

# A STUDY OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE USE OF SLANG LANGUAGE BY THE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Introduction:** The Web has dramatically changed people's communication style. It is a great move toward more community oriented, highly collaborative, interactive and responsive Web. The idea that people communicate differently is venerable and the usage of slang language had its origin in the mid eighteenth century from an unknown source. Slang is the informal usage of vocabulary that we speak/write in our daily lives. Slang words could be words that are in an abbreviated format or they could be words that are offensive and ones that would not be used while conversing with an authoritative figure or with elders. Slang terms are shortened terms that are used by a certain culture, group of people, or they were developed out of laziness.

Formal language on the other hand is completely opposite of slang words. Formal usage of vocabulary is often the correct way of language whether speaking/writing. It's suggested that we should use formal language more because that would enhance our vocabulary and improve our language skills. Formal language is often used in organizations/institutes when we converse with people in authority and our elders.

Informal language is more casual and spontaneous. It is used when communicating with friends or family either in writing or in conversation. It is used when writing personal emails, text messages and in some business correspondence. The tone of informal language is more personal than formal language. Formal and informal languages serve different purposes. The tone, the choice of words and the way the words are put together vary between the two styles. Formal language is less personal than informal language. It is used when writing for professional or academic purposes like university assignments. Formal language does not use colloquialisms, contractions or first person pronouns such as 'I' or 'We'.

The various slangs used on the Internet and different social media platforms by the youth in today's generation. In due course of the increase of this slang usage, the use of formal language is highly deteriorating and it is the job of teachers and prospective teachers to limit ourselves and the students with the usage of slang and promote formal language for building better vocabulary.

**1.2 Rationale of the study:** The reason the researcher chose to research on these slangs is because she realized that the extent of the slangs used by school students has increased manifold. Putting in serious classroom time is important when it comes to learning a new language; however, no amount of time in class can prepare you for the contemporary nuances you'll be faced with when you put your language knowledge to practical use out in the real world.

Slang is just one of those aspects of language which isn't usually taught in the classroom but is an important part of becoming proficient in any language. It has many pros and cons for us which would enable us to see both the sides of the coin. Even countries which speak the same language, such as Britain and the U.S., have huge slang differences, and understanding what your counterparts are trying to say is important for quick and efficient communication as well as a means to develop a stronger cultural bond.

While advocates of slang words may say this trend is simply an evolution of language, Chad Dion Lassiter, professor of race relations at the University of Pennsylvania, considers it "a dumbing down of culture." Lassiter has observed "this broken level of communication."

Terry Wood, a foreign language teacher at St. Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown, Md., has seen a "dramatic decline" in the writing abilities of her students "due to Tweeting, Facebook, and texting."

While slang terms may be most prevalent in classroom, hence the teachers' role and responsibility for promoting usage of formal communication has increased manifold.

The researcher therefore wanted to know the opinions of prospective teachers whether the usage of slangs is overpowering the formal use of language and if certain measures should be carried forward to make sure the formal language is not getting deteriorated.

**1.7 Need of the study:** The reason the researcher chose this particular topic to study on is because of the increasing usage of slang language in everybody's day to day life. Information on usage of slangs can help the faculty become more aware towards the issue of increasing slangs and the varied slangs used by the students. Outside the classroom- Information about slangs is extremely helpful in student affairs. The usage of slang is more often outside the school premises so the faculty and the parents should be well aware of the slangs used with their meanings. Slang is unavoidable, no matter what language one is learning, and is becoming increasingly more common with the advent of Twitter and other internet shorthand.

This research not only allows us to understand about few of the slangs used on the internet, but also gives us insights about the pros and cons of the usage of slang language with an effort to not let the children deviate from using formal language in communicating and not letting formal language fade away. At the same time, the use of information about slang usage reminds us that an institution that is seriously interested in the development of students as a purpose needs to embrace such a concept for faculty and administrators as well.

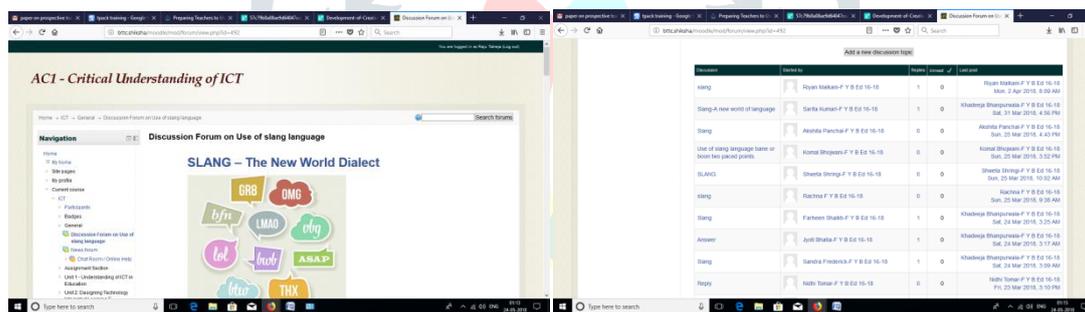
**Research questions:** Q. What is the prospective teachers' perception about the use of slang language among school students?  
Q. How can the use of formal language be promoted among school students?

**Research participants:** Forty research participants out of eighty-nine participated in the study pursuing Bachelors of Education from Bombay Teachers' Training College (BTTC). Twelve participants were from first year and twenty-eight were in the second year of study. They expressed their perceptions about the use of slang language by school students. Three male participants; thirty seven female participants articulated their perceptions on the forum.

The researcher has used the convenience sampling technique for this study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in study.

A tool is the means by which data are collected. A tool may be in the form of questionnaire, a blog, a test, a rating scale or an inventory. The researcher used the discussion forum in order to know the opinions expressed and discussed by the sample. The discussion forum was created on the institutional website <http://btcc.shiksha/moodle/>. It describes how on-going, reflective, qualitative data was collected using a popular, community-based online tool – Discussion Forum.

The discussion forum was open only for the B. Ed. student teachers of BTTC. The forum posting included the increase in internet slang usage, the difference between formal and informal language along with some brainstorming questions that were posed to the prospective teachers. The data collected was of qualitative nature wherein the opinion of the prospective teachers was elicited. The discussion over the forum took place in a very smooth manner. The prospective teachers discussed and put forth their viewpoints on the usage of slang language by the school students and a discussion was held on the same. Every teacher was free to express their opinions on the forum and ask questions.



The researcher has utilized qualitative analysis and frequency analysis for the present study.

OPINION	FREQUENCY
Teachers should avoid using slangs in their daily communication verbally and on social media as well	39
Slangs are cool, comfortable and interesting for the students	16
Slangs does not permit comprehensive language development	13
Slang weakens the vocabulary	17
Formal language deteriorates due to technology and social media sites	25
Societal influence increases the usage of slang	16
Slang usage is time saving	21
Formal language exists in school settings	7
Extensive reading of newspapers, magazines and listening to English news helps promoting usage of formal language	12
Slangs weaken the writing skills and spellings of students	11
Slangs are used even in formal settings for building a rapport	8
Teacher needs to differentiate between formal and informal language and correct ways of communicating in his/her classroom	14
Slangs were formed due to accommodation of ideas in limited space and faster communication	9

Slangs serves as a hindrance towards differentiating between formal and informal language as it confuses the children in the long run	11
Consequence of slang usage results in students writing in slang during exams as well	9

### Findings & Conclusion

Teachers should avoid using slangs in their daily communication verbally and on social media as well: 39 respondents feel that for avoiding the usage of slang languages in school by children could be brought under control if the teachers are aware about their speech in the formal environment especially. Teachers are the role models for students in school and students tend to emulate their actions. So the teachers should always be conscious of what language they use in communication and on social media since that might influence the students.

Slangs are cool, comfortable and interesting for the students: 16 prospective teachers tend to agree that slangs are used most of the times to sound cool and to be a part of the 'in-group'. Using slangs are comfortable because they are an easier way of communication with short forms that need not always need the elaborated form and of course they are interesting since the students find it unique.

Slangs do not permit comprehensive language development: Slang is sabotaging language. It is not permitting the students for a healthy comprehensive development because one cannot communicate in slang when in formal settings. Slang usage prevents the young students to become the potential employers as well as being prepared for the future.

Slang weakens the vocabulary: 17 teachers feel that one of the greatest con of using slang language daily results in gradual reduction of proficiency in language and the semantics. (Vocabulary). Slang weakens the vocabulary of the children using it because it does not allow the person to use the language schemes and that would result in depreciating vocabulary. Text messages are flourishing by each day. This new form of communication has become so prominent that some educators worry that it may be damaging learner's literacy skills.

Formal language deteriorates due to technology and social media sites: 25 pre-service teachers feel that formal language is depleting due to technology and social media sites. The words that surround us every day influence the words we use. Since so much of the written language we see is now on the screens of our computers, tablets, and smart phones, language now evolves partly through our interaction with technology. And because the language we use to communicate with each other tends to be more malleable than formal writing, the combination of informal, personal communication and the mass audience afforded by social media is a recipe for rapid change. This rapid change is resulting in deteriorating the formal language in the daily lives of everyone.

Societal influence increases the usage of slang: 16 teachers agree that slang is the influence of today's society. Many terms, phrases and words that are used in slang often become meaningful in the casual form of speech. Slang is widely understood and in most cases, easier to prove a point with than using regular language. Also, some people subconsciously use slang without knowing it because it just flows. Hence, the society plays a major role in influencing the slang language and thus increasing slang usage.

Slang usage is time saving: 21 people believe that usage of slang is time saving which is an advantage of using slangs in daily lives. Slang allows people to receive and write messages faster. Social media is making it easier than ever to contribute to the evolution of language. Slangs are usually written as acronyms on different media and often spoken in short forms which save the time of writing in an elaborated form and in formal language.

Formal language exists in school settings: 7 teachers agree that formal language yet exists only in school settings. Non-formal learning takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organizational framework. It arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a particular activity, skill or area of knowledge and is thus the result of intentional effort. A school is an institution designed to provide learning spaces and learning environments for the teaching of students under the direction of teachers and that is the only station that has formal language been given utmost importance and encouraging usage of formal language.

Extensive reading of newspapers, magazines and listening to English news helps promoting usage of formal language: Students at different stages do poorly on different proficiency of language learning. Developing vocabulary could be achieved by extensive reading and using of dictionaries. Extensive reading of learners could enrich the knowledge of students in the field of formal language and vocabulary. Extensive reading of newspapers, magazines and listening to English news will allow the student to create and maintain the usage of formal language avoiding the slangs that are generally used and making the language informal.

Slangs weaken the writing skills and spellings of students: Texting and the usage of slang has quite a negative impact on ones writing skills as well as their general education. Students who use messaging on a frequent basis often use bad grammar, poor punctuation, and improper abbreviations in academic writing. Spelling mistakes and the slang words that develop from rapid-fast thumb texting mean that kid are thinking about words, spellings and meaning.

Slangs are used even in formal settings for building a rapport: 8 prospective teachers think that the reason of using slangs by people is to build a rapport. For any work to be done in any formal settings, having a friendly relation is important for successful work completion and work culture. This relationship building can be best assured when the usage of informal language is encouraged by the speakers.

Teacher needs to differentiate between formal and informal language and correct ways of communicating in his/her classroom: 14 prospective teachers suggest that to reduce the usage of slang language and to promote formal language in classroom, the teacher needs to differentiate between the slangs and the formal language. The teacher is a role model for the students and she should avoid using informal language with her students. Differentiating between formal and informal language will help the teacher recognize when informal way of communication is used and how to reduce slang and promote the correct way of vocabulary.

Slangs were formed due to accommodation of ideas in limited space and faster communication: 9 teachers consider the formation of slang language due to the accommodation of ideas in a limited space to be done. Over the years volume of communication increased and data communication had become costlier, people were paying 99/- for some kilos (Kilobytes). To accommodate the limited space provided for communication and to some extent even save some money too, slang language automatically took birth.

Slangs serves as a hindrance towards differentiating between formal and informal language as it confuses the children in the long run: 11 pre-service teachers agree that slang will serve as a hindrance in vocabulary in the long run. Usage of slang language serves as a hindrance in helping the students know the consequences of it in the long run. It does not allow the people to realize the importance of formal language. Slang language usage might be detrimental in employment areas while conversing with the higher authorities.

Consequence of slang usage results in students writing in slang during exams as well: The explosion of social media has completely changed the way we communicate with each other. Cyber slang is a term used to describe shortcuts, alternative words, or even symbols used to convey thoughts in an electronic document. Because so many digital media limit the number of characters an author can use at a time, students are becoming more creative to get the most out of their limited space. This increase in slang and usage of acronyms are making the students used to slangs to level where they use slangs where they are ought to communicate in a formal manner. Even in exams, students tend to write the cyber slang that they generally type on social media sites.

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