

## STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SLANG

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**Annotation:** This section provides an academic overview of the structural and functional features of slang as a non-standard yet dynamic component of language. It examines informality, creativity, and playfulness as defining traits, while highlighting slang's constant changeability and short life cycle. Attention is also given to its role in shaping social and group identity, its regional and cultural variation, and its reflection of broader social and technological trends. Moreover, slang is analyzed as an expressive and metaphorical tool that enriches everyday communication while remaining outside formal linguistic norms.

**Keywords:** Slang, structural features, functional features, informality, creativity, changeability, social identity, cultural variation, metaphor, expressiveness, communication.

Slang is an ever-evolving and frequently informal element of language that differs from formal language in a number of ways. The following are the main traits of slang:

Instead of being used in formal or professional contexts, slang is usually informal and frequently employed in casual talks. It is frequently used in spoken language, text messaging, social media, and other casual communications to convey familiarity, camaraderie, or ease.

A.R.Tayzhanova, teacher of the Aktobe polytechnic college (Kazakhstan), defines that slang has stylistically coloured, emotional, evaluatory and expressive character, and particular, genetically highly non-homogeneous layer of vocabulary and phraseology. It is used in colloquial speech and exits outside bounds of literary norms [5, p.22].

Slang is frequently characterized by inventiveness and lighthearted linguistic use. In order to present ideas in an engaging or hilarious manner, wordplay, metaphor, and even exaggeration are commonly used.

1. **Inventing New Words:** Slang is often born from the need to express new ideas or concepts in a more creative or succinct manner. For example, “vibe” and “lit” have evolved into slang terms that express experiences or emotions in a more vivid and creative way.

2. **Metaphorical Usage:** Many slang terms rely on metaphorical or figurative meanings, which can make them more engaging or expressive. For example, calling something “fire” means it’s amazing, drawing from the metaphor of something being intensely hot or exciting.

Slang’s fluidity is one of its distinguishing features. Slang phrases change rapidly and might become obsolete as quickly as they become popular.

1. **Short Lifespan:** Many slang terms have short lifespans, often changing rapidly in response to social or cultural trends. For example, words like “groovy” or “rad” were popular in the 1960s and 1980s, but they’ve fallen out of common usage.

2. **Constant Reinvention:** Slang is constantly evolving, with new words or phrases emerging regularly as society and technology change. For instance, the internet age has brought in acronyms like “FOMO” (Fear of Missing Out) and “YOLO” (You Only Live Once), as well as emojis and shorthand phrases.

Slang is essential for creating a sense of social identity and belonging to a group. Slang is a way for people to indicate that they belong to a certain generation, subculture, or social group.

1. **In-group Language:** Slang fosters a feeling of exclusivity or community among those with comparable experiences or interests. A particular career, a particular circle of friends, or an online gaming community, for instance, may have its own set of slang terminology that are unfamiliar to outsiders.

2. Age and Generational Markers: Slang is frequently linked to particular generations. Teenagers and young people, for instance, have a tendency to create and promote slang, which older generations might not use or comprehend. As each generation has its unique language markers, this aids in the differentiation of age groups.

Slang tends to be made up of informal and colloquial words or phrases that are often considered non-standard or even "improper" in formal language.

1. Non-standard: Slang terms typically don't adhere to the traditional rules of grammar, spelling, or syntax. For example, in slang, "gonna" is used instead of "going to," and "wanna" is used instead of "want to".

2. Shortened Forms: Many slang expressions involve shortening or blending words, making them quicker to say or type. For instance, "fam" for "family" or "lit" for something that's exciting or excellent.

It is convenient to group slang words according to their place in the vocabulary system, and more precisely, in the semantic system of the vocabulary. If they denote a new and necessary notion, they may prove an enrichment of the vocabulary and be accepted into Standard English. If, on the other hand, they make just another addition to a cluster of synonyms, and have nothing but novelty to back them, they die out very quickly, constituting the most changeable part of the vocabulary [1, p.250].

There are major differences in slang based on the country, area, or cultural setting. Some communities or locales may utilize words that are entirely foreign to others.

1. Geographical Differences: Different regions or countries may have their own distinct slang. For example, "cheeky" in British slang refers to something mischievous, while in American slang, "cheeky" might not be widely understood.

2. Cultural Influence: Slang frequently originates from certain cultural trends, such as street culture, music, or youth culture. Those outside of the hip-hop, skateboarding, or gaming subcultures might not be familiar with the terms used.

Slang can be used to create a sense of community among a group and keep away outsiders. The distinction between those who are "in the know" and those who are not is strengthened.

1. In-group Exclusivity: Slang can create a sense of "insider" status. For example, a group of friends might use a set of shared slang expressions that others wouldn't understand, creating a sense of exclusivity.

2. Barrier to Understanding: To those unfamiliar with a particular slang, it can create communication barriers. Someone who isn't familiar with certain internet terms, for example, may not fully grasp the meaning of terms like "mood" or "stan" which have evolved to take on new connotations.

Webster's "New World Dictionary of the American Language" adds that slang: "1. originally, the specialized vocabulary and idioms of criminals, tramps, etc. the purpose of which was to disguise from outsiders the meaning of what was said; now usually called cant [2]. 2. the specialized vocabulary and idioms of those in the same work, ways of life, etc.; now usually called shoptalk, argot, jargon. 3. colloquial language that is outside of conventional or standard usage and consists of both coined words ( blub, whoopee) and those with new or extended meanings ( rubberneck, sap); Slang develops from the attempt to find fresh and vigorous, colorful, pungent, or humorous expression, and generally either passes into disuse or comes to have a more formal status" [4, p.96].

Social, cultural, and technical trends are closely linked to slang. Changing social dynamics, new technologies, or evolving values frequently give rise to new slang phrases. In the digital age, slang spreads at unprecedented speed through social media platforms and online communities [3].

**Cultural Reflections:** Slang often reflects the dominant trends and values of a given time period. For example, the rise of social media has led to the creation of slang terms like “selfie,” “hashtag,” and “viral,” which are all linked to the ways people interact online.

**Technological Influence:** Advances in technology, especially the internet, have created a wave of slang based on online communication, such as acronyms (“LOL,” “BRB”) and new terms for digital phenomena (e.g., “ghosting,” “trolling”).

Slang is frequently used to communicate comedy, exaggeration, or intense feelings. It can add energy, humor, or intensity to conversations.

1. **Exaggeration:** Slang frequently involves exaggeration to emphasize a point. For instance, “sick” may mean “awesome” or “cool,” even though the literal meaning of the word is negative.

2. **Irony and Sarcasm:** Slang is frequently used to convey irony or sarcasm, particularly in lighthearted or amusing conversations. One example of irony that is frequently expressed through slang is when something is referred to as “the worst” when it is truly remarkable.

Slang is regarded as the quintessence of colloquial speech and therefore stands above all the laws of grammar. Through it is regarded by some purists as a language that stands below standard English, it is highly praised nowadays as “vivid”, “more flexible”, “more picturesque”, “richer in vocabulary” and so on [4, p.101]

Many slang terms have metaphorical connotations, use symbolic language to express more complex or subtle ideas.

**Metaphors:** Slang is often metaphorical and can convey more than just the literal meaning of the word. For instance, the phrase “spill the tea” refers to sharing gossip, where “tea” metaphorically represents the news or information.

This article explores slang as one of the most dynamic and evolving layers of language, tracing its historical origins, structural and functional characteristics, and transformation in the digital age. It highlights how slang has served as a marker of identity and exclusivity within subcultures, professions, and social groups, while also reflecting broader cultural and technological changes. Particular attention is given to the rise of digital slang through social media, memes, acronyms, and online communities, which have accelerated its spread and diversified its functions. Overall, the study demonstrates that slang, despite being informal and non-standard, plays a vital role in shaping communication, social identity, and the ongoing evolution of modern language.

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