

English Department Students' Attitudes Toward the Use of English Slang on X (Twitter)

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: – Revised: – Accepted: – Keywords: English Department Students, English Slang, Language Attitudes, X (Twitter) To cite this article: This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).	Purpose of the study: This study investigates the language attitudes of English Department students at Universitas Airlangga toward the use of English slang on X (Twitter). Methodology: A qualitative approach was employed using Baker's (1992) language attitudes theory and Crystal's (2004) internet language theory. Data were collected from 30 English Department students through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed thematically. Main Findings: Three themes emerged positive, negative, and neutral attitudes. Most students showed positive attitudes, perceiving English slang on X as offering communicative benefits, while some also reported communicative barriers. Novelty/Originality of this study: This study is the first to specifically examine English Department students' attitudes toward English slang use on X, bridging the gap between studies on learners' general language attitudes and studies on slang attitudes among non-learner social media users.

A. Introduction

In this advanced era, many kinds of digital platforms offer different unique features, and each platform has different trends, including linguistic trends. X, formerly known as Twitter, is one of the global digital platforms used in many countries, including Indonesia. People are using social media for distinctive purposes, it could be personal use, enhancing business engagement, raising awareness of current issues, and even building a reputation (Anggraini et al. 2023).

People are free to express their feelings and thoughts through their social media posts. The post uploaded on X is commonly called a "Tweet" as the former name of the app was "Twitter," despite it being officially changed to X. The X post (or Tweet) feature has character limitations for uploading text. Consequently, this limitation changes the way people arrange their words, resulting in language innovations to express their complex feelings or thoughts with a new expression in a simpler and more effective way, evolving into slang words (Anggraini et al. 2023). According to Jabeen and Imran Nawaz (2025), they argue that as the fast linguistic change phenomenon spreads on digital platforms, this might affect the future of the language.

The emergence of slang has always been new throughout eras and evolving rapidly, and it has spread more widely through the use of digital communication, especially on social media platforms among Millennials and Gen Z (Juli, Suci, and Esti 2024). As English slang is becoming more popular among non-native English speakers, it is influencing the way people face this phenomenon. In the implementation of a language, people will try to understand and interpret the word, different individuals will potentially have different responses or attitudes. Baker (1992) explains that language attitudes deal with language maintenance, shift, and policy development.

Language attitudes itself defined as favorable or unfavorable evaluations, feelings, and beliefs of an individual toward a particular language variation (accent, slang, language learning, etc.) that can be shaped by psychological, social, and cultural factors (Baker 1992). It is important due to the rapid evolution of English slang. Although slang is easy to use, non-native speakers might make several mistakes. They potentially misunderstand slang, including cultural allusions and subtle meanings, which can cause communication problems because language and culture have a natural relationship, and cultural norms are also dynamic and continually evolving, as well as the language (Wardhaugh and

Fuller 2021). Non-native English speakers who lack knowledge about the social and cultural context potentially misunderstand the interpretation of particular words and phrases, which could lead them to negative attitudes toward English slang.

English Department students are expected to understand English better than students from non-English-based majors because they explore English more and wider, either in daily or academically so they are expected to have more positive attitudes toward English. Huwari (2021) investigated the language attitudes of Jordanian students towards the English language, and the results showed that the students' attitudes are positive. A study done by Wati (2023) explored Javanese and Sundanese people towards English learning. The result revealed that they have different attitudes in terms of cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of language attitudes toward English. Another study by Yuan et al. (2023) discovers students' attitudes toward English language learning, English-medium instruction (EMI), and their first language use, which shows that their attitudes are positive.

Besides, Halim et al. (2023) and Hermansyah, Mothe, and Mohamed (2025) conducted studies exploring the social media users' attitudes toward English slang on social media, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. The results are predominantly positive. They use slang because it is a trend and easy to use, as well as the usage of slang can make them seem cool, reduce awkwardness, and feel more comfortable with the interlocutor.

The studies that investigated English learners only examined their attitudes toward the general English language or language learning. Meanwhile, the studies that explored language attitudes toward English slang did not investigate English learners. None of the studies investigated the students' or English learners' attitudes toward the use of English slang on X. Therefore, this study fills the gap of the previous study by investigating the language attitudes of English Department students at Universitas Airlangga towards the use of English slang on X.

B. Literature Review

Language Attitudes

Attitude toward language is a cognitive process in how an individual perceives, defines, and interprets language information that enables the sensory information to be processed and transformed into something meaningful. Baker (1992) stated that language attitude refers to a state of readiness in the cognitive aspects that affect how people react to languages and bilingualism. It can be positive or negative depending on many factors such as individual experiences and external circumstances. It is widely used in modern social languages and plays a significant role in determining how speakers use the language, which in turn affects language policy and change (Kirilenko 2024).

Therefore, there are three components of language attitudes: 1) The cognitive component focuses on thoughts and beliefs. 2) The affective component focuses on feeling towards the attitude object, which is considered as a love or hate. 3) The action component, often referred to as the conative component, deals with being prepared or ready to take action. It is a plan of action or behavioral goal under specific conditions.

The motivation of language attitudes delivers the reason for choosing the language. In this case, according to Baker (1992), there are two types of motivation: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. The desire to obtain social recognition or economic benefits through learning a foreign language is a prime example of pragmatic, utilitarian motivations that are reflected in instrumental motivation. It is mostly self-oriented and individualistic. It appears to share conceptual similarities with the drive for achievement. Meanwhile, the integrative motivations are mostly social and interpersonal in orientation and have been defined as a desire to be like representative members of the other language community. It may concern attachment to or identification with a language group and their cultural activities.

Internet Language

Netspeak is a term that refers to the internet language. Crystal (2004) introduced these terms to describe a type of unique language used on internet platforms such as social media. In his book, it

explains that Netspeak involves both speaking and writing in the way of interaction with internet platforms as the medium. According to other researchers in Crystal (2004) Internet language can also be called written speech, which means it is written the way people talk, and it is read as if it were being spoken.

A characteristic of Netspeak is creativity. The netizen (internet citizen) develops new words or vocabulary to express their experiences, to deal with the limitations, and to capture the internet's characteristics. The new words are considered as jargon or slang, it is an innovative, playful, and dynamic property used for fun in social communication. Additionally, in Netspeak, there is a principle of economy that refers to a strategy of an individual to find the best way to convey their message efficiently, such as using abbreviations and acronyms. The future of Netspeak depends on the language and style that establishes a strong identity to attract new internet users, or the new users will derive new linguistic trends and changing stylistic usage norms that are not related to its origins.

Previous Studies

Numerous studies have investigated people's language attitudes in various terms of sociolinguistics, including English language learning. Those terms were investigated in many countries that do not use English as their official language. Huwari (2021) conducted a study to examine the language attitudes of high school students in Irbid, Jordan, toward the English language, and it was found that the attitudes are positive. Similarly, a study conducted by Wati (2023) analyzed Indonesian students, specifically Javanese and Sundanese, language attitudes toward English language pedagogy, and the results showed that the students have positive attitudes. In addition, Yuan et al. (2023) also discovered through their study that the language attitudes of university students in China are also positive, whether toward general English learning or English-medium instruction (EMI) programs.

However, some studies significantly investigate people's attitudes toward slang words, such as studies conducted by Halim et al. (2023) and Hermansyah, Mothe, and Mohamed (2025). Both studies investigated social media users' attitudes toward the use of English slang on social media, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. They employ a qualitative approach using questionnaires, but Hermansyah added online observation and documentation in their investigation. As those two studies have a similar purpose, they also found similar results in which reveal that there are 4 types of English slang used, including imitative, flippant, acronym, and clipping. The most frequently used are abbreviations such as KEPO, FYI, BTW, LOL, and more. Furthermore, they also found the reasons the users use it because it is a trend and it helps to feel more familiar and closer to their interlocutor. It can be concluded that their attitudes are mostly positive.

All this time, the study that investigated the students' language attitudes did not explore their attitudes toward English slang (Huwari 2021; Wati 2023; Yuan et al. 2023). Meanwhile the study that explore language attitudes toward English slang did not investigate the students (Halim et al. 2023; Hermansyah, Mothe, and Mohamed 2025). Therefore, none of the related studies above investigated the English Department students' attitudes toward the use of English slang on X (Twitter).

C. Research Methods

This present study employs a qualitative research approach. Refers to Dawson (2007), qualitative research can examine attitudes, behavior, and experiences through interviews or focus groups. In this case, the qualitative approach can help analyze in-depth the students' attitudes toward the use of English slang on X. The data collection techniques include a questionnaire and an interview to strengthen the data. The questionnaire aims to find out what English slang is usually used by the students and their attitudes toward it. On the other hand, to get deeper and more accurate information about the students' attitudes, the researcher applied a semi-structured interview.

This research was conducted at Universitas Airlangga. This study takes 30 students from the batch of 2022 of the English Department at Universitas Airlangga. The questionnaire of this present study only uses the open-ended type and is adapted from the previous study by Hunaeda and Rahmat (2024). Since this study is more focused on investigating the attitudes toward the use of English slang

on X, the questions are modified by the researcher, adjusting the aims and population target to achieve the objectives of this study.

In this present study, the researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews to get deeper information on the data. According to Rose, McKinley, and Baffoe-Djan (2020), semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to explore the information more widely and deeply because this type of interview is more flexible than structured interviews, however, this type still needs to have an interview scheduled. Therefore, the researcher decided on the schedule after getting the most required and available participants to get more detailed data regarding the students' attitudes toward English slang usage on X.

The collected data is analyzed based on the Language Attitudes theory by Baker (1992). The Internet Language Theory by Crystal (2004) is used to interpret the findings. This present study uses a thematic analysis technique to analyze the questionnaire and interview data. According to Dawson (2007), thematic analysis refers to the data analyzed by themes that emerge from it rather than being forced upon it by the researcher. The thematic analysis is conducted in which the researcher transcribes the interview recording and reviews it to get more familiar with the data.

The data of this study is limited to English Department students, Faculty of Humanities at Universitas Airlangga, which is the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The source of English slang terms focuses on a single social media platform X because each social media platform may have different linguistic trends, and it is considered that many new English slang terms emerged on X through the tweets (posts) produced by the users.

D. Result and Discussion

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on the results of the collected data through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The collected data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify the themes from the participants' responses, and also employ language attitudes theory by Baker (1992) and internet language theory by Crystal (2004) to interpret the findings.

The questionnaire was voluntarily filled out by 30 English Department students from batch 2022, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Airlangga. Based on gender, the respondents consist of 18 female students and 12 male students. In addition, the researcher investigated further regarding the eligible students' activity on X, and most of them admit that they are active on X at least three to four days a week. However, some students admit that they are active on X every day.

The questionnaire finds out the students' attitudes toward the use of English slang on X, as well as their motivations behind them. This section consists of four questions that align with three components of the language attitudes (cognitive, affective, and conative), and a question to investigate the motivation. The results were further investigated through the semi-structured interview. It is found that there are three main themes regarding the students' attitudes, including positive, negative, and neutral.

1. Students' Positive Attitudes

Students' positive attitudes refer to participants who perceive that English slang on X brings many values in their online communication. They believe that using English slang can enhance the atmosphere and the way people communicate, such as making it more efficient to express the speaker's feelings, making the conversation more casual, relaxed, and entertaining. It also indicates the self-enjoyment in communication. The students feel more comfortable, excited, attracted, and enjoy communicating using English slang on X. A student explained that it is more comfortable to communicate using slang than with just ordinary formal language. Moreover, because the students feel they enjoy using English slang on X, they also perceive that it can be a tool for social bonding and inclusion. Considering X is broad, where many people are considered strangers that probably do not in the same age, this was investigated further in the interview, and the pattern of students' responses illustrates that the use of English slang in online communication makes them feel more connected,

related, engaged, and included. No matter with whom they are interacting on X, whether with people of their same background and age or not, they are still willing to use English slang on X.

Furthermore, some students who indicated positive attitudes acknowledged that the use of English slang on X helps them in building self-image. They tend to feel more confident, cool, and they can build a good impression. The findings also reveal another benefit of using slang on X, as some students mentioned that by using slang, they can informally enhance their language skills by enriching their informal vocabulary, so they can adjust their communication strategy, especially with native speakers.

2. Students' Negative Attitudes

This theme captures the opposite of positive attitudes that the students perceive in the use of English slang on X, potentially being the communicative obstacles that can also be dangerous for society. Some students admit that they sometimes feel excluded for not knowing particular English slang. The statement from one of the participants also indicates that considering X is broad and there is a potential to interact with a stranger who is probably older or out of the community, English slang is not effective to use because they might not understand it. From this case, it can also be a cause of miscommunication.

Some other students believe that the use of English slang on X can cause communication problems because people who do not understand the particular slang words could misinterpret them. Not all people, even those who are in the same generation, understand the slang words, and it can lead to miscommunication. Besides, the use of English slang on X could be irritating because of its inappropriateness and overuse. A student also believes that most people use English slang on X to mock others' opinions.

The findings also show the behavior of avoidance in using particular slang words if they have never heard them. In this case, they were asked what they would do if they just found a new slang word that they could not identify the meaning immediately and some of them like some students admit that they would rather not using the particular slang words if they do not know the real meaning and other students statement indicates that she will avoid a particular slang that refers to particular culture. Furthermore, this theme also reveals that a student thinks using slang too often can degrade language skills, especially in terms of grammar.

3. Students' Neutral Attitudes

This theme represents the students who do not indicate one strong side and tend to perceive the English slang usage as a prevalent phenomenon because it is commonly used by most people these days. Those who believe it is an acceptable way of today's communication perceive that the use of slang is fine to an extent, and sometimes it must be considered to whom we are talking. Some students showed that they have no particular feelings.

A student expressed that he would not judge others for using English slang in a particular situation or context. On the other hand, another student's feelings are more conditional. She can judge whether it is bad or good, depending on the context. However, they display neither positive nor negative attitudes specifically. Another student also admits that his feelings depend on the context. If it is used in a casual way, he can accept it. However, even though it is sarcasm sometimes, he still can find it entertaining.

Some students acknowledged certain behaviors that are considered neutral. They use English slang depending on the situation and context. They adjust the situation if their interlocutor uses slang, they would like to use slang as well, and if their interlocutor barely uses slang words, they would not use slang. Mostly, the students who think it depends on the context said that slang is fine to be used as long as it is appropriately used in a casual and informal context, not a formal context.

The findings also reveal the students' motivation for using English slang on X. Instrumental motivations include using English slang to be more cool, to look trendy, to enrich their English vocabulary so they can speak English comfortably, and to express their emotions efficiently.

Furthermore, some students declared their motivation in the interview, some students said that their goals for using English slang on X are to help her to be able to improve their language skills so that they can communicate with casual or informal language calmly and expand their knowledge about native English speakers' culture.

On the other hand, integrative motivation is a desire to reach or to be included in particular social groups, influenced by the environment, keep up with the times, and some other reasons of slang attraction. In the interview, some students also acknowledged that they use slang to catch up with the trends, catch up with the particular community like Bookfess, a community of book lovers on X (Twitter). Although a student stated that he does not try to fit in the particular group, he admitted that he uses it because he adjusts his friend's language. Being influenced by friends is still considered the integrative motivation.

Interpretation of the Findings

It is found 3 themes of the students' attitudes toward the use of English slang on X, which are positive, negative, and neutral attitudes. The students' positive attitude is that they perceive the use of English slang on X as a beneficial tool for communication. Meanwhile, the negative attitude showed that the use of English slang on X can be a source of communicative barriers. Moreover, the neutral attitude tends to be a more conditional response of the students based on the context and situation, or a neutral stance overall.

From the findings, it can be seen that the use of English slang can be a source of either assistance or barriers to communication. Cognitively, on the positive side, the students believe that slang usage can raise the communication atmosphere, strengthen the social bonding and inclusion, no matter with whom they interact on X. It can also help them to build a self-image, which means that slang can make them cool, so that people think that they can speak English naturally like a native. This compilation of students' thoughts demonstrates the language attitudes' cognitive components as delivered by Baker (1992).

Those findings support the study by Halim et al. (2023), which stated that slang is used to build an intimate and comfortable atmosphere in conversation, as well as make the communication more effective. It aligns with Crystal's (2004) Netspeak concept, which is a unique and playful language used for fun in social communication. The belief in slang usage makes the communication more efficient, and it is also straightforwardly connected to one of Crystal's principles in Netspeak, which is the economy, showing that the students have the desire to have convenient and quick communication.

However, the negative cognitive displays some students' beliefs that considering X environment is broad, slang usage can cause miscommunication, and social exclusion. Sometimes it is not effective to use slang with people from different backgrounds or generations because slang evolves rapidly over time, and not all people can keep up with the times. Even people who are included in the same generation and online community can also confuse and do not really understand the particular slang, so it can potentially lead to miscommunication. Additionally, some students perceive it as a neutral concern that slang usage is a prevalent phenomenon on social media, so they tend not to have a particular thought about it.

Furthermore, on the positive side, some students believe that the use of English slang on X can improve their language skills. Meanwhile, on the negative side, a student feels that his grammar skills are degrading because he uses slang too much and barely communicates in the right grammatical order. On the other hand, Crystal (2004) argues that the use of internet language tends to improve language skills instead of degrading their skills.

In the affective aspects, positively, the students feel comfortable and enjoy using English slang to communicate on X. On the other hand, negatively, slang usage can make some students feel irritated due to its inappropriateness and overusage. Meanwhile, the students who have neutral feelings confirm that their feelings toward the use of English slang on X depend on the context and tend to have no particular feelings. This range of feelings clearly illustrates Baker's affective component model.

Moreover, in the behavioral or conative aspects, the students prefer to use English slang in a casual or unserious context, like joking with their friends. In terms of their behavior toward a new slang word that they have just learned and cannot identify the meaning immediately, positively, they will look it up on other platforms or X itself before deciding to use it. Meanwhile, on the negative side, some students admit that they just let it be and are not willing to use it because they are afraid that the meaning is harmful. Additionally, the students on the neutral side confessed that they use slang conditionally, adjusting their interlocutor. If their interlocutors barely use slang, they will not use slang as well.

Furthermore, they have various motivations for using English slang on X, such as to be cooler, slang is efficient to express their feelings, to look trendy, and to enrich their vocabulary. These motivations are in sync with the instrumental motivation concept by Baker (1992), which means the students have specific individual ambition for using English slang and want to be recognized by society. Besides, the integrative motivation concept by Baker (1992) also appeared from the students who admit that they use English slang to keep up with the trends, to be included in a specific social community, influenced by other people. These motivations support the findings of the previous study by Halim et al. (2023) and also the study by Hermansyah, Mothe, and Mohamed (2025), which also finds similar reasons for people to use English slang on other social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook.

E. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that the students perceive the use of English slang on X as having duality; it can be a source of either assistance or barriers to communication. Briefly, there are three themes found regarding the students' attitudes, including positive attitudes, negative attitudes, and neutral attitudes that each of which has its relationship with the three components of language attitude. Even though there are a lot of communicative assistance the students perceive, they also believe that there are several communicative barriers in the use of English slang in a broad social digital environment such as X (Twitter). Because of them, they also receive both positive and negative feelings, which also leads them to positive and negative behavioral aspects. However, some students showed that they have a neutral stance and are context-dependent toward it.

The students' reasons for using English slang on X include some ambitions, such as wanting to look cool, to look trendy, to enrich their English vocabulary, as well as because it is convenient to express their emotions in a short term. On the other hand, they also have other social inclusion motivations, like a desire to be included in a specific social community and keep up with the trends. Thus, the findings can be used as a reference for further research that can be conducted with the same topic but in a different population or location.

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