

TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF INTERNET SLANG

Abduxalilova Gulbaxor Karabayevna

Uzbekistan state world languages university

ABSTRACT: This article examines the types and communicative functions of Internet slang as a distinctive linguistic phenomenon emerging from digital communication environments. Internet slang is analyzed as a rapidly evolving form of non-standard language shaped by social media platforms, online forums, instant messaging, and virtual communities. The study proposes a typological classification of Internet slang based on structural, semantic, and functional criteria, including abbreviations, acronyms, blends, emotive markers, graphic symbols, and multimodal elements. Particular attention is given to the pragmatic functions of Internet slang, such as expressing emotions, constructing online identity, fostering group solidarity, managing interpersonal distance, and increasing communicative efficiency in fast-paced digital interactions. The article argues that Internet slang not only reflects technological innovation but also represents broader sociocultural and pragmatic shifts in contemporary language use. The findings highlight the role of Internet slang as a productive linguistic resource that reshapes norms of communication and contributes to ongoing processes of language change.

Keywords: Internet slang, digital communication, online discourse, language variation, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, computer-mediated communication, identity construction

The rise of web-based technologies, online chatting, mobile texting, email and instant messaging have all helped shape the way we communicate. In addition to national slang words, one more type is now often found, which is known as Internet slang. Short-form words, acronyms, phrases, and memes have almost helped contribute to the development of a whole new language that defines Internet culture. Today, this so-called “Internet language” is as popular as ever and virtually second nature in use amongst Internet users. The following lists the most well known and widely used Internet slang words. People all over the world use them on social media sites, email and SMS text messaging. Places like social media forums and online messaging might seem like a foreign world.

When we tell someone goodbye, we usually just say “bye”. This is a shortening that was created to save time since the word “goodbye” is so common. The same is true for the Internet. Much of Internet slang is made up of abbreviations and shortenings. Here some of the most commonly used Internet abbreviations:

lol — laughing out loud

brb — be right back

btw — by the way

lmk — let me know

g2g — got to go

A few websites have their own terminology, abbreviations and slang. Twitter\Instagram and Reddit, social media websites, are big sites that use a lot of their own slang.

1) Twitter Slang

2) Hashtag

Many websites and blogs use tags to make it easier to search for content. When Twitter first came out, it did not have the option to add these tags. People who used Twitter decided to create their own way of tagging their posts: the hashtag.

Hashtags use the # symbol before the keywords, which are written without spaces. The hashtag has expanded into the rest of the Internet, and does not only exist on Twitter now. One example of a popular hashtag is #TBT, which stands for Throwback Thursday. People share old things from their childhoods and use that hashtag. Here we can see an example with the funny hashtag I Can Eat Whatever I Want

DM (Direct Message)

A direct message, or DM, is a term used on Twitter for a private communication with someone. Each user has a “Messages” page where they can read and send direct messages to other users.

RT (Retweet)

A retweet on Twitter is when someone shares your tweet with their followers. Retweeting something means you like what that person said, agree with it or have something to add.

Example: Oh my gosh! Beyoncé just retweeted my tweet!! I cannot believe it!

2)Reddit Slang

AMA (Ask Me Anything)

The AMA was first made popular on the sharing forum and community, Reddit. Short for “Ask Me Anything”, an AMA is when someone, usually well-known or from an interesting background, goes online and answers questions posed by the community.

Example: Even President Obama has done an AMA!

In Reddit we can also notice lots of other abbreviations—such as ELI5 which means “Explain Like I’m 5”, IIRC – “If I Recall Correctly” and TIL which emphasizes “Today I Learned”.

3)Slang on Forums

A forum is a comment board where people discuss different topics, which have their own slang too.

Bump - in forums, topics are usually listed in the order of the last comment received. If they move too far down the list, they get onto the second page, and are not as likely to be seen. When you want to push a topic back to the top of the list, you “bump” the topic by just writing “bump” as a new comment.

Example: I still do not know what kind of bug I found in my sink. Bump!

Troll - online, trolls are people who take pleasure from starting disagreements and angering people. Trolls usually post or respond to comments in a way that will annoy or anger the most people possible. There is a saying online, “Don’t feed the trolls”. This means we should not interact with someone who is “trolling,” since it will only encourage them.

Example: A: Someone left a mean comment on my blog post.

B: Ignore him, he is just trolling you.

Lurker is someone who visits a forum, blog or website often, but does not leave any comments. The word can be used in offline conversations too - “to lurk” means to hide just out of sight.

Example: I really want my lurkers to comment, so I am going to have a giveaway on the blog!

4)General Internet Slang

IMHO - “In my humble opinion,” or just “in my opinion” can be used before stating your opinion on a matter being discussed. Adding the word “humble” makes the opinion seem less important or significant.

Example: IMHO, you should check out Creativa.

Meme - the word “meme” has been around longer than the Internet. Outside the Internet, the word describes a part of culture that developed because it was passed on from one person to another, usually by imitation. A meme can be an idea, a tune, an image—anything that can be passed on Online, though, a meme is an image, text or video that is copied and modified over and over again. Most of the time, people add their own funny change to the image or text.

Example: When the singer Drake released his ridiculous music video for “Hotline Bling,” it immediately became a meme. People copied and parodied the video with their own silly videos and vines (very short videos).

Facepalm is a gesture where you put the palm of your hand on your face. This is usually done in response to someone saying something very obvious or not very smart.

Example: A: I just realized the Apple logo looks like an apple

B: Facepalm

Epic fail - when someone fails, usually due to an easily avoided mistake, people online call it an “epic fail.” The word “epic” actually refers to old poems and stories that described the long and awesome adventures of legendary heroes. Today we use the word “epic” to talk about anything huge or important, like that epic sandwich we ate last night.

Example: Did that guy just crash his bike into the only tree on the street? What an epic fail and altered.

Apart from the aforementioned types of national slang, there are other kinds of slang related to different professions and classes of society such as college slang, political slang, sporting slang, etc. It is the nature of slang to circulate freely among all classes, yet there are several kinds of this current form of language corresponding to the several classes of society.

Slang is very informal language used by particular groups of people, who use it to show that we belong to a certain community. Students have a language of their own. Below it is illustrated some examples of common slangs used by students:

Chill means relax, calm down, or be easy-going.

Example: What are you guys up to tonight? We are done with exams and school stuff, so we will just chill tonight.

Dude/Bro is a casual greeting used instead of first names, primarily between males.

Example: Hey dude, how is it going?

What's up, bro?

Lib is the short form of "library."

Example: I am heading to the lib tonight.

Prof - many students call their professors "prof" when referring to them among friends. Calling professors "prof" to their faces is typically considered too informal.

Example: My Economics prof checks our attendance every single day!

Roomie means roommate.

Example: My roomie and I are going to go to the hockey game tonight.

RA is the resident assistant, a student who supervises the dorm community.

Example: My RA is really cool.

The two great divisions of slang are the vulgar of the uneducated and coarse-minded, and the high-toned slang of the so-called upper classes—the educated and the wealthy. The hoyden of the gutter does not use the same slang as my lady in her boudoir, but both use it, and so expressive is it that the one might readily understand the other if brought in contact. Therefore, there are what may be styled an ignorant slang and an educated slang—the one common to the purlieu and the alleys, the other to the parlor and the drawing-room.

In all cases the object of slang is to express an idea in a more vigorous, piquant and terse manner than standard usage ordinarily admits. A school girl, when she wants to praise a baby, exclaims: "Oh, is not he awfully cute!" to say that he is very nice would be too weak a way to express her admiration. When a handsome girl appears on the street an enthusiastic masculine admirer, to express his appreciation of her beauty, tells you: "She is a peach, a bird, a cuckoo", any of which accentuates his estimation of the young lady and is much more emphatic than saying: "She is a beautiful girl", "a handsome maiden", or "lovely young woman". When a politician defeats his rival he will tell you "it was a cinch", he had a "walk-over", to impress you how easy it was to gain the victory.

Some slang expressions are of the nature of metaphors and are highly figurative. Such are "to pass in your checks", "to hold up", "to pull the wool over your eyes", "to talk through your hat", "to fire out", "to go back on", "to make yourself solid with", "to have a jag on", "to be loaded", "to freeze on to", "to bark up the wrong tree", "do not monkey with the buzz-saw", and "in the soup". Most slang had a bad origin. The greater part originated in the cant of thieves' Latin, but it broke away from this cant of malefactors in time and gradually evolved itself from its unsavory past until it developed into a current form of expressive speech. Some slang, however, can trace its origin back to very respectable sources. "Stolen fruits are sweet" may be traced to the Bible in sentiment. Proverbs, ix:17 has it: "Stolen waters are sweet". "What are you giving me", supposed to be a thorough Americanism, is based upon Genesis, xxxviii:16. The common slang, "a bad man", in referring to Western desperadoes, in almost the identical sense now used, is found in Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, Massinger's play "A New Way to Pay Old Debts", and in Shakespeare's "King Henry VIII". The expression "to blow on", meaning to inform, is in Shakespeare's "As You Like it". "It is all Greek to me" is traceable to the play of "Julius Caesar".

“All cry and no wool” is in Butler’s “Hudibras”. “Pious frauds”, meaning hypocrites, is from the same source. “Too thin”, referring to an excuse, is from Smollett’s “Peregrine Pickle”. Shakespeare also used it.

Slang can be categorized into the following types:

Offensive slang

These words should be used with care. Although they are not particularly “hot”, they can be offensive to the person they are applied to. For example, if call somebody an “airhead”, that person could be insulted although anybody listening would not be shocked.

Vulgar slang

Vulgar slang words should be used with extreme care. In general it is recommended that non-native speakers do not use this language. If used inappropriately, could easily shock both the person talking to and anyone listening, which can be cause of resentment and anger.

Taboo slang

In general, taboo words are the most shocking in the language and should be avoided. It is highly recommended that non-native speakers do not use this language. As with vulgar slang, one could easily shock both the person they are talking to and anyone listening. It could also cause extreme resentment and anger, with unpredictable results.

The literature of slang is vast, its two most important monuments being Eric Partridge’s “Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English” (1937) and Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner’s “Dictionary of American Slang” (1960). Coleman pays due if reserved respect to the former (she finds it useful but dated, which is fair enough) but mentions the latter only in passing, which is strange given the importance of American slang not only to her overall subject but also to her book. Given that she is English, a British bias is understandable and forgivable in “The Life of Slang,” but American readers are likely to feel that she gives too much attention to British slang of the 18th and 19th centuries and too little to the American slang that, for better and worse, has become a central part of the English-speaking world’s vocabulary and, for that matter, has encroached on the vocabularies of other languages.

Like many others before her, Coleman is at pains to emphasize that there has always been tension between slang and standard English. “The arguments in favor of slang [are] about slang itself: it is vibrant, creative, and so on,” she writes. “These qualities might be attributed to slang-creators. The arguments against [are] largely about slang-users: they are unintelligent and have limited vocabularies. And that is one of the reasons why I find it hard to take sides in this argument: slang words often are witty and appealing, but not all slang-users are. On the other hand, slang-users might be perfectly charming were it not for their irritating repetition of tired slang words. The arguments are based on an entirely false dichotomy. Because new slang is creative (i.e. new), the argument implies, Standard English is not creative. Because some slang users have limited vocabularies, people who speak Standard English know more words. This is all nonsense. What really sets slang apart from Standard English is the way it functions in social contexts: communicating meaning is often a secondary function for slang; it is really for communicating attitudes and cementing relationships”.

Slang “creates in-groups and out-groups and acts as an emblem of belonging”. To Coleman, “the importance of slang in creating and maintaining a sense of group or personal identity” is paramount, and all the evidence supports her. Groups that have developed slang as a way of cementing their identity include the military, especially in the lower ranks, though oddly enough

her discussion does not include perhaps the most famous of all military slang words, “snafu”; African Americans, “the one group that has influenced contemporary American (and international English) slang more than any other”; the working classes; musicians, especially jazz musicians; the underworld, the language of which she calls “canting,” which “usually implies some type of dishonesty and is now generally used with reference to the language of beggars, criminals, estate agents, politicians, and religious hypocrites”; and, of course, teenagers, who are now perhaps the most important and influential sources of slang, all the more so as consumerism, “in constantly striving for the latest new thing,” uses slang to establish its hip bona fides.

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