation and make the learning process more engaging. Therefore, I recommend the following to educators: instead of condemning slang, study it as an example of linguistic creativity and apply it in lessons.

Finally, Gen Z slang also offers an opportunity to soften intergenerational divisions in society. By learning this language, adults can better understand young people's worldviews, issues (mental health, climate change, social justice), and values. This slang is not just a passing fad; it has a high likelihood of becoming a cultural legacy of one generation.

In summary, Gen Z slang remains one of the most relevant topics in modern linguistics and cultural studies. Studying it allows us to better understand not only today's youth but also the future of language and society. Gen Z's creative, authentic, and resistant voice is the foundation of tomorrow's language.

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