

AN ANALYSIS OF SLANG USAGE AMONG ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS AT NUML FAISALABAD CAMPUS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Tuba Latif¹, Aniq Rashid^{*2}, Muhammad Farukh Arslan³, Amun Rasheed⁴

¹BS scholar NUML Faisalabad Campus; ^{*2}Assistant Professor, NUML Faisalabad Campus;

³Lecturer NUML Faisalabad campus; ⁴Lecturer Government College for women Kahuta

^{*2}anrashid@numl.edu.pk; ³farukhgill99@gmail.com; ⁴amunrasheed@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the examination of slang usage within the English Department student community at NUML Faisalabad Campus, adopting a sociolinguistic perspective. Slang serves as a pivotal element in spoken communication, particularly within the discourse of pupils. The study employs a simultaneous cross-sectional design to compare various groups, emphasizing the discourse of English Department scholars in Faisalabad. The research aims to uncover the nature of Urdu and English slang, exploring distinct categories among different students. Additionally, the attitudes of elders, including parents and teachers, towards contemporary slang usage are discussed, providing insights into societal perceptions of language evolution. The findings reveal nuanced distinctions in slang vocabulary between scholars, shedding light on the intricacies of linguistic expressions in everyday discourse. Informal discussions with parents and teachers further contribute to understanding societal perspectives on the prevalent use of slang among the undergraduate generation.

Keywords: slang, offensive language, spoken discourse, discourse analysis, interpersonal routines, in-group communication.

INTRODUCTION

Slang, an integral aspect of spoken communication, continually evolves, featuring vivid expressions tailored for specific in-group communication. Rooted in diverse social ideologies, identities, and constructs, slang imbues discourse with spontaneity, humor, and informality.

According to Stenstorm (2014),

“What is regarded as slang changes through time. it is short-lived and creative; some slang words disappear, while new ones appear.”

(Stenstorm 2014, p.13).

According to the Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2015), the definition of slang is as follows:

“very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people.”

Slang terminology encompasses more than just offensive language. It's crucial to distinguish slang from abusive words, as the two are sometimes erroneously considered interchangeable

As per the Cambridge Dictionaries Online, abusive language refers to:

“rude and offensive terms.”

The Merriam Webster Dictionary Online (2016) also offered a similar definition of the term, stating:

“using harsh and insulting language.”

Abusive words, defined as rude and offensive terms, form a distinct category within the broader spectrum of slang vocabulary. To comprehensively explore slang, especially in spoken discourse, a discourse analysis approach is employed, aligning with Coulthard's (2007) emphasis on uncovering conversational rules and structures.

It's crucial to consider the difference between text and discourse in this context. Understanding discourse involves differentiating between text and discourse, where discourse encapsulates both the producer's intent and the receiver's interpretation. Widdowson (2007) simplifies this by asserting that discourse is a communicative process encompassing

text production and reception. Analyzing discourse is essential for fully understanding the complete meaning behind any statement.

The utilization of slang in daily conversations serves interpersonal routines, fulfilling communicative needs. Widdowson (2007) underscores the importance of schematic conventions, context-dependent norms that govern interpersonal interactions. These interpersonal routines, facilitated by slang, can be categorized based on their usage within specific groups, contributing to the rich tapestry of linguistic communication.

Aim and Significance

This study aims to explore the patterns and characteristics of slang expressions commonly employed in Urdu by students enrolled in the English Department at NUML Faisalabad Campus. The focus is on scrutinizing the variation in slang vocabulary among scholars and briefly highlighting the perspectives of the older generation regarding the prevalent use of slang by today's youth.

Investigating undergraduate slang is an area that has garnered attention from researchers, delving into the frequency of terms, their semantic nuances, and discourse. Notably, existing studies often lack comparisons across diverse groups. This research addresses this gap by unveiling the nature of slang and discerning differences based on societal groups, with specific consideration given to the NUML Faisalabad context.

Research Objectives

The research objectives for the article "An Analysis of Slang Usage among English Department Students at NUML Faisalabad Campus: A Sociolinguistic Perspective" include:

Explore the Nature of Slang Usage, Understand Attitudes towards Slang, identify Sources of Slang Vocabulary and Examine Sociolinguistic Trends.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What defines the nature of Urdu and English slang words employed by different scholars within the English Department at NUML Faisalabad Campus?
- How do elders perceive the usage of Urdu and English slang expressions among the undergraduate generation?

Research Hypothesis

While no specific hypothesis is mentioned, the research may hypothesize that slang usage varies among different age groups within the English Department, with potential influences from media and peer interactions.

Theoretical Framework

One sociolinguistic theory that could be applied to research on slang usage is Labov's theory of linguistic variation. Labov proposed that language variation is systematic and can be linked to social factors such as age, gender, and social class. Applying this theory to an analysis of slang usage would involve investigating how these social factors influence the adoption, diffusion, and evolution of slang within different communities. Additionally, exploring the concept of linguistic identity and how individuals use slang to express affiliation with certain social groups aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives.

The full impact of a scholar like William Labov (pronounced [l@bov]) is beyond the scope of a handbook chapter. The entire Handbook of Language Variation and Change (Chambers, Trudgill and Schilling-Estes, 2002) should be seen as part of Labov's scholarly impact, and even that one volume does not comprehensively capture every aspect of his work.

Labov's theory of linguistic variation is highly relevant to the study of slang usage among English department students at NUML Faisalabad Campus. This theory can help you analyze how social factors influence the linguistic choices of these students when it comes to slang. You can explore variations in slang usage based on factors such as age, gender, and social class within the student community. Additionally, Labov's theory provides a framework to understand how linguistic identity and group affiliation might shape the adoption and dissemination of slang among English department students. By applying this sociolinguistic perspective, you can offer a nuanced analysis of the social dynamics influencing slang usage in your specific context.

Literature Review

The exploration of slang has a longer history than commonly perceived, gaining widespread acceptance as an integral facet of spoken discourse in the early 1900s. Marckwardt (1961) delved into the

lexicography of slang, addressing the challenges faced by lexicographers compiling dictionaries of slang words. His analysis focused on an American slang dictionary, examining issues related to the definition of slang and the presentation of words in chronological order.

Dundes and Schonhorn's (1963) landmark study, "The Kansas University Slang," replicated a 1926 study on college slang, aiming to determine the persistence of expressions recognized by undergraduates. Their findings revealed limited continuity, with approximately 35 expressions still known but with altered meanings. The paper offers a comprehensive list of American slang terms, with Kartz (1964) critiquing Dundes and Schonhorn's (1963) research for not differentiating between general American slang and college slang. Kartz emphasized the importance of defining college slang within the context of the college environment.

In 1967, Heiman introduced the notion of using slang in teaching linguistics, emphasizing its role as an integral part of language. He stated:

"Perhaps by recognizing it, analyzing it as English, and putting it to use, we might teach its users some things they may not know about the language, the way they use it, and, the way we would like them to use it. We may even discover that some of the excitement students exhibit in using a slang dialect can be transferred to their learning the standard dialect."

(Heiman 1967, p.249)

He proposed that recognizing and analyzing slang could enhance language education, potentially transferring the excitement of using slang to learning the standard dialect.

Haroon and Arslan (2021) conducted the transitivity analysis of the poem 'old building'. UAM tool was used for Transitivity analysis includes different processes and through these items, we can put a stance on any context with verb to subject and these processes involve six kinds: material process, mental process, behavioural processes, relational process, verbal process and weathering. This paper investigates the relationship between linguistic structures and its meaning in the literary poem through ideational metafunction.

Hummon's (1994) comparative study, "College Slang Revisited," explored slang identities used by undergraduates at different institutions. His conclusion was that:

"The undergraduate speech draw from both the general slang of the larger culture and from a subcultural vocabulary of college slang terms, of which some are broadly shared as part of a national collegiate subculture and others are part of more provincial regional or institutional subculture."

(Hummon 1994, p.76)

He deduce that undergraduate speech draws from both general slang and subcultural vocabulary, shaping a collegiate subculture.

Hill (1994) and Kiesling (2004) focused on the term 'Guy,' tracing its shifts and evolving functions as an address term and discourse marker. Clancy (1999) delved into the implications and domains of the word 'Guy,' emphasizing its acceptance in spoken rather than written discourse.

Haroon and Arslan, (2024) conducted the study to analyse taboo and euphemism. Framed within Allan and Burridge's (2006) theoretical perspectives on euphemisms and Timothy Jay's (1992) work on taboo language, a qualitative content analysis of the film's script was conducted. The study highlights the intricate relationship between language, culture, and social dynamics, suggesting further exploration of linguistic choices in media narratives to illuminate broader cultural phenomena, aiding in the understanding of authenticity and rebellion within contemporary society.

Numerous magazine articles, such as Gould's (2013) "A Brief History of Dude," have highlighted the evolution of masculine terms like "dude," "bro," and "guy" into neutral address terms. Chi (2015) contributed to this discourse, highlighting the transformation of these terms into gender-neutral address forms.

Research Gap in Literature Review

The literature review identifies significant historical studies on slang, including Marckwardt's (1961) lexicography analysis and the Kansas University Slang study by Dundes and Schonhorn (1963). However, a research gap exists in exploring the contemporary sociolinguistic aspects of slang, especially within academic settings like the English Department at NUML Faisalabad Campus.

Research Methodology

The qualitative paradigm was chosen as the methodological approach for this study, providing an advantage over quantitative methods in generating

context-driven and authentic data (Mazhar, 2015). The Simultaneous Cross-Sectional design was employed to examine the nature and variations across different scholar groups. Participants were selected from three distinct student batches: Bs English 3rd, Bs English 5th, and Bs English 6th. Additionally, adults such as teachers and parents were included in the study to address supplementary questions.

The research site was the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Faisalabad campus, selected for the convenience of accessing the required student groups. Although attempts were made to include various departments at NUML Faisalabad campus, challenges led to focusing on specific batches within the English Department. To enhance data collection efficiency, a questionnaire was administered to participants, facilitated by personal connections with students who assisted in encouraging their peers to participate.

Due to the qualitative nature of the research, data triangulation was utilized, incorporating various methods to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings. Data collection instruments encompassed observation, a questionnaire featuring both closed-ended and open-ended questions, and informal discussions. Observation, conducted on-site, provided multidimensional firsthand data. To minimize any threat to the authenticity of findings, covert observation was employed, with only the teacher aware of the research.

The questionnaire, administered to 50 scholars, comprised 10 multiple-choice questions and 2 open-ended questions to gauge their understanding of slang expressions. Additionally, informal discussions with parents at home addressed the secondary research question. Throughout the research, participant identities remained confidential, and ethical considerations were strictly adhered to.

Analytical Discussion

This section of the paper focuses on the thematic analysis of data gathered through observation, questionnaires, and informal discussions. The gathered data holds particular relevance in addressing the initial research question, which centers on investigating the nature of slang vocabulary utilized among various groups of scholars.. The analysis is organized according to the respective semesters.

The observations revealed that students in the Bs English 3rd semester at NUML Faisalabad Campus actively incorporate slang words into their communication. A noteworthy example was observed during a dialogue between two friends at the university, where terms of address commonly employed by students were evident.

A: "Abey yaar, meri baat to suno!" ("Hey dude, listen to me!")

B: "Yaar, kya hai? Bol bhi do!" ("What is it dude? Just say it!")

Another form of addressing a second person that is observed among students involves taking the name of their friend and appending "kebachche" (literal meaning: B's son) to it. This addition is used either for emphasis or to express anger.

A: "B ke bachche! Tumhein nahi chhodunga, tumne meri bottle todi." ("B's kid! i won't spare you, you broke my bottle.")

B: "Chal be! Maine nahi todi." ("Get lost! i didn't break it.")

The phrase "chal be" doesn't have a literal meaning of "no way"; its interpretation depends on the context. At times, it is employed to dismiss an idea or convey surprise, emphasizing the importance of considering the surrounding context for accurate understanding.

A: "Maine aaj ke match mein do catches liye." ("I took two catches in today's match.")

B: "Chal be, jhoothe!" ("Shut up, liar!")

Another slang word that students make use of is "chamaaT" which means "a slap".

A: "Aaj mere dost ne us ladke ko aise zor se thappad mara ki uska muh toot gaya."

(A: "Today my friend slapped that boy so hard that his face got broken.")

The ensuing categories provide a glimpse into various slang expressions employed by students within their social circles and interactions with siblings. I documented 15 slang words observed being utilized by undergraduates, particularly in their communication with friends. These address terms contribute to creating an atmosphere of intimacy and a casual demeanor within the friendships.

Table no.1

(Address Terms)

"Abe"

“abe yaar” (also used as an expression to show disappointment)
“yaar”
“name' ke bachche”

Students often engage in teasing and jesting, particularly regarding someone's physical appearance. The list highlights words used by friends in situations where they assign a name to another person based on their physical attributes, whether as a form of praise or playful teasing.

Table no. 2
 (Slang for Physical Appearance)

“chashmish/chashmulli/chasmatu” (one who wears spectacles or glasses)
“Haathi” (one who is very fat)
“Lash he/hash shawasha” (expression used to praise something)
“Oye hoye!” (exclaiming awe)

Distinct actions prompt the use of various slangs among students. I noticed that students employ slang to refer to friends who exhibit specific habits.

Table no. 3
 (Action Slangs)

“chor” (one who borrows things and forget to return)
“chhoRuu” (one who exaggerates a lot)
“jhooTe/jhooTi” (one who has a habit to lie)
“Shikayati TaTTtu” (one who has the habit of complaining to the elders)

Children incorporate slang expressions that encompass disappointment and words employed to reject something.

Table no.4
 (Expression Slangs)

“Shit yaar” (disappointment marker)
“chal be” (used to reject an idea or for surprise)
“chal/nikal be” (used to reject an idea or for surprise)

Transitioning to Bs English 5th & Bs English 7th, a comparison with the previous semester group reveals

an increase in categories and variations. Noteworthy examples observed during this phase include a conversation between two girls at NUML University discussing their teachers’

A: “Humare sir ka Screw Dheela Ha~ fazool Chuss Maarta rahte hain.”

(A: "Our teacher exhibits inappropriate conduct; he consistently makes unnecessary remarks.")

B: “WTF! Are you serious?”

in another scenario, when a boy was asked about the reason for not participating in a football match, his response was:

A: "Yaar, mere tuition sir Tapakne vaale he~." ("Man, my tuition sir is about to arrive.")

During a discussion about assignments:

A: "Beta, sir ne itni saari chiize~ di~ he~ assignment me~ kese hoga?" ("Man, sir has included so many things in our assignment. How will we manage?")

B: "Sir bohat chirand karte he~." ("Sir unnecessarily complicates things.")

inquiring about the venue of the next class:

A: "Yaar, sir lahuu kaha~ chuuse~ ge? Apne office me~ ya class me~?" ("Where will sir drink our blood? in his office or in our class?")

The ubiquitous term "yaar," commonly used as an address term, is also frequently employed by teenagers to refer to their parents, reciprocally used by parents in informal situations. This informal usage extends to a variety of slang adjectives utilized by teenagers to convey intensity. For instance:

A: "Bhai, jaldi chal vaha~ tight qisim ka phaDDa start ho chuka he." ("Bro, hurry up, an intense fight has just started there.")

B: "He~ sach bata, qasam kha!" ("What! Tell me the truth, swear on it.")

The expression "tight he" signifies the intensity of the "phaDDa" (fight) but is versatile, also denoting happiness and admiration. Additional expressions like "fit he," "lash pash," and "annt" are also employed in similar contexts.

Certain expressions like "kadu," "ghanTa," "chal be," and "nikal lo/nikal le" serve the purpose of rejecting an idea, expressing disbelief or disobedience. While lacking a direct English equivalent, their usage conveys a general sense of disapproval.

Having compiled and categorized nearly 60 words, this list reflects the diverse slang vocabulary observed among students. Addressing their peers using various terms is a way to demonstrate solidarity and closeness.

Table no. 5
 (Addressing Slangs)

Urdu	Urdu	English
bhai	abe	Boss
chachcha	oye	Bro
Dada	yaar	Dude
kaake	saala/saali	

i noted that this category resembles Bs English 3rd semesters slang, where expressions are utilized to tease or insult a person based on their physical appearance. Other students also frequently employ these terms for such purposes.

Table no. 6
 (Slangs for Physical Appearance)

Urdu	English
“Chashmish” (a girl wears spectacles) “chashmulla” (a boy who wears spectacles)	“Burger” (someone who is westernized)
“champu” (a person who looks like a fool)	Hot
“chikni/chikna” (refer to good looking man or woman)	sexy
“chhoTu” (a short heighted person)	
“haathi (an overweight person)	
“lambu” (a tall person)	
“katil haseena / ninja” (one who wears a veil or hijab)	
“penDu” (a simpleton, a villager)	
“beRu” (a friend)	
“pappu” (shy or simple person)	
“Takla” (bald person)	

Likewise, the category of 'slang for personalities' surfaced, revealing that students possess slang terms for individuals with distinct personalities or specific habits recognized by their peers. These slangs are employed in a humorous manner to jest or make fun of them.

Table no. 7

(Slang for Personality)

Urdu	English
“bavla/bavlia” (stupid person)	Chatterbox
“andha/andhi” (who is unable to see things in front)	mummy daddy
“behra/behri” (one who doesn't hear instantly)	
“bonga” (a fool)	
“Dhakkan” (a dumbass)	
“mella/melli” (a cheap person)	
“phaTTu” (a person who can easily be intimidated)	
“Tharki” (a pervert)	

i observed a higher number of expressions conveying disappointment and disapproval in comparison to the previous semester of Bs English, prompting me to categorize them separately. The examples encompass a variety of English expressions as well.

Table no. 8
 (Disappointment And Disapproval Expressions)

Urdu	English
“DISAPPOINTMENT EXPRESSIONS”	
“Abe yaar”	bloody hell
“Ponka hogaya” (to abruptly end something boring like a lecture)	holy shit
“Shityaar”	WTF
	what the hell
“DISAPPROVAL SLANG WORDS”	
“chal be”	
“GhanTa”	
“Kaddu”	
“nikal lo”	

in the following category, words describing a joyful mood are encompassed. These expressions are occasionally employed to suggest that something appears pleasing.

Table no. 9
 (Describing (Mood) Slangs)

“lash pash”
“annt”

“fit he”
“oyehoye”
“set he”
“tight he”
“vah re vah”

The vocabulary of undergraduates also encompasses a category incorporating expressions for various actions. These expressions typically convey an attitude of “we are cool.” Within this category, there exists a range of expressions, some conveying attitude, some carrying vulgar connotations, and others serving to insult the other person.

Table no. i0

(Slangs for Actions)

“bhaR me ja” (to get lost)
“bharamjhaRna” (to show attitude or arrogance)
“dimaGh ki dahi karna” (to annoy to limits)
“Dafa duur” (to get lost)
“dimaGh ki lassi karna”(to annoy)
“Lahuu chuusna” (to suck one's blood)
“pan galena” (to get into fights)
“phaDa karna” (to fight)
“rakh k dena” (to give a tight slap)
“Scene hogaya” (something happened)
“Topi pehnaana” (to deceive)
“vaaT lagana” (to insult someone or pull someone’s leg)
“Chappar” (Exaggeration)

I also distributed a questionnaire to 50 students from the aforementioned three semesters to gain a comprehensive understanding of slang in general. The collected data is presented in Table ii, available in Appendix B.

The table indicates that the majority of students perceive slang as abusive language, suggesting that their primary intent when using slang may be to abuse or tease someone. Regarding the age when they initiated the use of slang, most indicated that they started incorporating slang during their teenage years (13-19 years). When asked about the age group that uses slang the most, the majority pointed to teenagers (13-19 years).

in response to the question about with whom they feel comfortable using slang, participants overwhelmingly agreed that they prefer using slang with friends. Conversely, when asked about whom they prefer not to use slang with, the unanimous response was elders.

To identify the sources of slang items, the sixth question revealed that participants believe they learn slang vocabulary from close friends, television, and movies.

The last four questions were formulated based on field notes, and the options provided were derived from recurring patterns. It was found that expressions like “abeyaar” are commonly used to express disappointment, while “yaar” serves as a common term of address. Expressions like “fit he”, “tight he,” etc., are employed to convey happiness, while words like “pe~Du,” “mela,” and “champu” are compliments on someone's actions and personality.

To address my supplementary question, I engaged in informal discussions with teachers and some parents to understand their perspectives on the prevalent use of slang. The majority of parents expressed unfamiliarity with many slang expressions and mentioned their struggle in comprehending their children's language. One parent candidly admitted, *“Most of the time, i do not have the slightest idea of what my kids are saying because of those modern expressions. i think they have their own world and its language.”*

Another parent acknowledged the challenge, stating, *“i usually do not get the terms kids use nowadays, but sometimes i comprehend their meaning through the context.”*

in contrast, a teacher shared that, as part of her role, she makes an effort to stay updated with the slang words her students use, understanding their meanings but refraining from using such terms when she was their age. Reflecting on past perceptions, a parent remarked,

“in our times, children who used slang were considered bold, and we preferred not to be friends with them.”

During the discussion, some parents highlighted a shift from using idioms in the past to the prevalence of slang today. They noted that while idioms held literary status, the function was similar to slang—creating humor and conveying ideas.

Certain parents believed that using slang with their children could foster a closer and friendlier bond, potentially reducing the communication gap between parents and their children.

The discussion also touched on the perceived sources of slang words according to elders. One parent attributed the influence of Indian content on television, suggesting it has impacted children's language. Others mentioned movies in general as a

source of slang words. Some teachers emphasized the role of a child's company, stating that observing students outside their homes led them to believe that the influence of close friends significantly contributes to a children's slang vocabulary.

Interpretative Deductions

Future research could narrow down the focus to explore specific sociolinguistic influences shaping slang within academic contexts. Examining the impact of digital communication platforms on slang development could be a fruitful avenue for more targeted investigations.

Limitations of Study

Limitations of this research include a focus on a specific academic department and campus, potentially limiting generalizability. Additionally, the qualitative approach might not capture the full breadth of slang usage among students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of data highlights a discernible pattern in the utilization of slang, with age serving as a defining variable that unveils the evolving nature of slang across different age groups. The study indicates that children initiate the use of slang at a rudimentary level, while adolescents seamlessly incorporate slang into their communication, showcasing a more refined and extensive vocabulary than teenagers. The expressions employed by teenagers exhibit subtle changes, introducing elements of vulgarity and indecency to form part of adolescent slang.

The research underscores that, akin to teenagers, adolescents actively engage in using a significant amount of slang, although disparities exist in the nature and categories of slang employed by these two age groups. Insights from discussions with elders, parents, and teachers highlight the pervasive nature of slang usage in contemporary society, with people expressing minimal reservations against its common use, to the point of becoming clichés. While the research doesn't present an exhaustive list of slang words, it endeavors to compile a comprehensive set. Notably, this study raises questions about the future of standard Urdu in our society.

Directions for Future Researchers

Future researchers should consider expanding the study to include a broader sample size from diverse

academic disciplines and campuses. Exploring the intersectionality of sociolinguistic factors, such as gender and cultural background, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of slang dynamics among university students.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the sociolinguistic understanding of slang usage among English Department students at NUML Faisalabad Campus. While recognizing its limitations, the study points toward potential avenues for further investigation, encouraging future researchers to delve deeper into the evolving landscape of slang in academic settings.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Name: _____ (optional)

Age: _____

Aim: *The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate the nature of slang used among different English Department Scholars. Your identity will be kept confidential.*

SECTION A: Circle the best answer from the options given below each question.

- What do you understand by the word 'slang'?
 - abusive words
 - non-standard variety of language
 - non-academic language
- At what age did you start using slang?
 - 8-12 years
 - 13-19 years
 - 20-25 years
- According to you which age group uses slang the most?
 - 8-12 years
 - 13-19 years
 - 20-25 years
- With whom are you more comfortable with the use of slang language?
 - friends
 - family
 - relatives
- With who would you prefer NOT to use slang language?
 - siblings
 - parents
 - elders
- According to you from where do you learn the informal words like 'yaar', 'shit', 'chamat', 'bakvas', etc?
 - close friends
 - siblings
 - T.V and movies
- When you are disappointed in someone or with something which word do you often use to express your anger?
 - shit yaar
 - abeyaar
 - bhanDhogaya
- How do you address your close friend in an informal situation?
 - yaar
 - Kaake
 - saale/saali
- Under what circumstances expressions like 'fit he', 'tight he', 'lashpash' are used the most? When:
 - you are happy
 - you praise something
 - you fix something if you call a friend 'pe-du', 'mela', 'champu', 'pappu', etc, is it because the friend:
 - looks like one
 - acts like one
 - is like that

Section B:

- Make a list of the slang words that you use frequently.
- Create a compilation of informal terms you recall hearing others use.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION