

## **The Use of Slang Words Among Junior High School Students in Everyday Conversation**

(A case study in the ninth grade students of a junior high school in Bandung)

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The study is entitled "The Use of Slang Words among Junior High School Students in Everyday Conversation." It aims to investigate slang words used by the ninth grade students. This study also investigates the morphological processes involved in slang words and the reasons why the students use them in their everyday talk. The collected data from questionnaires and interviews were categorized into the types of slang words and analyzed in terms of their morphological processes by using a method of analysis based on theories as proposed by Yule (1985), Potter (1975), O'Grady and Guzman (1996), and Gerber (1968). These data were calculated in terms of frequency presented in tables and charts. The findings show that there are eleven groups of morphological processes in this study. Coinage is the most frequently used with 30.56%, followed by blending with 20.14% and borrowing with 13.19% words. Furthermore, there are some reasons influencing appearances of slang words, namely students want to say something in an easy way, show their anger, make other people confused, and want to have fun and laugh. Thus, future researchers are recommended to conduct studies on different slang users in different settings because slang changes and increases through time.

**Keywords:** slang words, morphological processes, coinage, blending, borrowing.

## INTRODUCTION

Language is important in our everyday conversation. People need a language to communicate with each other in their society. Slang is also considered to be a variation of language. Holmes (1992: 183) claims that this language variation is a pattern of youth speech; people can find slang words in teenagers' conversation from all around the world (as cited in <http://www.digilib.petra.ac.id>).

Indonesian slang, or natively known as *bahasa gaul* is an informal variety of *Bahasa Indonesia* that comes through some processes. One of these processes is word formation. There are different types of word formation processes. Yule (1985) says that word formation processes are the processes of forming new words or terms from the use of the old words to the new uses through some processes. Some examples of these processes are coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, derivation (prefixes, suffixes, infixes), and multiple

processes. In addition, back formation of Potter (1975), onomatopoeia from O'Grady and Guzman (1996) and also reduplication from Gerber (1968) are included to the processes of word formations to complete these theories.

In the context of this study, it investigates why students use slang among friends in school and also what will be the function of students use slang words. Furthermore, this study is expected to improve people's knowledge and make a contribution to sociolinguistics related studies and also to anyone who is interested in investigating slang words, especially to students who want to investigate more about slang.

The study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data for the study were in the form of slang words. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data to investigate why students in the ninth grade use slang words and also types of slang words they use with their friends. In addition, the

data of the morphological processes of the slang words were collected from a list of words given by the students. After categorizing all of the data, slang words were then analyzed

The data were computed through numerical amounts and percentages to make the data

and calculated by putting the results of the data into a table of frequency to determine the morphological process which is the most frequently used among students.

accumulation easy to understand. The percentage is based on the following formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = percentage

f = frequency of occurrences

N = the total number of morphological processes used

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study shows 144 slang words used by the respondents. The next session discusses the morphological processes involved in the formation of the slang words.

### 1. Coinage

This study shows forty four new terms (30.56%) considered as coinage used by the junior high school students. Coinage is the invention of totally new terms and they tend to become everyday words in the language (Yule, 1985).

The slang words categorized as coinage here is mostly used to express a joke to other students, such as the word *cemen* which refers to *coward*, *comel* which is the term for *someone who cannot keep a secret*, and *culun* which refers to *(like) a fool*.

### 2. Borrowing

The study reveals nineteen borrowing words (13.19%) used by the students. Yule (1985) states that borrowing is the taking over of words from other languages. From English, the students have borrowed

some words such as the word *cool* which means *impressive* or *calm* and the word *cute*, which is usually used to praise someone who is attractive or *charming*. The words borrowed from Betawi are *gue* to mean as pronoun *I* and *lo* as pronoun *you*. There are two Javanese words such as the word *katrok* for *hick* or *countrified* and *koplak* for *crazy* or *idiot*. Last, the rest of the words has been borrowed from Sundanese vocabularies, such as the term *garing*, which means *unfunny joke*, *jangar* for *headache*, and *jomblo* which refers to *single*.

### 3. Compounding

This study indicates four compound slang words (2.78%) used by the students, such as the word *illfeel*, *speechless*, *playboy*, and *update*. Compounding is the process of joining two separate words to produce a single form (Yule, 1985). The term *illfeel* or to lose feeling by someone is mostly spoken to show displeasure about something. This term is used by combining the word *ill* and *feel*. The term *speechless* is usually used by the students when

they get nervous or when they have no words to say. This term is used by combining the word *speech* and *less*.

### 4. Blending

This study shows twenty nine blended words (20.14%) used by the students. Yule (1985) states that blending is a process of combining two separate forms to produce a single new term. The slang words categorized as blending here are used to say something briefly, for example the word *camer* is formed from the combination of *calon* and *mertua*. Then the word *cumi* is formed from the process of blending from *cuma* and *mint*.

### 5. Clipping

There are seven slang words (4.86%) revealed in the study, such as the word *agan*, *cin*, *bro*, *say*, *sist*, *kul*, and *oon*. Clipping occurs when a word of more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form (Yule, 1985). There are two types of shortening; they are apheresis and apocope. Apheresis is new words by deleting consonant or vowel at the first syllable. Moreover, apocope is

new words by deleting consonant or vowel at the last syllable (Potter, 1975). For example the formal word *juragan* is shortened becomes *agan* by deleting the letters *jur* (aphesis process). Furthermore, the formal word *brother* is shortened becomes *bro* by deleting the letters *ther* (apocope process).

## 6. Back Formation

This study reveals four words (2.78%) considered to be back formation used by the junior high school students, such as the word *bakil*, *rebes*, *ucul*, and *kamsud*. Potter (1975) states that back formation is a process of revising the order of the word. For example the word *bakil* from *balik* (*go home*), *rebes* from *beres* (*finish*), *kamsud* from *maksud* (*mean*), and *ucul* from *lucu* (*funny*).

## 7. Acronyms

This study shows sixteen acronyms (11.12%) used by the students. Acronym is the word process which is formed from the initial letters of a set of other words

(Yule, 1985). These acronyms often consist of capital letters where the pronunciation consists of the set of letters, for example the word *GPL*; is an acronym for *Ga Pake Lama*. *OMG* is an acronym for *Oh My God*. *OL* is an acronym for *On Line*.

## 8. Derivation

This study shows seven derivation words (4.86%) used by the junior high school students, for example the word *ngaret*, *ngegosip*, *jadian*, *ampyun*, *esmosi*, *gaswat*, and *dikacangin*. Derivation is a process which forms a word by adding an affix and has the distinct meaning and category from the base (O'Grady and Guzman, 1996). There are four kinds of affixes found in the study, such as prefixes, suffixes, infixes, and the combination of prefixes and suffixes.

## 9. Multiple Processes

The study shows six multiple processes words (4.16%) used by the respondents. Multiple processes are forming some new words from old words through more than one word formation process (Yule, 1985). For

example, the word *BBMan* is an acronym which is derived from *Black Berry Messenger* and then added a suffix */-an/* in the end of that word. The word *ngedate* (have a dating) is formed by the process of adding a prefix */nge-/* in the beginning of the word and combined by the process of borrowing from English (date).

### 10. Onomatopoeia

There are three onomatopoeia words (2.08%) revealed in the study. O'Grady and Guzman (1996) state that onomatopoeia is a word that has a sound that represents an aspect of the thing. Those three words are *krik* for the expression of a quiet situation, *prikitiw* for a sound of whistling (as cited in

<http://www.suaramerdeka.com>), and *tulalit* for a sound of unconnected telephone.

### 11. Reduplication

There are five reduplication words (3.47%) revealed in this study. Reduplication is a duplication of sounds or words (Gerber, 1968). It is supported by the appearance of the word *bubu* (sleep), *dong dong* (stupid), *jali jali* (hang out), *unyu unyu* (cute), and *yoyoy* (yes or of course).

Furthermore, the table 1 below shows the morphological processes frequently used in slang words by the ninth grade students.

**Table 1**  
**The Total of Morphological Processes Used by the Students**

No.	Morphological Processes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Coinage	44	30.56%
2.	Blending	29	20.14%
3.	Borrowing	19	13.19%
4.	Acronyms	16	11.12%
5.	Clipping	7	4.86%
6.	Derivation	7	4.86%
7.	Multiple processes	6	4.16%
8.	Reduplication	5	3.47%
9.	Compounding	4	2.78%
10.	Back formation	4	2.78%
11.	Onomatopoeia	3	2.08%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>144</b>	<b>100%</b>

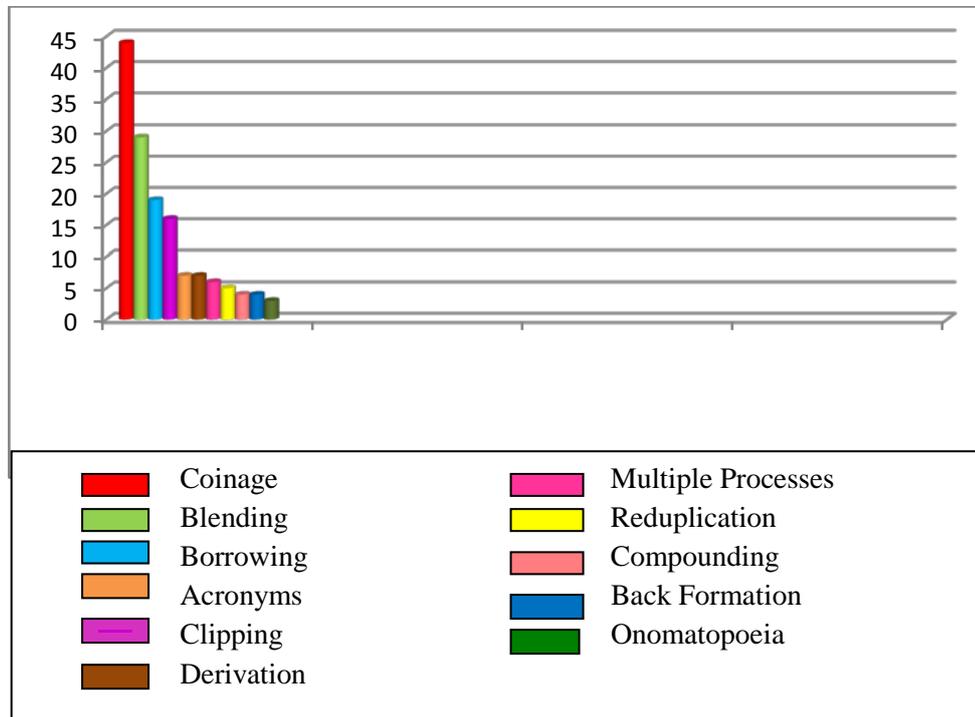
Table 1 above shows that coinage stays in the first position with 44 out of 144 (30.56%) total amounts of slang words. Then, it is followed by blending with 29 slang words (20.14%). In addition,

borrowing process has 19 out of 144 slang words (13.19%) and so on.

The chart 1 below shows the frequency of types of morphological processes in those slang words.

**Chart 1**

**The Total Number of Types of Morphological Processes in Slang Words**



As it is shown in the chart 1 that coinage is the most frequently used in slang words among the junior high school students. Thus, it can be assumed that the students are creative and innovative in playing and making the new words that older people cannot understand about them. It is supported by the appearance of slang words categorized as coinage, which are rich of new words and not listed in formal language dictionary.

### **THE REASONS WHY THE STUDENTS USE SLANG WORDS**

The study shows four reasons why the students use the slang words in their everyday conversation.

#### **1. Students Want to Say Something in an Easy Way**

Thongkamdee (1998, as cited in Gerber, 1968) states that teens use slang words in sentences shorter, faster, and easier to say. The study finds seven respondents (21.22%)

who argue that slang words can make their communication more quickly to say and easily to understand. Moreover, they tend to use them to make the conversation more attractive.

## **2. Students Want to Show Their Anger**

Some students tend to insult and show their anger by expressing it with slang words. Guitar (1963, as cited in Gerber, 1968) states that slang has been an acceptable means of expressing anger. The expression of anger is proved by noticing the students' responses from the interview data, there are eight slang words used by seven students (21.22%), such as the word *cemen*, *dong dong*, *gobog*, *jutek*, *rese*, *sarip*, *stupid*, and *lo gue end*.

## **3. Students Want to Make Other People Confused**

Some of the respondents (12.12%) said that they used slang words because they wanted to make somebody else confused. In accordance with the reasons why the students use slang words, slang can

show the group membership. It can assert or claim membership of identity or solidarity group (Spolsky, 1998). Thus, people who do not belong to the group may not know the meaning of those words.

## **4. Students Want to Have Fun and Laugh**

Guitar (1968) says that teenager can accept unsettling experiences by translating the formal words into slang and getting laugh. This study reveals some of the the students (24.25%) often use the words, such as *bubu*, *dong dong*, *jali jali*, *unyu unyu*, *yoyoy*, *krik*, *prikitiw*, and *tulalit*, which are used for the original joy of making sounds or even for a need to attract people's attention by making noise.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The slang words are frequently used among teenagers. They have their own words to use when interacting with their friends and slang words are a marker of teenagers' identity in their conversation style. It can be seen

from the result of the questionnaire. The students could answer most of the slang meanings correctly. It shows that they understand the slang words very well. Thus, future researchers would be better to conduct studies in the college to compare slang words used by teenagers and adult in their conversation.

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