استقصاء إتقان المصطلحات الدارجة لجيل Z بين الطلبة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: دراسة تطبيقية

Investigating the Mastery of Gen-Z Slang among Iraqi EFL Students: An Applied Study

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مستوى إتقان طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) في العراق للمصطلحات الدارجة الإنجليزية الخاصة بجيل (Z) (جيل الالفية الثانية وذلك من خلال التحليلين النوعي والكمي، وفقًا لأنواع المدخلات التعليمية الرسمية وغير الرسمية التي حددها & .Colley, H. , Hodkinson, P.) (Colley, J., 2003، وأنواع المدخلات القابلة للفهم التي حددها. (Ellis, 2008)شارك في الدراسة مائة طالب وطالبة من أربع جامعات عراقية، حيث خضعوا لاختبار مكون من جزأين. طُلب منهم الإجابة على مقابلة مكونة من ٤٤ بندًا تتناول مشكلاتهم المتعلقة باستخدام مفردات جيل (Z) ومصادر المدخلات. كما طُلب منهم الإجابة على مقياس ليكرت خماسي النقاط لتقييم مدى إتقانهم لخمسين كلمة عامية شائعة.

كشفت النتائج عن صلاحية وموثوقية الاختبار المكون من جزأين، حيث كانت المتوسطات المرجحة، التي جاءت أقل من القيمة المتوقعة، موزعة بشكل طبيعي. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن المشاركين مهتمون بتطوير معرفتهم بالمصطلحات الدارجة من خلال الاعتماد على مصادر غير رسمية فردية، مثل منصات التواصل الاجتماعي

كإنستغرام وتيك توك وسينيمانيا، بالإضافة إلى الدردشة عبر الإنترنت مع الغرباء. وُصف الطلاب العراقيون بأنهم مشابهون لأقرانهم في الفئة العمرية نفسها، حيث يتسمون بالفردية، والاستقلالية، واستخدام الرسائل النصية، وتجنب التواصل المتبادل.

Abstract

The present study aims to explore qualitatively and quantitatively the mastery level of Iraqi EFL students in Gen Z's English slang according to (Colley, H. , Hodkinson, P. & Colley, J., 2003) types of formal and informal learning, and (Ellis, 2008) comprehensible input. One hundred male and female students from four Iraqi universities participated in a two-part test. They were asked to answer a 44-item interview about their issues related to using Gen Z and input sources. They were also asked to answer a five-point Likert Scale to assess their mastery of fifty common slang words. The results revealed the validity and reliability of the two-part test because the weighted means, which were lower than the expected value, were usually distributed. Also, the study subjects were interested in enhancing their stock of slang by relying on individual informal sources, such as social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Cinemania and chatting online with strangers. Iraqi students were described as similar to their age because they are individualistic, self-independent, use text messaging, and avoid mutual communication.

Keywords: Gen Z, Iraqi EFL students, Likert scale, Questionnaire, Slang

Introduction

The importance of examining the sociocultural status of the different layers of any society is beyond debate. Most sociolinguists have been interested in studying these layers or classifications of the people of one society; here, many classifications are related to social markers like genre, age, gender, financial status, and occupation. (Yule, 2023). Yule also mentions two important sociolinguistic markers: speech style and style shifting. One of the recently used terms in this respect is Generation Z, also known as Gen Z. In this respect, (Jayatissa, 2023) states that this generation is also known as 'digital natives', 'Gen Tech', 'Post-millennials', 'iGeneration', 'Gen Wi-Fi Zoomers ', 'Homeland Generation', 'Centennials', 'Generation V', 'App Generation',

'The Silent Generation', 'Media Generation', and 'Responsibility Generation'. However, there is no agreement about specifying the actual age range of this generation. The literature review presented by (Dolot, 2018), (Gaidani, S. Arora, L. & Sharma, B. K., 2019), and (Jayatissa, 2023) shows that it ranges from 1990 to later; to conclude, it refers to people born between 1995 and 2010 in the digital era.

Dolot states that this generation is mainly characterised by achieving "a spectacular professional career immediately, without any effort" (Dolot, 2018). She moves to point out that

> It is difficult for them to face the vision of long-lasting professional career development while employing small steps. These people look for jobs in their closest surroundings and worldwide, as their characteristic features are mobility and knowledge of foreign languages. What constituted a threat for older generations is an object of fascination and experimentation for Generation Z. They do not care about stability at work; they quickly change their workplace, looking for versatility and to escape from routine.

For their education, Dolot describes them as "the most educated and sophisticated generation ever," justifying this by saying they are people who are looking for self-employment as their preferred way of "professional activity, especially because they consider it better paid and gives a sense of independence." Their age is their main weakness in the labour market; mainly, they are characterised as liking changes in their career or being away from concentrating on one thing. This makes them different since not being stable in their careers leads to different attitudes and personalities. However, this makes them ready to accept feedback from others if it can lead to a better competitive situation. This competitive environment is based on enhancing speech style and is supported by the needed technologies. The following figure presents the results of Dolot's survey (2018) on the actual representation of these characteristics of Gen Z.

Figure (1): The characteristics of Gen Z (taken from Dolot, 2018, p.47)
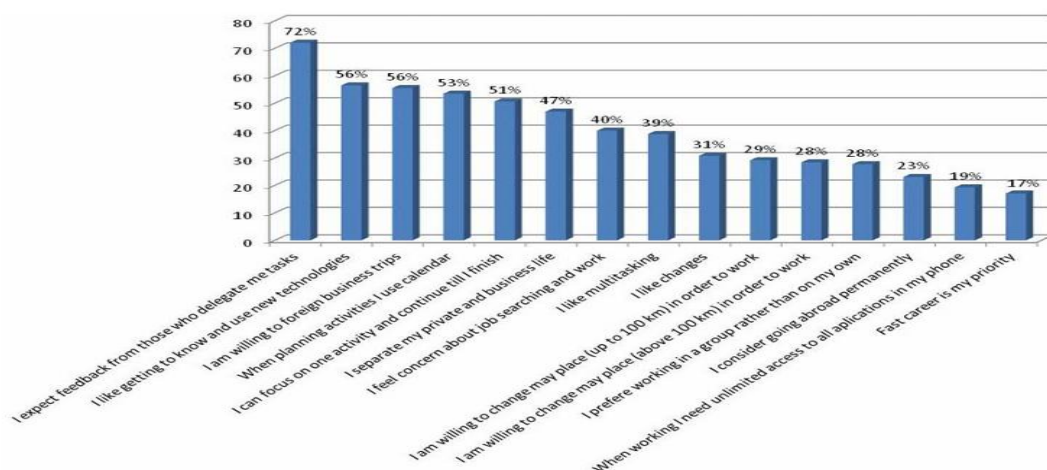
They are familiar with modern slang due to their involvement in social media or chatting apps. That supports the language change phenomenon since the Baby Boomer generation (born in the 1940s-1950s) until millennials (born in the 1980s- late 1990s) might not know what people from Gen Z talk about (Linuwih, E. R. & Handayani, G.K., 2022). Gen Z was raised in the internet era and adopted digital technology from the beginning of their lives (Tarihoran, S. & Jufrizal, J., 2024). They utilise social media to fulfill their work, information, communication, or entertainment needs. According to a Piper Sandler survey, "81% of Gen Z generally preferred to use more than three social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and mostly Instagram" (Kandiawan, 2023).

Technology drives people to use informal language in its primary domain, social media. Slang often uses figurative meanings, metaphors, or more specific meanings that only the group using the slang can understand. Social media users communicate intimately and comfortably by using slang, even among different specialised interest groups, ending up with many funny wordplay combinations (Silalahi, E. & Silalahi, N., 2023). In chatting apps, slang words are used in chat, captions and comments to express an impression and create an intimate atmosphere. They are widely used by all groups, including soldiers, medical professionals, and celebrities. They present polite, proper, and desirable meanings of disrespect and rudeness. Ironically, one feels prestigious when mastering popular, trendy slang (Saputra, R. S. & Salih, Y., 2023). Gen Z utilises slang to "keep insiders in and outsiders out or passers-by out of their conversation." They prefer to use different language coding to attain privacy away from the surrounding adults (Linuwih, E. R. & Handayani, G.K., 2022). They are the

most active users on social media. This phenomenon has created many new instances of slang for captions and posts. The present study has three research questions:

1- What is the mastery level of Iraqi EFL students of Gen Z slang?
2- What are the formal vs informal resources of their slang?
3- What challenges do they encounter to enhance their mastery of Gen Z slang?

These questions are expected to guide the researchers in better understanding the Iraqi EFL students' mastery of Gen-Z slang and whether they seek formal or informal sources to achieve this mastery.

English Slang

Slang is a language variation deriving from the standard based on the speaker's social needs and aesthetics (Einarsdóttir, 2022). It denotes "the commonly known linguistic variation among peers of the same standard and social status." It may occur as a single word, a phrase or a sentence within everyday language (colloquial speech). Slangs are newly coined forms or extended meanings attached to established terms (Chen, 2006). Although credit goes to teenagers who create most slang not recognised in dictionaries, they are used among different groups and at various levels of education to denote part of the group identity and keep out those they generally claim to be outsiders (Pongsapan, 2022). In the past, slang reflected inferior group identity in society. Nowadays, English slang has become more international and influential in everyday discourse, being funny and trendy. They enrich contexts to express attitudes against societal conventions. As speech variety, slang is created to be unique on lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactical levels. For instance, slang created with a rhyme is used to express humor to be understood and remembered, such as fender-bender and razzle-dazzle. On the lexical level, well-known words become slang by being attached to new meanings, such as the acronym NATO, which describes somebody or something that only says something but does not put their plans into practice (Zhou, Y. & Fan,Y., 2013).

Slang is a social concept reinforcing cohesiveness within a group or as a level of usage below stylistically neutral language. Slang is created within other varieties, such as

cant, jargon, dialect, and foul language. It has been claimed that slang is created by ingenious individuals to "freshen the language, to vitalise it, to make the language more pungent and picturesque, to increase the store of terse and striking words, or to provide a vocabulary for new shades of meaning." (Cabanas, 2023, pp.2-3).

Teenagers and college students are the fashion makers of this industry, being radical in every aspect, including their ways of interacting. They are unafraid of making mistakes and ready to explore the unknown. When young individuals interact by using unique college slang, they want to show and strengthen the emotion that they belong to the group. They are sometimes used "to deny allegiance to genteel, elite, and proper society and its standard linguistic forms." In this aspect, and in addition to stress group membership, slang is used to satisfy psychological needs by expressing emotion, which is one of the essential functions of language (Zhou, Y. & Fan,Y., 2013, pp. 2210-2211). Social media is the primary source of slang, as the emergence of slang in young people's conversations is very high (Alawiyah, S. & Lustiyantie, N., 2024).

Related Studies

The literature on Gen Z can be divided into two orientations. The first is concerned with examining Gen Z's characteristics, as well as issues related to age range and terms used to name this generation. Detailed examples of this orientation can be seen in (Dolot, 2018) and (Jayatissa, 2023), the latter of which mentions more than 21 classifications according to age range and 26 terms to name this generation.

The second orientation focuses on the use of slang in general and those coined within the digital era. (Pradianti, 2013) has used questionnaires to examine the morphological processes of slang words used by high school students in everyday conversation. The findings show eleven groups of morphological processes in this study. (Sadri, A. ,Haryanto, A. & Weda, S., 2017) have used a qualitative descriptive method to examine the types of slang used by lecturers and students, the factors causing the use of slang, and the reasons for using slang. The findings have shown that the lecturer and students employed fresh, creative, compounding, imitative, and clipping types in classroom communication. The analysis has shown that social status, age, social distance or familiarity, and situation are the factors that affect the use of

slang in the classroom. Using slang meets learners' social and educational needs and enriches the language with different delights, imitations, and jokes. Using cluster random sampling classified into two groups, (Yultisa, N. & Mardiah, A., 2018) have aimed to determine whether using English slang affects the speaking skills of the 2018/2019 Nigerian tenth-grade students. A questionnaire test has been followed as the instrument for collecting data. The study has found that using English slang significantly affected students' speaking skills. Collecting data from document analyses and close-ended questionnaires, both (Nuraeni, F. , Pahamzah, J. Sultan, U. & Tirtayasa, A., 2021) and (Pongsapan, 2022) have conducted similar studies on slang using the interactive data analysis model: data reduction, data display, and concluding/verification. The studies have found that the types of slang used in teenage interaction show various results for each type, including acronym, clipping, fresh and creative coining, compounding, and imitation. Seven reasons are found for the use of slang. The reasons for using such slang are to enrich the language by inventing new words, to induce friendliness, to be different, to ease social intercourse, to reduce the seriousness of the conversation, to have fun, and to delight in virtuosity. (Linuwih, E. R. & Handayani, G.K., 2022) have used qualitative data analysis to determine the input of a successful English learner from Indonesia and the knowledge of Gen Z's English slang. The respondent was exposed to formal and informal input. Out of 25 questions given about slang, the respondent was able to define three slang words correctly. The respondent did not do well in the slang test because English education in Indonesia does not focus on teaching slang, the people the respondent follows on social media are not from Gen Z, the respondent does not spend much time on social media, or the topics/ contents are not using general slang words, offline game cannot connect people worldwide, the respondent might have heard or read one or two slang words but did not search for its meaning. In a complementary study, (Kandiawan, 2023) has collected data from journals, reports, or books that other researchers had written and analysed using content or document analysis and discourse analysis. Using descriptive qualitative research methods, he has examined slang in code-switching among Indonesian Gen Z on social media. The analysis has revealed reasons behind using slang in code-switching, such as social needs, convenience, referential functions like emphasising the precise message, and affective functions.

The literature on the Iraqi situation of EFL students is poor. It has focused on examining their awareness of social issues that may affect their use of English (Abed,

A. Q.. & Mohammed, H. E., 2012) or their awareness of learning strategies (Abed, 2011). (Ali, A. & Dawood, Z., 2019) have used a matching test to examine the performance of Iraqi EFL learners in using idiomatic expressions. The results showed weak performance of the study's subjects due to the poor input of these expressions under study. (Hamud, S. H. & Mutar, Q. M., 2023) and (Mutar, Q. M. & Hamud, S. H., 2024) have used a descriptive-quantitative method to examine whether social media has a decisive positive role in developing Iraqi EFL learners. The study found a significant difference among Iraqi EFL learners in social media use based on their academic stage. The present study is expected to fill the gap in examining the use and performance of Gen Z slang among Iraqi EFL students at the university level.

Methodology

This paper uses specific mixed-method procedures to explore Gen Z's mastery of slang and its significant sources in their inputs. The data was collected via a cross-verification method, including an in-depth interview and a paper test. This method was chosen to examine the phenomena in breadth and depth, limit any possible biases and inaccuracies from using a single data source, and get better insights from the respondents' information. The population in this research was 100 Iraqi EFL students from four universities, namely Mustansiriyah University, Wasit University, Al-Qadisyyah University, and Imam Al-Kadhum College. Twenty-five males and females were selected from each university based on three criteria: their age is within the limits of Gen Z, their speaking skills are assessed to be Very Good by their teachers, and they are willing to participate positively in the applied part of the present study. The practical part was administered in two steps. The first step was an interview with the subjects of the study. It was done via Google Meet for four subsequent days (10-14/12/2024), where the researchers met the subjects of each university separately, explaining to them the aims and benefits of the research and the questions they were required to answer. The interview included 44 questions on the undergraduate's usual input (see Appendix below), language learning routine, habitual language practice, and listening preferences. The interview ended after the researchers found that no new data could be added. Later in the same day, a Google Form of the required questions was sent to them. The data were collected and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively according to Colley et al.'s types of inputs (2003) and types of comprehensible input by

(Ellis, 2008). (Colley, H. , Hodkinson, P. & Colley, J., 2003) presents two types of language inputs; first, the formal input that is acquired though education activities take place in a structured setting, typically a classroom, at specific hours and according to a set of curricula, and second, the informal input that is acquired through everyday activities like chatting with native speakers, watching movies, listening to music, or reading books in the target language. (Ellis, 2008) proposes three types of input: first, pre-modified input, which falls under formal input adjusted to enhance comprehension; second, unmodified input, which falls under informal input; and last, interactionally modified input, which means negotiation of meaning to improve the comprehensibility.

The second part of data collection was done the next day, where a list of 50 common slang words was sent to the subject via another Google Form (see Table 1 below) (Adams, 2009). The selected data are of three types: one-word, two-word and three-word slang. The data were also analysed quantitatively using SPSS, v.24. The practical part's face and content validity was achieved by consulting a jury of four scholars in applied linguistics and EFL who work in the universities of the study's subjects. The five-point Likert Scale was used to analyse the results of the second Google Form of the test.

Results and Discussion

The interview analysis revealed that 32 males and 68 females were the study subjects. It is important to mention here that the present study is not gender-based. Their ages ranged from 21 to 24. Q3 in the interview was about being involved in any social media groups; the results were 44 for Yes and 56 for No. The researchers examined these Yes instances and found that about 80% were males and 20% were females. This indicates that males are more attracted to social media groups than females. The researchers believe the main reason is the conservative society to which the subjects belong. Q4 was whether they had heard the term 'Gen Z.' The results were 40% for Yes and 60% for No. The fifth question was about using e-dictionaries or apps like Google Translate or Yandex Translate in their study; the results showed a higher percentage of 84 for Yes and 16 for No. The results of these questions can be represented as follows.

Figure (2): Pie charts for gender, social media involvement, knowledge about Gen Z and using e-dictionaries and apps
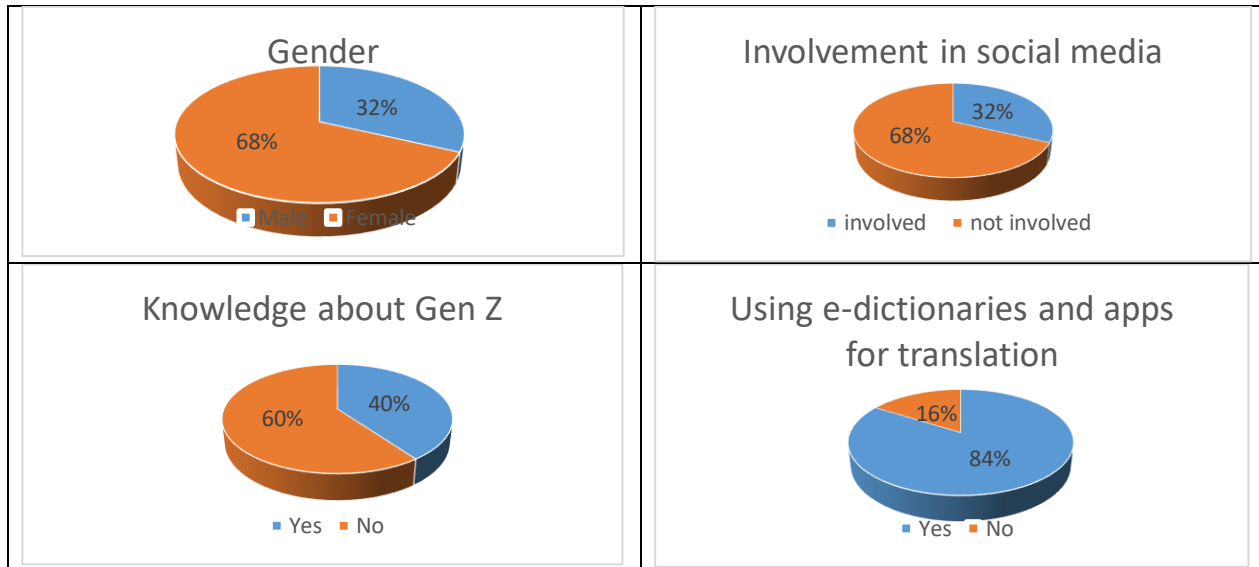
Q6 to Q9 were related to the subjects' use of slang words. The subjects gave different answers to the sixth question (Do you have any unique slang words? Do you share them with your friends?). About 24% of their answers were (*No, nothing, not like, I don't have any)*. The other 74% answered Yes, with examples ranging from one single word to nine examples as the maximum. Among these examples were (*ate, cap, gonna, sus, chil, I'm dead, goat, FOMO, cool, slaps, whatsapp, cooked, simp, nailed it, lit, vibe, pookie, willy nilly, deary, flopped, sigma, salty, and slay*). For the second part of this question, the following answers were identified (no changes to the structures of the original answers):

- *I know a lot of slang words. but I do not necessarily have space to share with friends.*
- *I know most of the words and use only with close friends whom I know will understand it.*
- *Actually my friends are not obsessed to speak English like me.*
- *No need to share*
- *Show off*
- *Some are sensitive*
- *I think it don't fit the situation to share with friends.*

The important point here is that there are some personal reasons behind sharing or communicating with others using slang words. Also, the researchers found that the use of (*sensitive to share, show off*) was among the answers of female participants. For the seventh question (Why do you use slang words?), the subjects' answers were represented in the following figure:

Figure (3): The subjects' use of slang words

Their answers revealed their tendency to find individualistic ways to enhance their capacities as EFL students. This finding was relevant in their answers to the following two questions (Q7 & Q8) about having friends use slang words and their willingness to imitate them. The following figure presents the results of these questions.

Figure (4): Participants' friends and imitating them in using slang
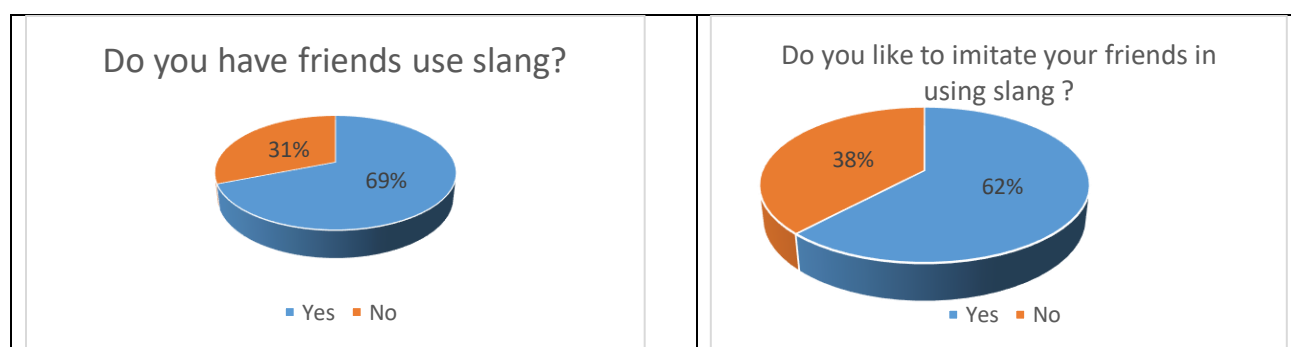
Q10 to Q14 were concerned with their view of using slang in the classroom. Q10 related to the most appropriate situations where slang words can be used. The results revealed that they never use slang alone, meaning they do not use slang when practising English alone. On the other hand, they use slang with their friends outside

the classroom with 51%, compared with 9% only inside the classroom. The following figure illustrates these results.

Figure (5): The appropriate situations to use slang words
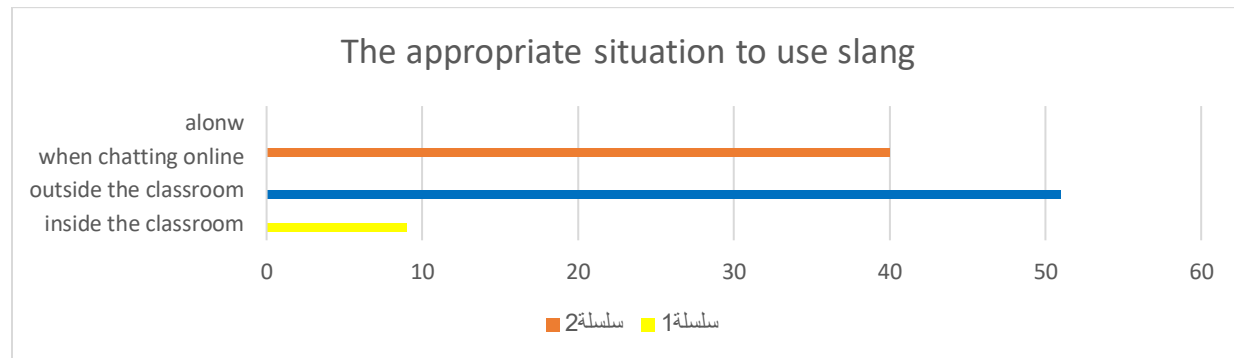
The good point is their realisation of increasing the percentage of slang words in classroom communication. This has been revealed by 52% for Yes and 48% for No in Q11. Although the two percentages are close together, this can be used as a motivating orientation recognised by Iraqi EFL students. Respectively, the results reported 42% for Yes and 58% for No for Q12, which was concerned with teachers' orientation to increase their students' use of slang inside classroom communication. Similarly, in Q13, the subjects claimed that 60% of the conversations in their Listening/Speaking modules are slang words, while 40% had the opposite claim. The different levels of speaking skills of the teachers themselves can justify this. The researchers noticed that young teachers are likely to include American accents in their presentations, while the old ones are restricted to RP English. The results of Q14 support the above discussion significantly when 49% of the subjects believed that using slang is a sign of creative use of language, compared with 10%, 9% and 32% for vulgar, taboo and funny uses, respectively. Also, another important conclusion here is the informal input of these percentages of using slang words, compared with relatively less for formal input.

The interview's questions also examine the sources of the input, whether informal or formal. In Q15, the results reported that 40% of the subjects like to read their textbooks, compared with 17%, 18%, 14% and 11% for browsing social media, watching TV, listening to music, and playing video games, respectively. This can be represented in the following figure.

Figure (6): The subjects' interests in spending time

The subjects' interest in spending time
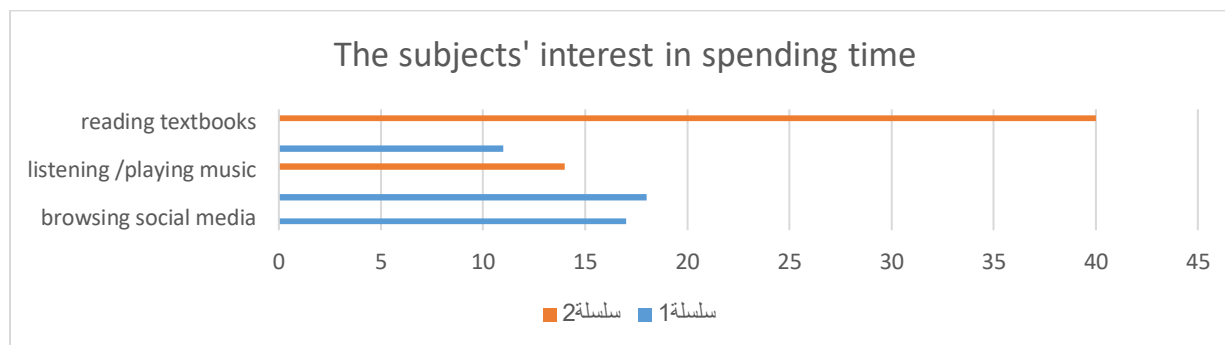
Q16 to Q20 were related to reading. In Q16, the results reported that 45% of the subjects read novels in their textbooks, compared with 28% for general books, 17% for short stories, 2% for newspapers and 8% for plays. In Q17, the subjects were asked about the last book they had read. Among the textbooks they have mentioned were the following: *(Animal Farm, Death of a Salesman, Arms and the Man, Crimes and Punishment, Fahrenheit 451, Featured in Yellow, Great Expectations, Hamlet, Little Life, Macbeth, Pride and Prejudice, Roses and Bullets, The Lord of the Kings, The Stranger, Wuthering Heights, Why do we Sleep, Thinking Slow and Fast, and White Nights).* What supports the above results is those of Q18., where 70% of the books they read are traditional, i.e., those made of paper, while 30% are electronic. In Q19, 13% of the subjects are part of reading communities, while 87% are not. Q20 called those 13% to mention the names of these communities. They reported the following: (*Booktok Community, English Family, English Language Teacher's, Hope, Hope Makers, Migo Gang, Learning of English*). Two subjects stated that they had their reasons for not revealing the names of their groups or communities.

Q21 to Q25 were related to the second source of informal input of slang, namely, playing video games. Q21 was associated with the type of video games the subjects are interested in. The results reported that most like to play action and FIFA. Others like those of puzzles and fantasy. In Q22, the subjects mentioned the following as those they play most: (*PUBG, 100 Rooms, Bratz, Call of Duty, Ludo, Part Gang, Resident Evil, Hay Day, Squad Basters, The Evil Within, and Wow Mode*). %59 of the subjects liked to play these games online with their friends, while the other 41% did not like that. Also, 46% of those who played online liked using English slang words, while 54% liked using Arabic ones. These were the results of Q23 and Q24, respectively. In Q25, 80% of the subjects were not part of any online communities of playing games, while 20% were.

The influence of social media was examined from Q26 to Q30. Q26 was related to the type of social media platforms that the subjects liked. The subjects were more active on Instagram, with 59%, followed by TikTok and Telegram, respectively. In Q27, they thought that TikTok was the richest with slang, 38%, followed by Instagram, Facebook, and Telegram. This is represented in Figure (7).

Figure (7): The Subject's Favorite social media platform & most rich platforms with slang
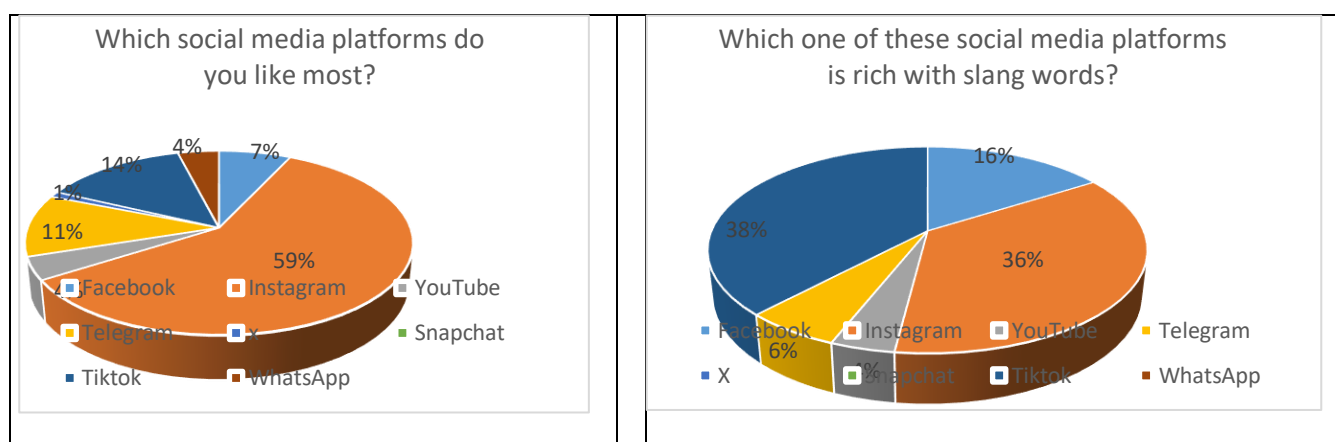
In Q28, 71% of the subjects tended to communicate with native speakers on social media platforms, and in Q29, 77% believed that recent social media trends could increase their slang words. However, in Q30, only 30% were part of a community or group.

Q31 to Q36 was related to the fourth source of informal input of slang, namely, listening to English songs. Q31 was related to music bands the subjects were listening to. The results show that the most favourite bands were *Arctic Monkeys, BTS, Billie Elisha, ABBA, Cigarette after sex, One Direction, Coldplay, Ghostly Kisses, Guns N' Roses, Imagine Dragons, Little Mix, Paramore, Queen, Radiohead, The Smiths, Oasis, Rammstein, The cure.* In Q32, most subjects were listening to *pop, Arabic songs, opera and violin, calm and sad, classical music, country music, rap, jazz, popular music, quiet music, and rock).* In Q33 %68 thought listening to songs can increase their slang

words. In Q34, the songs the subjects liked to listen to most were *Bird of Feather, Bad Blood, Another Love, Aramam, Asking Alexandria, kneel before me, Dark Paradise, Disease, double take and Memories, Careless Whisper, Hello, it's me, Him and I, Just come on, Kiss the sky, gods & monsters, Let Down, Like a tattoo, Me, myself and you, Myxomatosis, Perfect, Rise, Run by Daughter, Silent lucidity, Somewhere only we know, Stay with you, Sway, Guilty as sin, The strokes, Selfless, The weekend, Try me, We don't talk about bronco, When I'm with you,* and *White Ferrari).* 3% do not listen to music at all. In Q35, %66 tried looking for the word meaning in the songs to help understand and remember them, though, in Q36, only %10 of them were part of music communities or groups. This is represented in Figure (8).

Q37 to Q41 are related to the fifth source of informal input of slang, namely, watching films. In Q37, 58% preferred Cinemana as a film platform, followed by Netflix and TV (see Figure 9). In Q38, 66% re-watched the same film to understand the slang words, and in Q39, most were attracted to films by the language used, Actors/ actresses, Music, and visuals, respectively.

Figure (8): The Subjects Engagement in Activities Involve Native Speakers
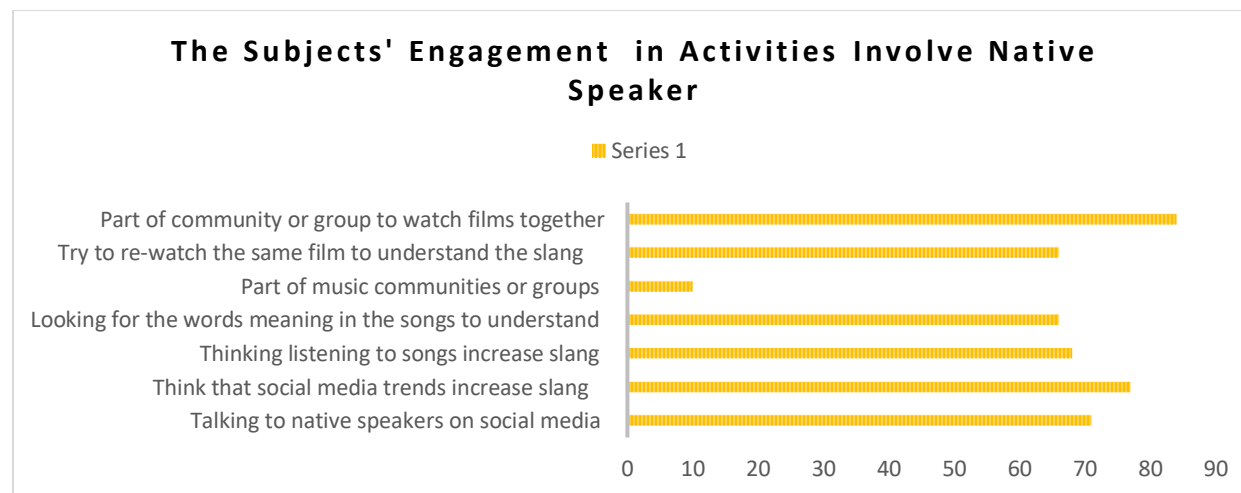
In Q 40, %62 of the subjects preferred online search over other methods when hearing a new slang word in a film and trying to look for its meaning and uses (see Figure 9). In Q41, %84 were part of a community or group that likes to watch films

together (see Figure 8), and in Q42, %64 thought that the language used in Iraqi TV channels is full of slang Arabic words.

Figure (9): Favorite film platform & source of slang meaning
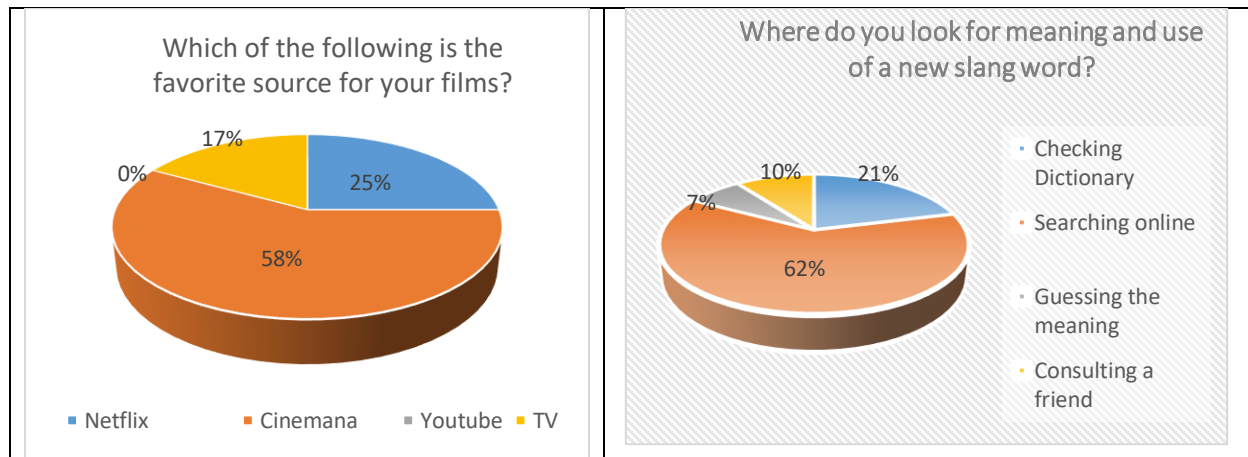
The subjects in Q43 use slang words more while speaking with close friends, followed by chatting on social media platforms. In Q44, most subjects think that using slang words in English or Arabic positively influences them as students. This is presented in Figure (10).

Figure (10): Slang output environment & influence of usage
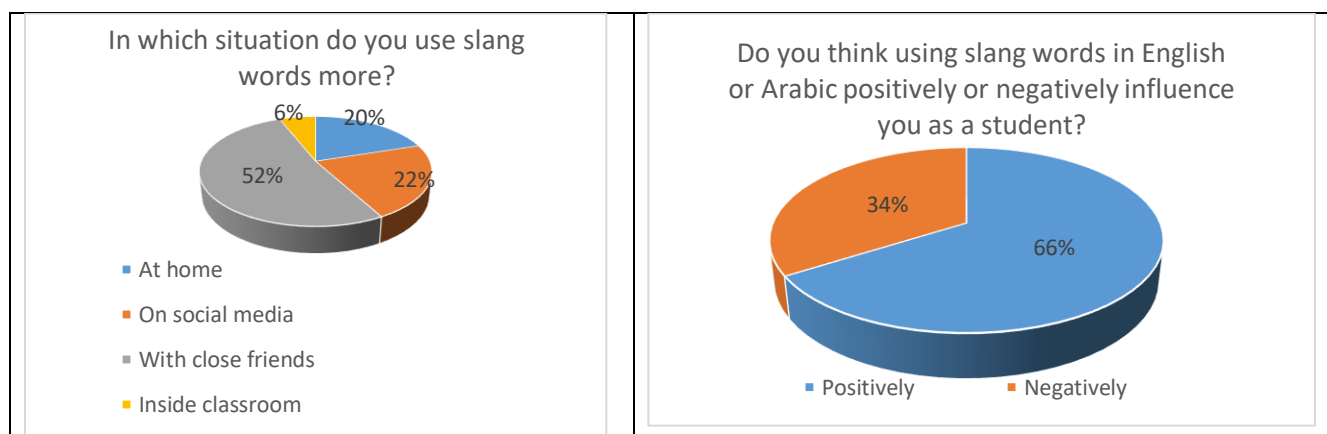
To examine the subjects' performance in recognising and using slang words, they were asked to assess their use of 50 words from everyday slang. This assessment uses the Likert scale of five-point values as the statistical tool (see Table 1 below). Based on the literature of the previous studies, which shows a lower mastery by EFL learners/ students, it is expected that Iraqi EFL students have the same behaviour. Therefore, their performance should follow the following null and alternative hypotheses:

Ho = If weighted means are less than the mean, they are normally distributed. The test is valid and reliable.

Hi=If weighted means are equal or higher than the mean, they are not normally distributed. The test is invalid and not reliable. the weighted means are not normally distributed.

The following table presents the calculation of weighted means based on an equation related to the Likert Scale. This scale is "one of the most fundamental and frequently used psychometric tools in educational and social sciences research" (Joshi, A. , Kale, S. Chandel, S. & Pal, D. K., 2015, p.396). These five points are 'never', 'seldom', 'occasionally', 'frequently', and 'always'. These are assigned 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 values, with a medium of 2.5. The subjects were given one question for these slang words or phrases: 'Have you used these slang words or phrases in your speaking? Weighted Means were gathered as follows:

[(never x0) + (seldom x 1) + (occasionally x 2) + (frequently x 3) + (always x4)/ 100

Table (1): Likert Scale for the fifty common slang words.

No.	Slangs	Never 0	Seldom 1	Occasionally 2	Frequently 3	Always 4	Weighted Means
1.	Pet	18	11	44	18	9	1.89
2.	Glow	13	16	26	39	6	2.09
3.	CEO	24	44	5	18	9	1.44
4.	Fit	2	6	15	36	41	3.08
5.	Tea	3	2	11	21	63	3.39

6.	Stan	33	13	28	14	12	1.59
7.	Basic	2	7	28	21	42	2.94
8.	Slaps	20	14	39	6	21	1.94
9.	Force	13	13	21	27	26	2.4
10.	Beat(or cake) your face	48	23	14	3	12	1.08
11.	Bops	48	13	23	9	6	1.1
12.	Bouta	49	15	16	5	15	1.22
13.	Bread	51	26	12	5	6	0.89
14.	Clapback	50	14	16	5	15	1.21
15.	Crackie	32	49	9	5	5	1.02
16.	Deadass, dogs/on dogs dead	36	14	23	18	9	1.5
17.	Don't do me dirty	33	12	14	20	21	1.84
18.	Facts	2	0	4	44	52	3.48
19.	Finesse	33	19	19	20	9	1.53
20.	Flexed on	33	21	8	20	18	1.69
21.	The game	8	14	22	19	37	2.63
22.	Gassing/hyping	29	21	24	14	12	1.59
23.	Gotta blast	47	18	12	14	9	1.2
24.	Hardo	60	11	20	0	9	0.87
25.	High key	31	33	16	14	6	1.31
26.	Hip/get hip	69	13	9	0	9	0.67
27.	Hop off	35	15	24	8	18	1.59
28.	I'm dead	13	0	18	12	57	3
29.	Jams	23	26	19	17	15	1.75
30.	Low key	31	6	10	20	33	2.18
31.	No cap	33	15	11	14	27	1.87
32.	Nunya	68	8	6	0	18	0.92
33.	Periodt	47	6	19	16	12	1.4
34.	Pull up/come thru	21	14	19	22	24	2.14
35.	Put someone on	19	11	24	28	18	2.15
36.	Rashing	51	9	19	6	15	1.25
37.	Real one	15	8	11	22	44	2.72

38.	Secure(d) the bag	30	27	22	6	15	1.49
39.	Shlitty	69	14	14	0	3	0.54
40.	Sis	17	11	9	13	50	2.68
41.	Slaps	27	11	26	9	27	1.98
42.	Slay	43	16	20	8	13	1.32
43.	Snacks	7	0	6	14	73	3.46
44.	Stay up	12	6	13	24	45	2.84
45.	Take the L	53	10	7	6	24	1.38
46.	spill the tea	12	3	8	21	56	3.06
47.	Tight	12	14	9	26	39	2.66
48.	Tweaking	32	16	22	9	21	1.71
49.	Valid	16	11	10	30	33	2.53
50.	Wig snatched	48	10	23	16	3	1.16

					Total Weighted Means	93.37
					Average of Total Weighted Means	1.8674

These weighted means are presented in a line diagram to show that they are normally distributed. The test is valid and reliable if the weighted means are normally distributed (see Figure 11 below). It can also be a valid indicator of the subject's performance and mastery of slang words. For this purpose, the total weighted means is divided by the total number of the subjects to obtain the final average of weighted means, which should be equal to or higher than 2.5 to state that the performance is acceptable and a good mastery is reported. If the null hypothesis is invalid, the null hypothesis will be considered. This means the subjects have not participated correctly, or their mastery is not within the accepted average. To test this, and in addition to the Likert Scale, the researchers used SPSS v.16 to apply T-Test (see Figure 12 below). Consequently, the null hypothesis is valid, and the test is accepted as a possible indicator of the subjects' mastery of Gen Z slang.

Figure (11): Line representation of Weighted Means of fifty common slangs
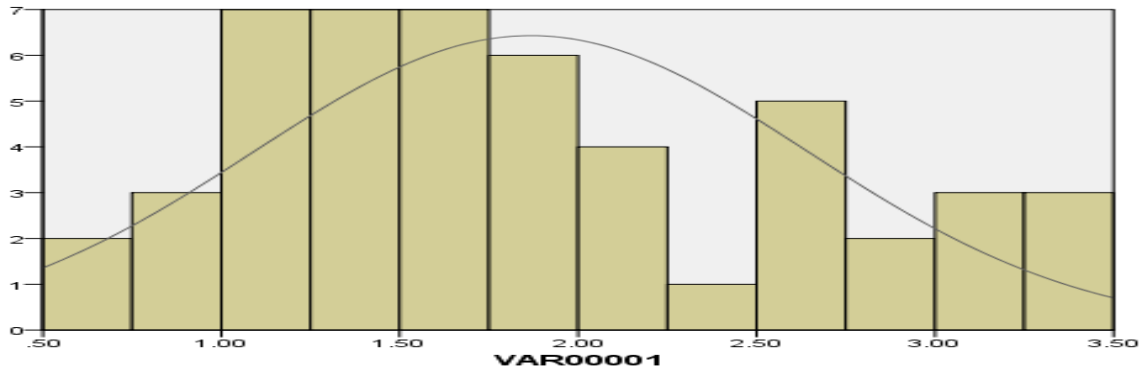
The results of the T-Test are shown in the following figure.

Figure (12): The results of T-Test

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00001	50	1.8674	.77535	.10965

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
VAR00001	17.030	49	.000	1.86740	1.6470	2.0878

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of VAR00001 is normal with mean 1.867 and standard deviation 0.78.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.470	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Conclusion

The present study is expected to fill the gap in the literature by examining the use and performance of Gen Z slang among Iraqi EFL students at the university level. The results are sufficient to call the subjects of the study actual representatives of Gen Z. That is evidenced by the subjects' range of age, hobbies, interests, and social media preferences.

Concerning the first research question, the results are similar to those of previous studies in that using English slang significantly affects students' speaking skills, reduces seriousness, induces friendliness, eases social interaction, and enriches the language. It also supports the literature concerning reasons behind using slang in code-switching, such as social needs, conveniences like emphasising the precise message, and affective functions. However, the results showed that Iraqi EFL students have a lower mastery of slang words due to poor input.

Concerning the second research question, building on types of input by (Colley, H. , Hodkinson, P. & Colley, J., 2003) and (Ellis, 2008), slang can be classified as informal, unmodified input. This is evidenced here by the result that many subjects used slang words in the classroom, and most of them used slang words with friends outside the classroom. However, slang characteristics meet better with the interactionally modified input since it is coined and altered to suit users' social and educational needs. The results also show that the reason behind using slang words was to find a good way to develop a learner's English. Though the input of slang is insufficient, social media platforms are the most influential sources that positively affect students' mastery levels. It has a decisive positive role in Iraqi EFL learners' mastery of slang since most students are involved in social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, try to interact with native speakers online, and feel that social media trends increase their slang. This also indicates that slang is a social concept that reinforces cohesiveness within a group. Other sources of slang input are other informal types, namely, chatting apps, films, music, books, and friends. The last in this list is classroom activities (like Conversation/ Listening & Speaking) that fall under formal input.

Concerning the third research question, the subject's slang output is affected by their attitude towards slang nature, setting, and situations. Some of them do not have the opportunity to share slang words or find them sensitive to be shared, like vulgar or taboo slang. They may only use slang words with group members who use the same slang or have no friends interested in chatting in English. Some do not think they need to share slang words, while others use slang words "to show off." In this sense, the learner feels prestigious when mastering popular, trendy slang. However, the present study reveals that a formal setting lacks the employment of fresh and creative slang and that, as university students, the study's subjects depend on informal resources to develop their mastery level of slang. Bearing in mind that most of the subjects thought that teachers do not encourage using slang words in classroom communication and suggest including slang words in classroom communication, there is a need to adjust the setting of the classroom to cope with students' aim to follow up slang as a language trend that significantly affects their speaking skills. As mentioned, slang can be an interactionally modified comprehensible input since it represents part of socially driven interaction; by adopting suitable slang into a formal modified setting that supports language learning (e.g., within speaking class activities), teachers can encourage students to use slang inside the classroom to achieve goals on educational, social, and personal levels.

The interview analysis also showed that Gen Z's characteristics of Iraqi EFL students include being social media-driven, self-independent, individualistic, and having in-person communication. They also tend to avoid mutual communication, use text instant messages (or follow virtual communication), engage in internet socialisation, participate in social activism, rely on internal motivation for responsibility, multitask, and exhibit materialistic tendencies.

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Appendix

Interview

Read the following questions and write or choose the answer that fits you best.
1- Year of Birth.
2- Your gender: male / Female.
3- Are you involved in clubs or any social media group? Yes   / No

4- Do you know the meaning of Gen-Z? Yes No

5- Do you consult a dictionary (or apps like Google Translate) when you face a slang word? Yes No

6- Do you have any unique (slang) words? Do you share them with your friends?

7- Why do you use these slang words?

   To be up to date   ☐ to find a good way to develop my English

   To keep your group's   or friends privacy   ☐ To show others you are good at English

8- Do you have friends who use slang words too much in their daily use of English? Yes No

9- Do you like to imitate them when using these slang words?   Yes   No

10-   Do you think it is appropriate to use slang words inside ----

   Inside classroom   Outside the classroom with my friends

        when chatting online   Alone

11-   Do you suggest including slang words in classroom communication? Yes No

12-   Have any of your teachers encouraged you to use slang in your communication? Yes   No

13-   Do the spoken courses (like Conversation/ Listening & Speaking) include slang words in the material? Yes No

14-   How can you describe using slang words?

   Vulgar (disrespectful)   ☐ Taboo (forbidden terms)   ☐ Funny ☐ Creative

15-   Which of the following is your hobby /interest (s)?

   Browsing social media   Watching TV (films/ football matches/,,,)

   Listening/ playing music   Playing video games   Reading my books

16-   If you read, which one you read most?

   Novels   Books   Short stories   Newspapers   Plays

17-   What is the last book you have read?

18- If you read, which one do you like?

   Electronic books   Traditional books (made of paper)

19-   Are you part of any reading communities (groups)?   Yes   No

20-   If Yes (for the previous question), What is the name of this group?

21-   If you play video games, what kind of games do you play most?

22-   What was the last game you played?

23-   Do you like to play games online?   Yes   No

24-   Do you use slang words when playing video games online?   Yes   No

25-Are you part of any gaming communities/groups?   Yes   No

26-If you use social media platforms, which one do you like most?

Facebook   Instagram   YouTube   Telegram   X (Twitter)   Snapchat   Tiktok   WhatsApp

27-Which one of these social media platforms is rich with slang words?

Facebook   Instagram YouTube   Telegram   X (Twitter)   Snapchat   Tiktok   WhatsApp

28- Have you ever tried to talk to native speakers of English on social media platforms? Yes No

29-Do you think that recent social media trends can increase your slang words? Yes No

30-Are you part of any community or group on social media platforms? Yes No

-3I-f you listen to music, what is your favourite band?

32-What kind of music do you listen to more?

33-Do you think listening to songs can increase your slang words?   Yes   No

34-Which song do you like to listen to most?

35-Have you tried looking for the words in the songs to help you understand / remember them? Yes No

36- Are you part of any music communities or groups? Yes   No

37- Which of the following is the favourite source for your films?

Netflix   Cinemani9   YouTube   TV

38-Do you try to re-watch the same film to understand the slang words in it? Yes No

39-What attracts you more to watching films?

Music   Actors/ actresses   Visuals   The language used

40-If you hear a new slang word in a film, where you try to look for its meaning and uses?

Checking my Dictionary   Searching online   Guessing the meaning Consulting a friend

41-Are you part of any community or group that likes to watch films together? Yes No

42-Do you think the language used in Iraqi TV channels is full of slang Arabic words? Yes   No

43-In which situation do you use slang words more?

At home   Chatting on social media platforms   Speaking with my close friends Inside my classroom

44-Do you think using slang words in English or Arabic positively or negatively influences you as a student?   Positively   Negatively