

Exploring The Use of Digitalised Slang in Verbal Communication Among Generation Alpha

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ABSTRACT

Language is a dynamic form of human heritage, continually shaped by cultural exchange, technological change, and generational interaction. Among today's youngest digital natives, Generation Alpha (born 2010 onwards), slang has emerged as a distinctive mode of verbal communication, reflecting the evolution of communication patterns in contemporary contexts. This study examines (i) the types and functions of slang used by Generation Alpha, and (ii) the factors influencing their adoption, including the influence of Gen Z, social media, and peer culture. Guided by Allan and Burridge's theory of slang type and function, a qualitative approach was employed through semi-structured interviews with seven Malaysian participants aged 12–15. Data were analysed through condensation, coding, and meaning interpretation, revealing slang types such as fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping, with functions including addressing, humiliating, and expressing impressions. Imitative slang (30%) and fresh and creative slang (30%) were most prevalent. "Digitalised slang" such as adk, rizz, skibidi, was shaped by digital platforms, gaming environments, and sibling interaction. While these terms are often short-lived, they embody a dynamic, culturally embedded form of communication that carries meaning, identity, and belonging within peer communities. The findings highlight slang as a contemporary layer of intangibles in communication, showing how interaction adapts to the digital era while preserving the age-old role of language as a marker of shared culture and social connection.

Keywords: Generation alpha, Digitalised slang, Verbal communication, Digital platform.

INTRODUCTION

Language continuously evolves under the influence of social, cultural, and technological shifts, with slang serving as a powerful tool for identity, peer connection, and cultural expression (Keidar et al., 2022). Generation Alpha those born from 2010 onwards marks a turning point in communication, as they are the first cohort to grow up fully immersed in digital ecosystems shaped by artificial intelligence, social media, and global connectivity (McCrindle, 2023; Mehta & Giunchiglia, 2025). Their verbal communication styles are increasingly influenced by digital platforms where new expressions rapidly emerge, circulate, and fade (Fatmasari et al., 2025; RNZ, 2024; The Times, 2025).

Digitalised slang is more than a casual expression; it embodies creativity, identity, and belonging for young people. For Generation Alpha, who have been surrounded by technology since birth, such expressions are integral to how they interact, build relationships, and negotiate cultural belonging (Keidar et al., 2022). These practices also highlight how global digital trends are appropriated and reshaped within diverse cultural settings, reflecting both individuality and collective identity.

While previous studies have examined slang and informal communication, much of this work has focused on Generation Z, particularly their use of platforms such as Instagram (Maros & Taufek, 2019) and TikTok (Marzuki & Syafiqah, 2023). However, the communication practices of Generation Alpha remain underexplored, especially regarding how digitalised slang enters their verbal communication and whether it extends beyond informal peer interaction into more formal contexts.

This study seeks to address that gap by exploring the use of digitalised slang in the verbal communication of Generation Alpha. It situates their communication practices within global linguistic trends while recognising the factors that shape how digital slang is adopted and adapted. In doing so, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and educational implications of digitalised slang for the youngest digital-native generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Alpha and Digital Platform

The Internet has become the dominant form of communication, leading to the transformation of traditional speech norms and behaviours. This shift has resulted in the emergence of a new type of media culture, characterized by unique communicative dominants that differ from traditional culture (Klushina, 2022). Generation Alpha, born between 2010 and 2025, represents the first cohort to grow up entirely immersed in digital technology, shaping their communication styles in distinctive ways (Hale, 2022). Their proficiency with mobile devices, virtual assistants, and AI-integrated toys from an early age has made them hyper-connected and technologically adept (Blanco & Gutiérrez, 2022). This constant engagement with digital platforms has facilitated the widespread adoption of digitalised slang, which now forms a prominent aspect of both their verbal and written communication. Alpha generation drives by social media, communication apps, and gamification platforms in their daily interactions, thus internet slang has evolved not only as a communication trend but also as a cultural symbol which differentiates Generation Alpha from past generations.

Digitalised Slang in Verbal Communication

The rise of digitalised slang has numerous linguistic and social functions, serving as a medium for identity creation, social unity, and cultural appearance (Aharul, 2023). This generation's slang frequently contains phrase abbreviations, acronyms, clips, and neologisms, demonstrating both communication innovation and efficiency in digital communication. Studies have shown that slang enables personal expression and strengthens peer connections by fostering belonging and community among the young generation (Korolova & Aleksandrova, 2022; Milyoshina, 2021; Motiash, 2023; Shalkov et al., 2021). Alice Evangaline Jebaselvi (2023) expressed that excessive use of slang is linked to oversimplified language, which can lead to decreased meaningful interaction, make it harder to develop reading or writing skills, and harm long-term language traditions.

On the other hand, empirical studies emphasise that internet slang plays a crucial role in crafting individuality and expressing culture within peer groups. (Soo, 2025). Many bilingual researchers (de Bruin & Shiron, 2023; Dikilitaş et al., 2023; Parlindungan & Rifai, 2022) have highlighted that digital slang tremendously changes the traditional concepts of language norms and introduces new dynamics in young generation communication words collection.

The dynamic evolution of youth slang within digital environments highlights the interplay of cultural trends, subgroup affiliations, and the development of generational identity. According to Usmani et al (2025), this accelerated slang development can also establish communication challenges between generations, as older individuals may find it difficult to comprehend novel terms and abbreviations, potentially resulting in misunderstandings and a widening gap in intergenerational communication.

Digital platforms have substantially reshaped verbal communication by modifying speech conventions, fostering novel interaction dynamics, and influencing language evolution. Concurrently, these platforms have catalyzed the emergence of digitalized slang, propelled by the internet's extensive reach and the imperative for efficient discourse. Consequently, this research introduces a framework integrating digital platforms, verbal exchanges, and digitalized slang to enhance comprehension of Generation Alpha's evolving communication practices. Key digital environments, including TikTok, YouTube, Roblox, and messaging applications, function as primary arenas for the genesis, dissemination, and popularization of new slang.

Verbal communication captures how these digitally mediated slang terms are adapted into face-to-face interactions among peers, reflecting not only linguistic creativity but also social bonding and identity construction. Digitalised slang, functioning as the intersection between these two domains, embodies the transformation of traditional language norms into concise, playful, and culturally embedded expressions. By connecting these components, the framework illustrates (*Figure 1*) how technological affordances, peer culture, and generational

dynamics interact to shape the communication styles of Generation Alpha, positioning digitalised slang from digital platforms and incorporating it into verbal communication in the digital era.

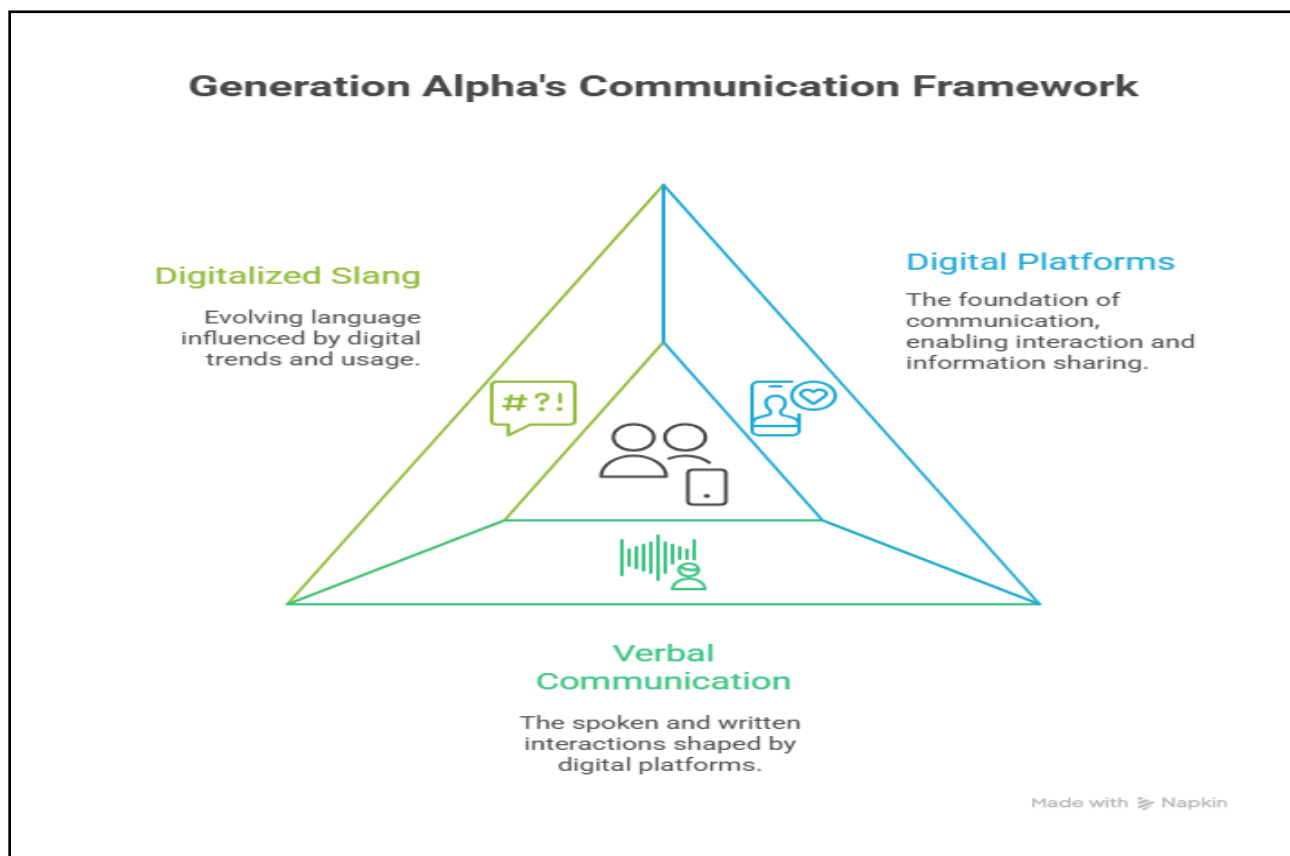


Figure 1. Relationship Between Digital Platform, Verbal Communication and Digitalised Slang in Generation Alpha's Communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, as the primary objective was to gain in-depth insights into the use of digitalised slang in verbal communication among Generation Alpha. Qualitative approaches are particularly well-suited for exploring meanings, social practices, and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, interviews with selected participants were used to capture the naturalistic and context-dependent ways in which digitalised slang is used in everyday communication.

The participants consisted of seven members of Generation Alpha, defined as individuals born from 2010 onwards (McCrindle & Fell, 2020). Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants were active users of social media, online platforms, and digital devices, thereby increasing the likelihood of familiarity with digitalised slang. All participants were between the ages of 12 and 15, representing the early teenage stage where slang adoption in verbal communication becomes more salient. Consent was obtained from both participants and their parents/guardians in line with ethical research guidelines.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, designed to encourage natural and context-rich accounts of slang use. The interviews were conducted in a casual and conversational setting, allowing participants to feel comfortable sharing their everyday language practices. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with the researcher's observation notes to capture nuances of communication. A list of slang items was then systematically extracted from the transcripts for further analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages to ensure both systematic categorisation and reliability. First, the list of digitalised slang terms extracted from interviews was uploaded into ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) to facilitate initial classification. The model was prompted to categorise the slang following Allan and Burrige's (2006) typology, which groups slang into five categories: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronyms, and clippings.

This initial classification provided a thematic framework, which was then re-verified by the research team to ensure accuracy, contextual relevance, and alignment with participants' original explanations. To further strengthen reliability, the categorisation was reviewed by a linguistics expert, who confirmed the appropriateness of the

assigned categories and suggested minor refinements where necessary. This multi-layered approach, AI-assisted classification, researcher verification, and expert validation ensured that the findings were both rigorous and trustworthy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of seven participants aged between 12 and 15 years were interviewed for this study, comprising three males and four females. Four participants were aged 15, two were aged 12, and one was aged 14. All participants reported daily engagement with online games such as Mobile Legends and Roblox. Respondents spend an average of two to three hours per day online. The older participants (14 and 15 years old) maintained active social media accounts on Instagram and TikTok, which provided direct exposure to trending slang. These digital platforms, combined with sibling and peer interaction, shaped the participants' slang collection.

Slang Use Among Generation Alpha

Participants actively employed a variety of slang in their verbal communication, much of which originated from gaming culture, TikTok trends, and peer interactions. Table 1 presents the slang terms identified, together with their meanings.

Table 1. Slang terms used by Generation Alpha participants.

	Slang	Meaning
1.	Skibidi	Nonsense
2.	Sigma	Independent
3.	Gigachad	Hyper-masculine ideal
4.	Gyatt	Admiration
5.	Yeet	Exclamation of excitement
6.	Slay	To do something exceptionally well
7.	Delulu	Delusional
8.	Its giving	Something Aesthetic
9.	Cap	Lie
10.	No Cap	No Lie or Truth
11.	Vibe	The atmosphere
12.	W	Success
13.	Tea	Gossiping
14.	Fanum Tax	Stealing Something
15.	Ate	Awesome
16.	Cloud 9	Happy
17.	Feeling Blue	Sad
18.	Sus	Suspicious
20.	Bruh	Addressing someone boy or girl
21.	Ohio	Awkward
22.	Rizz	Ability to flirt or attract others
23.	Drip	Stylish
24.	Slaps	It's really good
25.	adk	I Don't Know
26.	Cook	Doing really well at something
27.	Snatched	Looking amazing
28.	Bet	Okay
29.	Flex	Show off, brag
30.	Yassify	Exaggerate beauty

Classification of Slang Types

Following Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, the slang was grouped into five categories: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping (Table 2). Each category reflects the communication innovation and cultural adaptation of Generation Alpha.

Table 2. Slang types according to Allan & Burridge's classification.

Category	Slang	Description
Fresh and Creative	Skibidi, Delulu, Its Giving, Gyatt, Slay, Fanum Tax, Ate, Yassify	Newly coined terms with playful, context-specific meanings.

Flippant	Cloud 9, Feeling Blue, Tea, W, Bet, Flex, Snatched, Slaps	Words/phrases humorously reinterpreted beyond their literal sense
Imitative	Yeet, Bruh, Sus, Ohio, Cook, Rizz, Drip, Sigma, Gigachad	Borrowed from gaming, influencer, or digital culture.
Acronym	ADK, Cap, No Cap	Shortened forms of longer expressions, often letter-based.
Clipping	Vibe	Shortened words/phrases retaining core meaning.

Fresh and Creative

Terms such as skibidi and delulu reflect playful coinage with no direct literal meaning. A 15-year-old female participant clarified that “Sometimes when my friends are acting weird, I just say ‘you’re so skibidi’ and everyone laughs. It doesn’t mean anything, but we all get it.” This illustrates how Generation Alpha uses creativity to generate shared humor and identity.

Flippant

Flippant slang relies on exaggeration and playful reinterpretation. Tea for gossip and cloud 9 for extreme happiness exemplify this category. As a 14-year-old male participant explained, “When a group of pupils sits together, we say ‘spill the tea.’ It’s funny because it’s not about tea at all, it just means gossip.”

Imitative

Imitative slang draws deeply from digital cultures, especially from gamification platforms. Words like sus and rizz from online influencer culture are widely used. A 12-year-old female stated, “When someone acts sneaky in the game or even in real life, we just call them ‘sus, to show something wrong is going on.”

Acronym

Acronyms are short forms usually used in social media and communication apps for speed writing. ADK (I don’t know) and cap/no cap are frequently used by participants to signal truth or lies. As one 15-year-old male highlighted, “If someone lies, we just say ‘that’s cap.’ If it’s true, we say ‘no cap.’ It’s faster than explaining everything.”

Clipping

Clipped slang reflects shortened but expressive forms such as vibe (atmosphere). A 15-year-old female enlightened, “when we went to a place and felt a good environment, we said the place gives good vibe”. Rather than describe the environment, we just said good vibe.

Table 3. Distribution of Slang Types among Generation Alpha.

Category	Slang	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fresh and Creative	Skibidi, Delulu, It's Giving, Gyatt, Slay, Fanum Tax, Ate, Yassify	9	30
Flippant	Cloud 9, Feeling Blue, Tea, W, Bet, Flex, Snatched, Slaps	8	26.7
Imitative	Yeet, Bruh, Sus, Ohio, Cook, Rizz, Drip, Sigma, Gigachad	9	30
Acronym	ADK, Cap, No Cap	3	10
Clipping	Vibe,	1	3.3
Total		30	100

Table 3 presents imitative slang and fresh and creative slang (30%) were the most dominant, reflecting the influence of gaming communities, memes, and social media trends where mimicry is central. Flippant slang is 26.7%, suggesting that humorous exaggeration is core to Generation Alpha’s verbal repertoire. Acronyms (10%) and clippings (3.3%) appeared less frequently, showing that while brevity is present, participants favored more expressive and performative forms. The findings suggest that imitative slang and fresh and creative slang dominate Generation Alpha’s speech, highlighting their preference for playful and efficient communication.

The findings from this study demonstrate that Generation Alpha's use of slang is not merely a verbal phenomenon but a reflection of how digital culture, gamification, and social networks shape communication practices. Although the results highlight the widespread use of imitative and fresh slang, the more important insight is how these categories reflect Generation Alpha's identity, creativity, and cultural stance in their communication.

The prevalence of imitative slang underscores the centrality of mimicry and digital intertextuality in contemporary youth discourse. Terms such as *sus* and *rizz*, which originate from gaming platforms and influencer culture, reveal the extent to which children's communicative repertoires are shaped beyond school and home (Paoletti et al., 2025). Zulkhaeriyah et al (2023) revealed that these slang terms function as shorthand for shared experiences in interactive digital environments, bridging online and offline identities. On the other side, Teng & Joo (2023) discovered that the rapid adoption of these terms illustrates how language is increasingly mediated by entertainment ecosystems, where influencers, streamers, and gaming communities act as communication gatekeepers.

In parallel, the dominance of fresh and creative slang reflects Generation Alpha's drive for playfulness, humor, and in-group solidarity. Words such as *skibidi* and *delulu* hold little literal meaning but gain value as markers of shared understanding and cultural belonging. This signals a broader trend of communication innovation, where novelty and absurdity serve as tools for bonding and differentiation (Drugaş, 2022). Importantly, the creative use of nonsense or exaggerated expressions highlights how slang acts as a medium for agency, enabling young people to construct meaning outside of formal communication structures.

The presence of flippant slang such as *spills the tea* or *cloud 9* further illustrates how Generation Alpha appropriates conventional phrases and strips them of their literal connotations to generate humor and irony. This aligns with Allan and Burrige's view that flippant slang thrives on playful reinterpretation, but within Generation Alpha, this practice is amplified by social media virality, where ironic phrases spread globally within days (Kaplan-Berkley, 2022). In this sense, flippant slang functions as a performative act, reinforcing group identity while also signalling digital literacy.

Interestingly, acronyms and clippings, which were expected to be prominent due to their efficiency, appeared less frequently in the data. This suggests that while brevity remains important in fast-paced digital interaction, Generation Alpha values expressive, performative, and context-rich slang over mere verbal communication (Gartshore, 2018). In other words, communication is not only about speed but also about affect, humor, and creativity.

Several sociocultural factors underpin these patterns. First, digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram act as accelerators of slang circulation, exposing Generation Alpha to global trends that quickly embed into their everyday speech. Participants aged 15 and 14 years old expressed digital platform is a venue for them to learn the slang. Unlike previous generations, their slang is not restricted to localized peer groups but reflects an intercontinental communication flow (Lupanda, 2025). Second, gaming environments like Roblox and Mobile Legends provide interactive contexts where slang is tested, reinforced, and spread, linking digital play to offline identity. Finally, siblings and peers, particularly older Gen Z family members, function as communication models, creating intergenerational diffusion of digital slang. A participant aged 12 years old declared learn the slang through online gamifications and Gen Z siblings. Together, these factors demonstrate that slang use among Generation Alpha is not isolated but emerges from the interplay of technology, entertainment, and social relationships.

The broader implication of these findings is that slang should not be dismissed as trivial or corruptive. Instead, it should be understood as a cultural resource through which young people navigate belonging, identity, and creativity in a digitalised world. By recognizing slang as a legitimate communication practice, educators and policymakers can better engage with Generation Alpha, incorporating their communicative repertoires into discussions of literacy, digital citizenship, and cultural engagement. Furthermore, the rapid turnover and global spread of slang highlight the need for future research to track how Generation Alpha communication evolves in tandem with technological innovation and algorithmic culture.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the use of digitalised slang in the verbal communication of Generation Alpha, highlighting the types of slang employed, their functions, and the social and cultural factors shaping their adoption. The findings revealed that imitative slang and fresh and creative slang were most dominant, reflecting the influence of gaming culture, social media trends, and peer interaction (Paoletti & Mujahidah, 2025; Zulkhaeriyah et al., 2023). These forms of slang are not merely playful expressions but serve as markers of identity, belonging, and creativity within peer communities (Aharul, 2023; Korolova & Aleksandrova, 2022).

Importantly, the study demonstrates that slang functions as more than a linguistic shortcut; it is a cultural resource through which Generation Alpha negotiates humor, solidarity, and individuality. The prevalence of flippant slang illustrates how conventional terms are reinterpreted for irony and bonding, aligning with Allan and

Burridge's (2006) framework, while the relatively lower use of acronyms and clippings suggests a generational preference for expressive and performative forms of communication over brevity (Gartshore, 2018).

The integration of digitalised slang into face-to-face interaction also reflects broader sociolinguistic dynamics, where language practices are shaped by the interplay of technology, entertainment ecosystems, and intergenerational influence (Kaplan-Berkley, 2022; Teng & Joo, 2023). This underscores the reality that communication among Generation Alpha cannot be separated from the digital environments they inhabit daily (McCrinkle & Fell, 2020).

From a practical standpoint, the study points to the importance of recognising digitalised slang as a legitimate aspect of contemporary communication rather than dismissing it as trivial or corruptive (Soo, 2025). Educators, parents, and policymakers should consider how such language practices influence literacy, cultural identity, and intergenerational communication. Future research could expand on this work by examining larger samples, cross-cultural comparisons, or the longitudinal evolution of digitalised slang as Generation Alpha matures.

In sum, digitalised slang represents both continuity and change in human communication: continuity in its role as a tool of identity and group cohesion, and change in its forms, speed of circulation, and integration across digital and verbal spaces (Keidar et al., 2022; Usmani et al., 2025).

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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