

Semantic Changes in Generation Z Slang on TikTok

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Abstract

The slang that appears on the social media platform TikTok comes from various sources, such as regional languages, foreign languages, or puns derived from Indonesian itself. Its forms and meanings vary, depending on the context of the video post. Slang used in the Fyp (For You Page) feature or posts on TikTok has the potential to become more popular than on other platforms. This study aims to describe the forms and types of changes in the meaning of Generation Z slang vocabulary found in posts on the social media platform TikTok. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method that collects descriptive data in the form of vocabulary. The data collection technique used in this study is the observation and note-taking technique. The researcher observed and recorded words that underwent changes in meaning found in posts on TikTok. Based on the research conducted, various forms and types of meaning changes were found. The results of the study found 12 slang vocabulary words consisting of: 2 words undergoing generalization, 2 words undergoing specialization, 5 words undergoing amelioration, 2 words undergoing pejorative changes, and 1 word undergoing association. The 12 findings contribute to the systematic mapping of semantic changes in slang language in the digital world, provide empirical understanding of meaning changes in Generation Z language on social media, and enrich contemporary linguistic studies.

Keywords: *language, semantic shift, semantics*

Introduction Section

Language is a complex form that serves as an element of culture and influences humanism. Language plays an important role in individual and social life, especially for communication. Every social being is always attached to the development of language, which is influenced by time and environment. Through language, humans can communicate and establish cooperation as social beings (Melinda & Putra, 2023).

Language use can be described in terms of meaning and vocabulary through individuals. According to Mastuti (2008, p. 70), slang is used by various groups, from ordinary people to celebrities, as a casual language to increase their familiarity in communication. Slang is a language that does not follow the rules and regulations that are commonly used in social interactions, which have specific characteristics such as being concise and creative (Mastuti, 2008:57). Slang is a non-formal variety that contains various special terms derived from regional languages, English, and other foreign languages. Because it is born from the creativity of its users, slang continues to evolve and give rise to various new forms of vocabulary.

The slang that appears on the social media platform TikTok comes from a variety of sources, such as regional languages, foreign languages, or puns derived from Indonesian itself. Its form and meaning also vary, depending on the context of the video post or comments. Slang in the FYP (For You Page) feature or posts on TikTok has the potential to become more popular than on other platforms. Therefore, researchers chose TikTok because the variety of slang used on this platform is unique compared to other social media platforms. This study focuses on examining various forms of slang.

In line with the development of the times, language always produces new words and new meanings to meet human needs in communication so that ideas can be conveyed accurately (Ernawati, 2021). This shows that changes in language can cause shifts in the meaning of a word or lexeme. The dynamics related to meaning are one of the important topics in linguistic studies, especially in the branch of science called semantics.

Language is always evolving or changing in line with the times and the way humans interact. Chaer (2009) explains that changes in meaning arise due to social and cultural dynamics and ever-changing communication needs. Ullman (1972) adds that these changes can occur as a result of shifts in grammatical structure or the historical journey of words. Meanwhile, Pateda (2010) views changes in meaning as a reflection of social interactions and technological advances that influence the way people use language. The forms of meaning change are also diverse, ranging from expansion (generalization), narrowing (specialization), elevation of meaning (amelioration), degradation of meaning (pejorative), exchange of sensory responses (synesthesia), to specific meaning associations (associations) (Tarigan, 2015; Suwandi,

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2011). In the context of slang used by Generation Z on TikTok, these various forms of change emerge dynamically from linguistic creativity such as sound play and abbreviations, while also being influenced by technological developments, digital culture, and the need for young people to express their identity.

Changes in the history of language often involve changes in the semantic function of certain words in the vocabulary of those languages. This vocabulary is seen as an element of the continuous development of language. The shift in meaning that has emerged in Indonesian speaking communities has become apparent since social media began to be actively used by various segments of society. Despite showing variations and changes, social media plays a role in introducing culture and expanding access to language learning. By maintaining the proper and correct use of language, Indonesian can develop and function as an effective communication tool in the digital space (Amaly & Armiah, 2021).

In the early 2000s, slang terms began to gain popularity, especially among the younger generation (Azizah, 2019). According to Winarno (2018, p. 4), the TikTok app has been downloaded 100 million times on Google Playstore. Data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy also shows that the number of TikTok users in Indonesia ranges from 30 to 70 million users. Among the various social media platforms available, TikTok was chosen as the object of this study because it has advantages that other platforms do not have. Through this application, users can produce content in the form of short videos lasting 15 seconds to four minutes that can be accompanied by music or short texts. Each video uploaded can receive responses from other users through the comment feature provided by TikTok, resulting in active interaction among its users.

This study aims to describe how the slang vocabulary used by Generation Z on TikTok has undergone a change in meaning, while also exploring the social, cultural, and linguistic factors behind it. In addition, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference in language learning, particularly to enrich teaching materials that are relevant to language development in the digital age.

Previous studies have shown that social media plays an important role in shaping changes in the meaning of slang. Research by Alisha et al. (2023) found that the creativity of Twitter users encourages ameliorative and pejorative shifts in meaning, especially in flora vocabulary such as onion, eggplant, and chili, which are reinterpreted as metaphors to describe human emotions or characters. These findings are in line with the pattern of meaning shifts in vocabulary such as *baper*, *anjay*, *cepu*, and *gacor*, although the form of expression is different because TikTok posts are video-based. Further research by Anggraini Fuza et al. (2024) shows dysphemistic meaning shifts on TikTok, such as in the words *meninggal* (died) or *baby blues*, which are used satirically. Fuza's research focuses on the type of meaning change, particularly pejorative, while this study examines a broader scope of meaning change.

Furthermore, research by Mufid Dzakwan et al. (2022) confirms that changes in the meaning of radical words are influenced by social associations and the emotional judgments of social media users. These findings reinforce the relevance of Ullmann's theory of meaning change, which was also used in this study to analyze shifts in meaning in TikTok slang vocabulary such as *cepu*, *gacor*, *sokab*, and *caper*. These three studies show that linguistic creativity on social media platforms such as Twitter and TikTok results in rapid changes in meaning, but there are still gaps in systematic semantic categorization and a lack of studies that place TikTok as the main linguistic space for Generation Z. This study attempts to fill these gaps through comprehensive semantic classification and in-depth analysis of changes in the meaning of Gen Z slang, specifically in the context of TikTok.

In response to the dynamics of language use in the digital space, this study emphasizes the importance of clearly formulating the problem in order to systematically present changes in meaning in Generation Z slang vocabulary on TikTok. This formulation is necessary so that the analysis is not merely descriptive, but also able to answer academic questions about how semantic change occurs in a fast-moving platform that is heavily influenced by trends. Based on the background and research gaps that have been identified, this study seeks to examine in depth the types of changes in meaning that have emerged in Generation Z slang vocabulary used in TikTok content, as well as how these changes can be understood from the perspective of classical and contemporary semantic theories.

Method

The research method used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of vocabulary. Qualitative descriptive research is used because it aims to describe linguistic phenomena in depth, particularly related to changes in the meaning of Generation Z slang vocabulary in TikTok social media posts. According to Sugiyono (2015:14), qualitative research is a research method used to study natural objects, where the researcher is the main tool, data collection techniques are carried out using triangulation, and data analysis is inductive. Moleong (2013:6) states that qualitative descriptive design is used to describe social situations or phenomena that occur systematically, factually, and accurately. Therefore, this design is suitable for analyzing the form, factors, and utilization of semantic changes in slang on TikTok.

The data sources in this study consist of various TikTok posts uploaded within a one-year period from January to December 2025, providing a more in-depth observation of recurring and temporary changes in meaning. The selection of vocabulary was based on certain criteria, namely: (1) the word is used consistently by Gen Z TikTok users, (2) it has a high frequency of occurrence and is regularly used in a digital context, and (3) it shows a difference in meaning between its original (denotative) use and its contemporary use on TikTok. The data collection technique used is the observe-record

technique, in which researchers observe, select, record, and classify slang words that have undergone a change in meaning. All data is then compared with the original meaning to determine the type of semantic shift. The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation, both theoretical and source triangulation, so that the analysis results were more reliable and scientifically accountable.

Result and Discussion

Forms of meaning change in Generation Z slang vocabulary in Tiktok sosial media post:

Data classification and data analysis:

1. Generalization (Expansion of Meaning)

Table 1. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Cepu”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 1	cepu	police information (criminal) (Tempo.co) Meanwhile, according to https://kbbi.web.id/cepu a cepu is a small drum made of wood (silver, etc.).	A person who reveals a friend's secret (hai.online.com)

Data Analysis 1 : “tetap memasukan orang2 yang cepu ke dalam sec acc ku, biar aku tau dia cerita ke siapa aja” (Keep adding people who are trustworthy to my account so I know who they are. Tell anyone you want).

The word “cepu” in this context has undergone a generalization of meaning. Denotatively, “cepu” is a term used to refer to an informant in the criminal world or someone who secretly provides information to the authorities. In the KBBI dictionary, cepu is defined as a wooden spoon (made of silver). Meanwhile, in the speech of Generation Z on the social media platform TikTok, the meaning of this word has been expanded to mean “someone who likes to reveal the secrets of their friends or group.” This expansion shows how a term that was originally limited to the legal context is now widely used in the daily lives of teenagers to mock someone who cannot be trusted.

Table 2. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Gacor”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 2	gacor	chirping in every place and time (about birdsong) (https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/gacor)	Someone who is chatty, active, or vocal on social media, easily wins. (www.suaramahasiswa.com)

Data Analysis 2: “19 tahun, ga ngerokok, ga ngevape, ga clubbing, ga living together, ga punya anak, ga ngerti lagi, ga penting, gacor, ganas” (19 years old, doesn't smoke, doesn't vape, doesn't go clubbing, doesn't live together, doesn't have children, doesn't understand anymore, doesn't care, loud, fierce).

The word *load* “gacor” has undergone a broadening of meaning or generalization. Originally used only for bird sounds, it is now used as a compliment for people who are active in speaking or appearing on social media. This phenomenon aligns with Chaer's theory (2009), where words undergo layers of meaning based on behavioral associations.

2. Specialization (Narrowing of Meaning)

Table 3. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Dry text”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
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Data 3	<i>dry text</i>	(From English) 'dry text' = dry, 'text' = dry text/without emotion (google translate)	Text messages/chats that are considered boring, flat, expressionless, or lacking in attention (www.antaraneews.com)
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Data Analysis 3 : “ *Dry text tu ngerusak mood tau ga* “ (Dry text ruins the mood, you know).

The meaning of “*dry text*” has narrowed from its literal meaning of ‘*dry text*’ to an emotional term referring to a style of communication via chat that is considered uninteresting and shows no interest. This change in meaning has emerged due to the need of Generation Z to assess interpersonal relationships through digital media. This also reflects a change in communication culture that prioritizes virtual expression. Non-linguistic factors: changes in the context of digital communication.

Table 4. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “*Gamon*”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 4	<i>gamon</i>	failing to move on; failing to forget someone or a particular special event (https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/gamon)	Keeping gifts from an ex and reluctant to start a new relationship (www.liputan6.com)

Data Analysis 4 : “*Inget aturan mainlya masalalu dolarang berisiklu gamon ya itu urusan lo jangan ngusik orang yang udah gak mau berkomunikasi sama lo*” (Remember the rules of the game, don't be noisy, that's your business, don't bother people who don't want to communicate with you anymore).

The word “*gamon*” is a form of semantic specialization because its use is now limited to referring to individuals who are still emotionally attached to their ex-partners. In Chaer's theory (2009), specialization occurs when meaning becomes narrower. This term also shows how emotional experiences are standardized into digital social identities within the Gen Z community.

3. Amelioration (Enhancement of Meaning)

Negative Connotation:

Table 5. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “*Cegil*”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 5	<i>cegil</i>	crazy girl; a young woman who behaves differently from most girls, but is considered attractive by young men (https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/cegil)	An expressive, free spirited woman who dares to be different or a problematic woman (www.kumparan.com)

Data Analysis 5 : “*Siapp menjadi cegil tantrum ugal-ugalan meskipun dia dry text, slow respon, cuek tetap akan ku trobos*” (Be prepared to cegil throw a tantrum even though he texts dryly, responds slowly, and is indifferent. I will still break through).

The word “*cegil*” has undergone amelioration because its negative connotation has been changed into something positive and empowering. This word reflects a reversal of social values that supports women's self-expression. This is in line with Tarigan's (2015) view that changes in meaning also occur due to social and ideological motivations.

Positive Connotation:

Table 6. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Seng”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 6	seng	A metal element with atomic number 30, symbol Zn, and atomic weight 65.38; two thin sheets of iron coated with tin (to prevent rusting) for roofs and so on: they built a rice barn with a roof -- so it wouldn't leak; his head was already covered with a roof -- , his hair was already white (https://kbbi.web.id/sen)	A playful nickname, the usual meaning changes to a form of affection. A term of endearment in romantic relationships , derived from a play on the word saying Salsabila Azzahra(2024).

Data Analysis 6 : “ *‘iya seng’ stop panggil aku seng. Panggil aku sayangku, cintaku, duniaku, semestaku, cantikku, manisku, kanjeng ratu, ndoro ayu.* “ (Yes, zinc, stop calling me zinc. Call me my darling, my love, my world, my universe, my beauty, my sweetheart, my queen, my lovely lady).

The word zinc “seng” lexically refers to a type of thin metal commonly used for roofing. However, in this context, the word is used as a playful nickname with humorous or ironic undertones. This shows a change in meaning, as the original neutral and even uninteresting meaning has been transformed into an expression of affection and humor. According to Chaer (2009), amelioration is a change in meaning that gives a word a more positive or pleasant connotation. This phenomenon also demonstrates the linguistic creativity of the Gen Z community in playing with language to create social bonds and unique expressions of affection.

Table 7. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Gwendeng”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 7	gwendeng	Crazy or mentally ill person (Radarmalan g.jawapos.com)	A humorous and hyperbolic expression used to describe oneself as extraordinary in terms of appearance, style, or self confidence.

Data Analysis 7 : “ *im not say : “maaf aku ga secantik mantan kamu”but im say : Gwendengg, luwih ayu aku cik, mwening aku, manisaku, sangar aku, kemaki aku, ngeyelan aku, gacor aku, lucuan aku, galakan aku, royal aku, kendelan aku, effort aku, mandiri aku, cegilan aku, Kabeh Tak Borong Nyapo we? Ecekkkk* ” (I'm not saying, “Sorry, I'm not as pretty as your ex,” but I am saying: crazy, I'm prettier, I'm more charming, I'm sweeter, I'm tougher, I'm more stubborn, I'm more talkative, I'm funnier, I'm more energetic, I'm more generous, I'm more determined, I'm more independent, I'm more clever, I'm more everything. What's the big deal? trivial).

According to Chaer (2009: 141–145) and Tarigan (2015: 78), amelioration occurs when a word that was originally considered low or rude experiences an increase in meaning or social value. The use of “gwendengg” on TikTok by Gen Z reflects a linguistic strategy to break down negative stigma by turning it into entertainment or a creative form of expression, without any serious intention to belittle. Type of meaning change: Amelioration.

The word "*gwendengg*" (crazy) has undergone an increase in emotional value, from a word that originally had negative connotations (referring to people who are mentally ill) to a term that is used humorously and positively, especially in expressions of confidence or hyperbolic self praise in TikTok culture. Originally pejorative, "*gwendengg*" in the context of TikTok has become a stylish, confident, and even funny expression. There is a process of amelioration: from negative (crazy) to positive (cool, confident). This word has also undergone phonological alteration (the addition of 'g'). This change was triggered by socio-cultural factors and the linguistic creativity of Generation Z, who reinterpreted old vocabulary in the context of digital entertainment.

Table 8. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word "*Anjay*"

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 8	<i>anjay</i>	A play on the word "dog," often used to express admiration (Fauziyah et al. 2025)	A neutral or humorous www.jatimes.com to express surprise or (www.jatimes.com)

Data Analysis 8: "*Baru aja ngerasa kalo hidup baik-baik aja, udah ada lagi aja plot twist-nya anjayy*" (Just when I thought life was going well, there's another plot twist. Damn it).

The word "*Anjayy*" (Damn it) has undergone amelioration, losing its harsh meaning and becoming part of a humorous style of language. This word adapts to Gen Z's social media interaction norms, which rely on irony and puns. This change shows a softening of meaning due to cultural adaptation.

Table 9. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word "*Anying*"

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 9	<i>anying</i>	A slang term derived from 'dog', an offensive insult, an offensive term (www.suara.com)	A funny hyperbolic expression used for extreme expressions in a humorous context (www.jatimes.com)

Data Analysis 9: "*genzi dont say "capek bgt anying " but we say "tuhan jadikanlah langkahku sing mobat mabit ini menjadi ladang kegacoran yang anjay gurunjay takanjay-kanjay"#wongliyongertiopo*" (Genzi, don't say "I'm so tired, anying," but we say, "God, make my steps in this desert become a field of prosperity that is as vast as the desert itself." # what other people know).

This vocabulary has undergone a double pun to become "*anying*," which is absurd and comical. The process of amelioration occurs not only in meaning but also in phonological form, creating a comedic effect. This shows the creative evolution of language in the Gen Z community, which rejects the boundaries of formality.

4. Pejorative (Decrease in Meaning Value)

Table 10. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word "*Caper*"

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 10	<i>caper</i>	Informal form of "cari perhatian" (https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/caper)	Behavior that is done excessively attract sympathy or attention (www.liputan6.com)

Data Analysis 10: "*lo ngarep gue tanggepin pengen pansos dasar caper*" (You expect me to respond to your basic social media basic attention seeker).

The meaning of the word "*caper*" (attention seeker) has undergone pejorative change because it is used to belittle actions that are actually neutral. In the digital context, this meaning has become a form of negative judgment of a person's self-expression, in line with Chaer's (2009) theory regarding shifts in meaning due to social pressure.

Table 11. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Sokab”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 11	sokaab	Sok Akrab (Negative connotation) (www.wolipop.com)	Lighthearted teasing between friends, negative connotation becomes lighthearted banter (www.wolipop.com)

Data Analysis 11 : “*liat orang yang gakenal samsek tiba tiba sokab trs nanya2 privasi*” (Seeing someone you don't know suddenly acting all friendly and asking personal questions).

The word “Sokab” is an abbreviation of “sok akrab” (*too familiar*). This word is used to mock someone who acts too familiar even though there is no previous close relationship. In its use on TikTok, this term has undergone pejorative change, namely a decline in meaning from a mere social assessment to a form of insult or sharp criticism of behavior that is considered to exceed the norms of interaction. According to Suwandi (2011), pejorative change is a process of meaning change that causes a word to have negative or derogatory connotations. In this case, “sokab” is used with a sarcastic and mocking tone that shows the tendency of Generation Z to use language as a tool of social control in online interactions.

5. Asosiasi Association (Meaning due to semantic relationship)

Table 12. Analysis of the change in meaning of the word “Glow up”

Data	Vocabulary	Original meaning	New Meaning
Data 12	glow up	Phrasal verb from 'glow' (to shine) + up (improvement) changes amazingly (google translate)	Significant improvement in physical and mental appearance (Later.com)

Analisis Data 12 : “*kunci glow up “Diet Gula”* (The key to glowing up: “Sugar Diet”).

The term “glow up” is an associative form of words derived from English that has undergone a shift in meaning in popular culture. Initially, “glow up” referred to a physical transformation into a more attractive appearance, but in the context of TikTok, the meaning has been expanded to represent a comprehensive transformation of oneself, including a healthy lifestyle, mental health, and self-confidence. This association occurs because, in the theory of meaning change (Chaer, 2009), there is a shift from literal meaning to symbolic meaning. Glow up is used to describe personal development, not just visual radiance, but also pride and self-confidence in the era of visual culture.

Patterns of Meaning Change and its relevans to Previous Research

Research findings show that the slang vocabulary used by Generation Z in TikTok content undergoes five types of meaning change, namely generalization, specialization, amelioration, pejoration, and association. This pattern of change is in line with the theory of semantic change proposed by Chaer (2009), Ullmann (1972), Pateda (2010), Tarigan (2015), and Suwandi (2011), which asserts that shifts in meaning are influenced by social, cultural, psychological, and technological developments.

Generalization: expansion of meaning due to changes in social and digital contexts

The findings on the words *cepu* and *gacor* show a process of generalization (expansion of meaning), namely a change in meaning from a narrow scope to a broader one. According to Chaer (2009), generalization occurs when a word acquires a new meaning beyond its original usage. This can be seen in:

[Data 1] “*Cepu*” which originally meant a criminal informant, has expanded to mean “a friend who leaks secrets.”

[Data 2] “*Gacor*,” (*load*) which was originally related to the sound of birds, has shifted to mean praise for someone who is active, talkative, or vocal on TikTok.

According to Ullmann (1972), this expansion of meaning occurs due to the social creativity and expressive needs of Generation Z in digital culture. TikTok, as a trend-based medium, makes funny and hyperbolic words easier to spread, so that new meanings are more quickly accepted by the community.

Specialization: narrowing of meaning due to the need for social categorization

Findings on dry text and gamon show meaning specialization, which is a shift from general meaning to more specific meaning. As stated by Tarigan (2015), specialization occurs when speakers need more specific terms to describe certain phenomena.

[Data 3] “*Dry text*” no longer means “dry text,” but is narrowed down to “boring chat messages.”

[Data 4] “*Gamon*”, which originally simply meant “failing to move on,” has been narrowed down to a specific emotional condition related to the habit of holding onto memories of an ex.

This phenomenon confirms Pateda's (2010) opinion that the narrowing of meaning is influenced by the need for social categorization in digital communities, where interpersonal relationships are assessed through patterns of digital communication.

Amelioration (Enhancement of Meaning)

Research findings show that amelioration is the most dominant type of semantic change (5 out of 12 words). According to Ullmann (1972), the process of amelioration is a change in meaning towards a more positive connotation.

Examples in this study:

[Data 5] “*Cegil*” from “*cewek gila*” (crazy girl): an expressive and confident woman

[Data 6] “*Seng*” (*zinc*) from “*metal*”: a humorous term of endearment

[Data 7] “*Gwendengg*” (crazy) from “*crazy*”: a hyperbolic expression of confidence

[Data 8] “*Anjay*” and [Data 9] “*anying*” have undergone a shift in meaning to become expressions of admiration and humor

Based on semantic theory and research findings, amelioration (meaning enhancement) is more dominant in the meaning change of Generation Z slang due to:

- (a) Digital identity and self-branding

Gen Z builds digital identity through language. Amelioration allows them to turn harsh words into funny ones, soften taboo meanings, and build an expressive and confident self-image. This is in line with Pateda's (2010) concept of subjectification, which is when the meaning of words becomes more oriented towards the speaker's self-expression.

- (b) TikTok humor culture

TikTok is dominated by comedy, irony, and hyperbole. Language that undergoes amelioration goes viral more easily because of its lighthearted and humorous nature. This is in line with Chaer's view that emotive motivation triggers changes in meaning.

- (c) Resistance to old meanings

Gen Z tends to reinterpret words with negative connotations as a form of resistance to social stigma. This process is supported by Ullmann's theory that changes in meaning can occur due to psychological and ideological factors. The dominance of amelioration in the research data is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a socio-cultural phenomenon that reflects Gen Z's distinctive communication style.

Pejorative: a shift in meaning towards the negative as a form of digital social control

In this study, the word *caper* is an example of pejorative meaning change on TikTok. Originally, [Data 10] *caper* is an informal form of “*cari perhatian*” (seeking attention), which neutrally refers to a person's efforts to gain recognition or responses from others. Meanwhile, on TikTok, the meaning of the word has undergone a decline in value. Generation Z users use it to judge behavior that is considered annoying, excessive, or embarrassing in order to gain digital interaction. This change in meaning has been shaped by a context dominated by critical content, sarcastic comments, or negative responses to other users' behavior. This form of change is in line with Ullmann's (1972) concept of association by emotional evaluation, whereby speakers associate a word with negative emotions, causing its meaning to shift to become pejorative.

The word [Data 11] “*sokab*” in this study has undergone pejorative, namely a decline in meaning to become more negative. According to Suwandi (2011), pejorative often appears when speakers use language to judge, criticize, or give social labels. Pejorative functions as a social control mechanism for Gen Z to mark behavior that is considered excessive, rude, or intrusive of personal boundaries.

Association: meaning relationships based on digital impressions and experiences

A change in associative meaning occurs when a lexeme acquires a new meaning because it is associated with certain impressions, experiences, or patterns of use in the digital space. Ullmann (1972) explains that the association of ideas arises when speakers connect a word with images, emotions, or specific situations that are repeated, thereby forming a new meaning that differs from its denotative meaning.

In this study, the vocabulary [Data 12] “*glow up*” is a prominent example of this type of change in meaning, especially association. Literally, *glow up* means “to shine” or “to appear radiant.” Meanwhile, in its use on TikTok, this term has

undergone a shift in meaning to “the process of transforming oneself for the better,” especially in terms of appearance, confidence, and lifestyle. Generation Z no longer interprets glow up as merely a physical condition of “shining,” but as a symbol of positive personal change.

This change in meaning occurs due to social factors, as explained by Nasution (2022), who asserts that the development of media, language habits, and social interactions greatly influence the shift in meaning of a word, such as generalization, specialization, amelioration, pejorative, and association. In the context of this study, the findings, such as the expansion of the words *cepu* and *gacor*, the narrowing of the meanings of *dry text* and *gamon*, and the increase in the meaning of *cegil* or *gwendengg*, confirm Chaer's view that changes in meaning are a natural process that arise from the communicative needs and creativity of speakers. The findings of this study not only prove the dynamics of Gen Z slang, but also reinforce Chaer's theory that language will always evolve in line with the developments of the times and the social spaces in which it is used.

The research by Masruroh et al. (2022) is relevant to this study because it also examines changes in the meaning of slang vocabulary among teenagers. The similarity lies in the type of meaning change found, namely the expansion of meaning (generalization) due to the influence of social media. The word “*cabut*” (pull out), which originally meant “to pull something out by the roots,” has shifted to mean “to leave,” and the word “*ambyar*” (broken), which originally meant “to fall apart,” is now used to describe food that “melts in the mouth.” Meanwhile, this study also found forms of meaning expansion in vocabulary such as “*cepu*” “*gacor*” (loud), which have shifted from their denotative meanings to new social meanings in the context of Gen Z socializing on TikTok. The difference is that Masruroh et al.'s research focused on two specific lexemes in the context of Twitter and Instagram, while this study found results for 12 different slang words on TikTok that show the dynamics of meaning in Gen Z's digital culture.

The study by Hijrah et al. (2024) is similar to this study in that it also discusses shifts in the meaning of slang vocabulary in terms of changes in meaning, namely generalization and amelioration, in words such as “*anjay*” (Damn it), which demonstrate linguistic creativity in digital culture. The difference is that the research by Hijrah et al. focuses on the aspects of identity expression and the social function of slang on various platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X, while this research focuses more on in depth semantic analysis of the forms and types of meaning changes on TikTok alone.

Muzaiyanah's (2012) research is relevant to this study in identifying types of meaning shifts such as (generalization), (specialization), (amelioration), and (pejoration). Muzaiyanah's research is theoretical and general in nature without social media data, whereas this study is based on empirical data from TikTok. Another difference lies in the types of meaning shifts. Muzaiyanah's research explains meaning shifts from a semantic concept perspective, while this study reinforces that theory with evidence of actual usage on social media.

The research by Kustriyono, et al. (2016) is in line with this study because it has similar findings regarding the types of meaning changes. The difference lies in the context and source of data analyzed. The study by Kustriyono et al. (2016) focuses on meaning changes in written texts or print media, while this study examines meaning changes in slang on TikTok.

Yeni Ernawati's (2021) research is in line with this study because it found forms of meaning change such as expansion, narrowing, amelioration, pejorative, and total change. In Ernawati's research, words such as *bos* (boss), *bunda* (mother), *drama* (drama), and *kompot* (stove) were found to have undergone meaning expansion due to social factors and associations, while in this study, vocabulary such as “*anjay*” (Damn it), “*gamon*”, “*cegil*”, and “*cepu*” were found to have undergone similar changes in meaning due to the influence of digital culture and Gen Z interactions on TikTok. The fundamental difference lies in the context and object of study: Ernawati's research focuses on text-based platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, while this study focuses on changes in meaning on the video-based social media platform TikTok.

The research by Ameylia Maya Kristinaupi, et al. (2024) is highly relevant to this study because it also found types of meaning changes, such as expansion, narrowing, and total change, that arise due to digital social and cultural influences. Words such as *bunda* (mother), *gabut* (bored), *badut* (clown), and *narsis* (narcissistic) have undergone a shift in meaning due to the context of user communication on Instagram and X. A similar phenomenon is also seen in this study, where vocabulary such as *anjay* (Damn it), *cepu*, and *gacor* (loud) show changes in meaning as a form of linguistic creativity among Generation Z on TikTok. The main difference lies in the context and media Kristinaupi et al.'s study focuses on text based platforms and comment interactions, while this study focuses on changes in meaning in short video content.

Research by Ailsa Zevaulima Dilivia, et al. (2023) is in line with the findings of ameliorative and pejorative processes resulting from digital creativity, which show changes in meaning based on the context of communication and user expression. In the research by Ailsa et al., words such as *bawang* (onion), *terong* (eggplant), *kentang* (potato), *kacang* (peanut), *kencur* (*kaempferia galanga*), and *cabe* (chili) have undergone a shift in meaning from their lexical meaning of flora to a metaphorical meaning that represents human emotions or characteristics on Twitter. This is in line with the results of this study, which found shifts in meaning in vocabulary such as *caper* (attention seeker), *cepu*, and *gacor* (loud) on TikTok, which also show changes in meaning based on the context of communication and user expression. The difference lies in the form of expression and the context of the media: the research by Ailsa et al. highlights textual metaphors in Twitter posts, while this study emphasizes shifts in meaning in the form of videos on TikTok.

Sonya Nur Aziza's (2021) research has similarities in terms of changes in meaning, both for the better (euphemism) and for the worse (dysphemism), such as *betina* (female) and *kepo* (nosy), which have undergone shifts in meaning as forms of expression of identity and social interaction on Instagram. Meanwhile, this study found vocabulary such as *kepo* (nosy), *cepu*, and *gacor* (loud). The main difference lies in the media context and discourse characteristics Sonya's research

highlights changes in meaning on text-based Instagram, while this study emphasizes shifts in meaning that appear in TikTok Fyp posts.

The research by Eka Rin Marantika et al. (2025) is relevant to this study because it also highlights shifts in meaning that can take the form of amelioration, pejoration, and association (metonymy). The difference between this study and the previous one lies in the object of study and the context of the data. Marantika et al.'s research focuses on nature-themed vocabulary on the X platform, such as *badai* (storm), *ombar* (rain), and *pelangi* (rainbow), which are interpreted metaphorically to describe emotions. Meanwhile, this study examines the shift in meaning of slang vocabulary, such as *cepu*, *sokab*, and *gacor* (loud), which have undergone a change in meaning.

Jaelani's (2017) research is in line with finding types of meaning changes such as broadening, narrowing, and pejorative. The difference lies in the context and the development of the times. Jaelani's (2017) research focuses on youth slang in direct communication, while this study examines Generation Z slang from video content. In addition, Jaelani found changes in meaning in words such as *kacang* (peanut), *gersang* (barn), *om* (uncle), *kompot* (stove), and *dodol*, which are lexical and conventional in nature, while this study found new Generation Z vocabulary such as *gwendeng* (crazy), *glow up*, and *gamon*, which indicate digital linguistic innovation.

Conclusion

Based on the results of analysis during one year of observation, 12 words were found to have undergone semantic shifts, including generalization (2 words), specialization (2 words), amelioration (5 words), pejoration (2 words), and association (1 word). These findings indicate that the changes in meaning are not random, but follow semantic patterns as described in the theory of Chaer, Ullmann, Tarigan, Pateda, and Suwandi. The dominance of amelioration indicates Generation Z's tendency to build a positive social identity through the resemanticization of terms, as well as to create group closeness in the fast-paced, creative, and participatory culture-based digital space of TikTok.

There are several types of meaning changes that appear in the use of Gen Z slang on TikTok, and these changes can be systematically mapped into classic and contemporary semantic categories. This study emphasizes that TikTok functions as a space for the production of new meanings that accelerates the spread of semantic changes among its speakers. The limitations of this study lie in the relatively small number of vocabulary words, the limited range of contexts in certain types of content, and the focus on only one social media platform. Further research is recommended to expand the amount of data, conduct cross-platform analysis integrating a digital ethnography approach, and examine the relationship between changes in meaning and the social identity of users. Further study on how slang develops into part of the new lexicon of the Indonesian language in the digital space is also a potential direction for research.

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