Exploring Slang Words on Social Media TikTok in 2024

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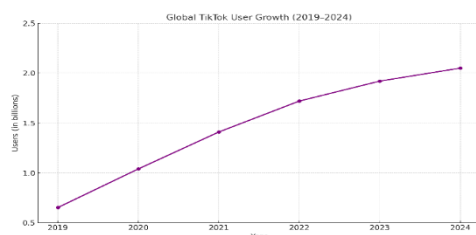**ARTICLE INFO**

ABSTRACT

Slang is rapidly evolving on social media as a form of informal expression, and TikTok has become one of the most dynamic platforms for the spread of slang among the younger generation. This research aims to analyze the types and functions of slang words that develop on the TikTok social media platform in 2024. Using a qualitative approach, this study refers to Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification of slang words, which consists of five categories: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. Data were obtained from 19 popular TikTok videos, including text in captions, video content, and comments, which featured explicit use of slang expressions. The results show that TikTok users exhibit a high level of linguistic creativity, along with the fast, informal, and multimodal character of digital communication. Of the seven slang functions identified in previous theories, it was found that only three main functions were most dominant, namely: (1) to express impressions, (2) to show closeness or intimacy between users, and (3) to form a relaxed and familiar communication atmosphere. These findings indicate that the use of slang on TikTok not only reflects the dynamics of informal language, but is also an important means of building self-identity and strengthening social relationships among the younger generation. Thus, TikTok can be seen as a digital social space that contributes to the formation and spread of contemporary language innovations.

I. Introduction

In recent years, TikTok has grown into one of the most dominant social media platforms in the world, especially among the younger generation. With its engaging short video format and advanced algorithms, TikTok has not only changed the way people consume content but also influenced the way language is used and evolved. Slang, as part of a dynamic and ever-changing language, finds particularly fertile ground on platforms like TikTok, where trends can spread very quickly among global users. [1] explain that among various social media platforms, TikTok has emerged as a generator of language and culture.

In addition, [2] states that TikTok encourages its users to experiment with multimodal communication through its distinctive short video format. TikTok's algorithm that promotes content based on engagement levels accelerates the spread of trends, including slang terms.[3] explain that through the democratization process of content creation, users can shape language standards directly. By analyzing the TikTok phenomenon in 2024, researchers can uncover the complex process of how language adapts to the digital world.

The number of TikTok users globally increased from approximately 653 million in 2019 to more than 2 billion in 2024 according to data from [4]. Although the annual growth rate decreased from 88.3% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2024, the absolute number of users continues to increase significantly each year. This decrease in percentage growth

is normal in the growth cycle of digital platforms; the larger the user base, the smaller the year-on-year relative growth rate.

The explosion of users that peaked in 2024 shows that TikTok has entered the global mass adoption phase. With the growing number of users and variety of interactions on the platform, TikTok is becoming a fertile space for language innovation and development, particularly the dynamically evolving slang language.

This phenomenon reflects how language as a communication system continues to evolve along with social changes and the needs of its users. However, these unstructured language changes often pose challenges in understanding the process of language adaptation to new contexts. [5] states that language is a communication system between humans that develops over time to adapt to the needs of its speakers. In line with this, [6] asserts that language change is evident in the emergence of slang - a form of informal language that reflects the creativity and identity of a particular community. Slang serves as a bridge between individual expression and collective culture, so understanding the flexible nature of slang provides important insights into how language responds to the demands of a dynamic society.

This flexibility makes slang very adaptive to ongoing social and cultural changes. [7] argues that in contrast to standard language, slang develops in informal spaces that allow spontaneity and creativity to take precedence over rigid norms. This flexibility allows slang to grow with social trends and become a means of personal expression. Therefore, slang can be considered a benchmark of language that is able to capture the spirit of the times. [8] added that the emergence of social media platforms further accelerates the process of language innovation, especially in the context of informal communication.

This phenomenon can be examined in depth through a sociolinguistic approach, which is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the relationship between language and the social structure of society. [9] states that sociolinguistics is the study of language as a social and cultural phenomenon, which cannot be separated from the social context of its speakers. In this framework, language is seen not only as a symbolic system, but also as a means to reflect, maintain, and change social structures. [10] emphasizes that sociolinguistics aims to study the social use of language as well as how linguistic forms acquire social meaning through a collective evaluation process. Thus, the growing slang phenomenon on TikTok can be positioned as a sociolinguistic entity that reflects the complex interactions between social identity, digital technology, and everyday communication practices.

One of the most prominent forms of sociolinguistic phenomena in this context is the use of slang. Slang is a form of informal language that is characterized by the distinctiveness of vocabulary, creativity of forms, and the limited range of its use in formal contexts. [11] explain that slang appears in certain contexts that are not standardized and often display fresh and entertaining nuances of word play. [12] underlines that slang is rarely the first choice in official communication, because it tends to be expressive and not bound by standard norms. In this case, slang not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a symbol of the identity of certain social groups. [13] research confirms that slang can create symbolic boundaries that strengthen group solidarity, while making it difficult for outsiders to understand the meaning it contains, due to the different symbolic systems used.

In an effort to classify the emerging forms of slang, especially among the younger generation of TikTok users, this study refers to the taxonomy proposed by [14]. They identified five main types of slang based on their linguistic characteristics and formation process. First, fresh and creative, which is slang that arises from the creation of new vocabulary as a result of the creativity and imagination of its speakers. Words in this category usually have no previous equivalent in standard language and are created to describe new concepts or phenomena. Second, flippant, which is slang formed through combinations of words or phrases that produce non-literal meanings, is often euphemistic or humoristic, and is used to convey messages in an indirect way. Third, imitative, which is a form of slang that takes pre-existing vocabulary, but undergoes a significant shift in meaning and is often used as an exclusion strategy against out-groups. Fourth, acronym, which is slang formed from the abbreviation of the initial letters of a phrase which is then pronounced as a whole word. This type is commonly used to simplify the expression of longer concepts. Fifth, clipping, which is a form of slang derived from cutting a whole word into a more concise form without substantially changing its

meaning. This shortening process reflects the tendency of speakers to prioritize language efficiency, especially in informal communication.

Some previous studies related to the analysis of slang words in social media and literary works are important references in this research. [15] examined the use of slang words on TikTok in 2022 by using the theory of meaning and function from [16] and [14]. The results show five types of slang that are most commonly found, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, clipping, and acronym, as well as five main functions of slang such as to express familiarity and create a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, [17] analyzed slang words in the script of the film "Toy Story 4" with a focus on morphological and sociolinguistic aspects using Allan and Burridge's theory, to find out the types and functions of slang in the context of literary works. Meanwhile, [18] examined the use of slang words in Kim Kardashian's Instagram captions with a descriptive method, finding various types of slang such as cockney slang and various language functions, including to show familiarity and express various linguistic meanings. In contrast to these studies, this research takes the object of TikTok social media in 2024 to examine the development and function of slang words that are more up-to-date and relevant to current digital communication trends.

Although previous studies have examined various aspects of slang words in social media and literary works, there is still a lack of studies that specifically examine the development of slang on the TikTok platform with the context of 2024, which is the fastest growing period in terms of users. In addition, many studies only focus on analyzing the types and functions of slang in general, without exploring the meaning and social implications of its use in the era of increasingly multimodal and interactive social media. Therefore, this research is important to fill this void in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the types, meanings, and functions of slang words in TikTok 2024 and their functions towards today's young generation.

II. Method

This research uses a qualitative method. According to [19], the qualitative approach aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, and motivations, thoroughly through descriptions in the form of words. This approach is applied in a natural context by utilizing various methods that follow the characteristics of the research object. Qualitative research emphasizes social inquiry that focuses on how individuals interpret and understand their experiences and the world around them. This method produces findings that are not obtained through statistical procedures or quantitative techniques.

To collect relevant data, researchers adhere to the fundamental principles of qualitative research methods. According to [19] Researcher should capture information accurately, completely, and systematically through field notes, screenshots, recordings, and other appropriate techniques. Based on this, the researchers took several steps in the data collection process. The first stage started by searching for TikTok videos in 2024 that had a high level of engagement, which can be seen from the number of likes, comments, and shares. After a selection and filtering process based on user engagement and the presence of slang expressions, 19 TikTok videos were collected. Second, the researchers transcribed and documented the slang forms that emerged from the three elements (captions, video content, comments). Third, the researchers collected secondary data in the form of articles and previous research that discussed slang in social media to support the analysis.

In analyzing qualitative data, researchers follow systematic steps so that the research results can be academically accounted for. [19] explains that qualitative data analysis includes three main stages: reducing data (selecting, focusing, simplifying, and summarizing raw data), presenting the reduced data in a form that facilitates analysis, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Based on this, the researchers grouped the slang found into a table based on Allan and Burridge's classification, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. Next, we analyzed the context of use and meaning of the slang on TikTok. Finally, the results of the analysis were used to conclude the types and functions of slang that developed on TikTok during 2024.

III. Results and Discussion

The table presents the classification of TikTok slang words based on the typology by Allan and Burridge (2006), which includes five categories: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. The data was collected from popular TikTok phrases and expressions that gained traction in 2024. Each slang term is categorized according to its linguistic characteristics and usage context.

Table 1. Classification of TikTok Slang Expressions Used in 2024

No.	Type of slang	No.	Slang word
1.	Fresh and Creative	a.	"Pisces is the queen of emotions and **delulus** fr"
		b.	"**Bed rotting** with my bsf bc our worlds did in fact end when we lost our boys"
		c.	"Shopping with my **NPC** girlfriend"
		d.	"Anyone else go **goblin mode** at their desk"
2.	Flippant	a.	"You accidentally **doomscroll** for too long'
		b.	"Got caught **thirst-trapping**."
		c.	"When u successfully **ragebait** someone on a topic u know nothing about."
		d.	"**Keyboard warriors**, what's your diagnosis?"
3.	Imitative	a.	"Listening to that friend who randomly **shades** you mid-convo"
		b.	"**Spilling the tea** because he's not only my boyfriend but also my bestfriend"
		c.	"New boyfriend reveal hard launch **no cap** fr on god"
4.	Acronym	a.	"**IYKYK** When you clean your room a little too hard"
		b.	"**GOAT** Thanks for everything"
		c.	"**GRWM** First day in vegas for F1"
		d.	"**NGL** bro we haven't done something stupid in a while"
5.	Clipping	a.	"Acting very **sus**"
		b.	"**Fam** day"
		c.	"POV: you're a kpop **stan**"
		d.	"I've been **legit**"

Discussion

This section provides a detailed analysis of the TikTok slang expressions identified in 2024. The discussion is organized into two layers: first, the meaning of slang words based on the types of slang as categorized by [14], namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping; and second, based on the communicative functions these slang terms serve. These functions include addressing others, initiating relaxed conversation, humiliating, forming an intimate atmosphere, expressing impressions, revealing anger, and showing intimacy. The following analysis explores how each slang expression reflects both its linguistic form and social function in online discourse.

A. Types of Slang Expression

1. Fresh and creative
   a. "Pisces is the queen of emotions and delulus fr"

   In this sentence, Pisces is described as an emotional person who often fantasizes excessively. The word delulus is used to emphasize this characteristic, which is believing too much in something that is unrealistic, especially in terms of love. Saputri (2021) refers to delulus as a play on the word delusional, which means being overly confident in empty hopes, often used in the context of fandom.
   b. "Bed rotting with my bsf bc our worlds did in fact end when we lost our boys"

   This sentence places the creator and her friend in the same emotional state, that is, grieving over the loss of their idol. The phrase bed rotting is used to describe lying silently in bed without doing anything, as an emotional response to the loss of their idol. In this case, bed rotting is a form of grief expression that is now widely used by Gen Z. As explained by Taylor Lorenz (2023), this term reflects mental exhaustion or burnout that is expressed through social media.
   c. "Shopping with my NPC girlfriend"

   In this sentence, my NPC girlfriend refers to a passive girlfriend who remains silent while shopping. The term NPC (Non-Playable Character) is used to mock someone who does not show

any reaction or personal opinion. According to [20] NPCs represent "people who are considered not to think for themselves."

d. "Anyone else go goblin mode at their desk"

This sentence uses the term "goblin mode" to describe messy behavior and a lack of concern for one's image while at work. The subject "anyone else" indicates that the speaker is attempting to engage the audience in a sense of relatability. Spears (2000) refers to "goblin mode" as a form of resistance against societal standards of always being neat and productive. The term gained popularity through memes starting in 2022.

2. Flippant
   a. "You accidentally doomscroll for too long"

   The phrase You accidentally doomscroll for too long is used by the creators to describe the audience's habit of overusing social media. The term doomscroll refers to the behavior of spending hours browsing negative content, bad news, or information that triggers anxiety, stress, sadness, or anger. According to [21], doomscroll means the tendency to constantly read bad news, even if it makes the mood worse. The word first became popular around 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged people to access bad news constantly[22].

   b. "Got caught thirst-trapping."

   This sentence comes from a comment made by a netizen to a content creator. The term thirst-trapping is used to describe a creator who deliberately uploads seductive content to attract physical attention. According to [23], the term "thirst trap" does not only refer to provocative posts but also reflects society's collective perspective on sexuality and physical attractiveness, including how men can be positioned as sexually appealing, provocative, and threatening objects.

   c. "When u successfully ragebait someone on a topic u know nothing about."

   This sentence is an expression of pride from a content creator who has successfully provoked anger in others through their actions, even though he does not understand the topic being discussed. The term ragebait comes from a combination of the words rage and bait. According to [24], rage baiting is a deliberate, provocative act aimed at triggering an emotional reaction, particularly anger, frustration, or irritation. It is like baiting emotions, not with ordinary bait, but by exploiting sensitive topics that can trigger strong reactions from others.

   d. "Keyboard warriors, what's your diagnosis?"

   This sentence is the creator's satire to the audience who are considered keyboard warriors, which are people who dare to be aggressive or attack on social media but are passive in real life. The term keyboard warrior is generally used with a negative connotation to describe someone who only speaks out online without taking any real action [25].

3. Imitative
   a. "Listening to that friend who randomly shades you mid-convo"

   The sentence in the video uses the word shades to describe a subtle form of sarcasm that still feels painful. In this context, shading is an indirect way of expressing dislike. According to [26] the term originates from African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and is used in social interactions to convey implicit criticism or ridicule. The term shade was also popular through the drag and queer communities in New York in the 1980s. Legendary drag figure Dorian Corey in the documentary Paris Is Burning explains, "Shade is, I don't have to tell you you're ugly, because you know you're ugly." This statement emphasizes that shade doesn't have to be said explicitly-just through tone, expression, or gesture that conveys a hidden meaning.

   b. "Spilling the tea because he's not only my boyfriend but also my bestfriend"

   The creator in the vidio uses the term spilling the tea to refer to the act of sharing gossip or interesting stories in a relaxed and intimate setting. The word tea in this slang means personal or sensational information, and spill the tea means to reveal such information, usually in a familiar social context. According to [27], this form of slang is part of the dynamics of unofficial language used in informal social situations. More specifically, the term tea comes from African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and began to be used in the black and drag communities in the

1990s. The letter "T" originally stood for truth, and later evolved into tea in the sense of gossip or "juicy" stories.

c. "New boyfriend reveal hard launch no cap fr on god"

This sentence in the video uses the phrase no cap to emphasize that the statement is honest and not exaggerated. In this context, no cap means without lying. The term comes from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), where cap means "lie" or "exaggerate", while no cap is an assertion that the utterance is true [28]. According to [29] , AAVE is a rich source of creative and innovative expressions, including various forms of slang that later spread into mainstream culture. Cap and no cap became widely popular through rap music and social media platforms, especially from the influence of artists such as Future and Young Thug in the mid-2010s. The phrases were later widely adopted by Gen Z circles as part of an informal, expressive language style.

4. Acronym

a. "IYKYK When you clean your room a little too hard"

The sentence uses the acronym IYKYK which means If You Know, You Know. This term is used to convey the hidden meaning or experience that can only be understood by certain people who share the same context. In this case, clean your room a little too hard could refer to over-cleaning as a form of emotional release-something that would be understood only by those who have experienced something similar. According to [30], IYKYK is an expression popularized by internet culture and social media, used to imply that an event, joke, or meaning can only be understood by a specific group. The use of this phrase creates a kind of social boundary indirectly by forming a bond between those who know, while excluding those who don't.

b. "GOAT Thanks for everything"

The caption uploaded by the creator uses the acronym GOAT, which stands for Greatest of All Time. The term is used to express great admiration and appreciation for someone who is considered to be at the top of their field. In this context, the word is directed at Lionel Messi, who is widely regarded as the best football player of all time. According to [31] the acronym GOAT was first used in the world by Mohammad Ali, then rapper LL Cool J popularized by using the phrase as the title of his album "G.O.A.T." in 2000. Since then, it has become part of the popular vocabulary to describe legendary figures in various fields, including music, sports and entertainment.

c. "GRWM First day in Vegas for F1"

This sentence is the title of a video uploaded by a content creator with the GRWM (Get Ready With Me) format, which documents the moment of his first day watching the F1 race in Las Vegas. The GRWM format itself is a popular trend on social media, where creators share the preparation process before attending an event or activity. According to [32] , "GRWM" or "Get Ready With Me" refers to a type of content that showcases a person's routine or preparation, such as dressing up or choosing an outfit, before an event.

d. "NGL bro we haven't done something stupid in a while"

The sentence that creator uses in the vidio uses the abbreviation NGL-which comes from the English phrase not gonna lie to introduce an honest statement. The term is widely used in social media and chat to convey honesty without being too serious or heavy. [33] defines NGL as an informal abbreviation for not gonna lie.

5. Clipping

a. "Acting very sus"

The sentence "Acting very sus" uses the term sus, a clipped form of suspicious-to describe a suspicious condition. [34] mention that sus is a slang term for suspicious, and although it took off after the viral game Among Us, the term has been used since the 1920s. The game made the term more popular among Gen Z and online players, the word originated in early 20th-century British police language, then was popularized in an AAVE context before becoming part of today's internet conversation.

b. "Fam day"

The phrase "Fam day" uses the word fam, which is a short form of family. According to [35] This word means one's close friends or family. Among internet users, as explained, fam is used as a term of endearment for close friends, equivalent to friend for example, Fam replaces dude or bro in casual conversation.

c. "POV: you're a kpop stan"

This is the title of TikTok content in POV (Point of View) format, where the creator invites the viewer to enter into the point of view as a K-pop fan. According to [36] , the POV format on TikTok is a first-person narrative style designed to provide a sense of immersion and make viewers feel like they're in the scene On platforms like TikTok, POV allows content creators to create personalized and participatory experiences.

d. "I've been legit"

The phrase I've been legit is used as an assertion by the creator that he is genuine, sincere, and reliable. The slang meaning of the word legit, which is a shortened form of legitimate, contains connotations such as genuine, real, and not fake. [37] gives usage examples such as "I legit forgot" and "I legit tracked down" to show how legit functions to emphasize the honesty or authenticity of an action.

B. The function of slang words

1. To Express Impression

The function to express impression in TikTok slang shows how language is used to convey emotional impressions, subjective attitudes, and social judgments in a spontaneous, expressive, and often hyperbolic way. For example, phrases like "Pisces is the queen of emotions and delulus fr" show stereotypes of certain zodiac characters that are dramatically exaggerated. This communication style reflects the characteristics of internet language, according to [38], hyperbolic as part of online expression. This is also seen in expressions such as "Anyone else go goblin mode at their desk?" which not only shows ironic lazy habits, but also a form of solidarity between other TikTok audiences with similar experiences. As [39] explains, slang is an ever-changing form of colloquial language used to reinforce social identity and group cohesion.

Furthermore, terms such as "You accidentally doomscroll for too long" illustrate an awareness of digital habits that have a negative emotional impact. According to Merriam-Webster, doomscroll refers to the excessive consumption of news that causes anxiety or sadness, and this language reflects a style of online communication often used to expressively comment on psychological states [38]. Meanwhile, phrases like "got caught thirst-trapping" or "when u successfully ragebait someone on a topic u know nothing about" show how slang functions to convey expressions of satisfaction. The term "thirst-trapping" in this context is used to criticize content creators who explicitly display physical appearance in order to get attention or social validation. The phenomenon is in line with the opinion of [40] who stated that slang on TikTok has become part of "cyberculture, facilitating the exchange of identities in cyberspace," where self-expression, including a sense of satisfaction or superiority, becomes part of digital performativity.

Expressive functions are also seen in terms such as "keyboard warrior" and "throwing shade" which are used to satirize aggressive or passive-aggressive behavior on social media in a sarcastic yet communicative tone. According to the Merriam-Webster definition, the term shade describes an expression of subtle mockery full of innuendo, while keyboard warrior refers to an internet user who is verbally bold only online. This kind of slang is often used to label or judge behavior in a concise yet nuanced manner. In addition, many slangs also build the expression of intimacy and exclusivity within the digital community. For example, "IYKYK" (if you know, you know) creates an insider atmosphere, where only those with similar experiences will understand the context [30]. Similarly, "POV: you're a K-pop stan" establishes closeness through personal perspective narratives that encourage participation.

Phrases such as "GOAT thanks for everything" show admiration for someone who is considered the best of all time, while "GRWM First day in Vegas for F1" displays the spirit of sharing creator moments with the audience through a spontaneous narrative format [38]. On the other hand, the phrase "acting very sus" succinctly expresses suspicion of someone, and "I've

been legit" reinforces a sense of honesty and self-authenticity. All these examples show that the use of slang on TikTok is not just a trend, but a means to express impressions, form identities, and strengthen social relationships in today's digital communication ecosystem. As explained by [41] "slang is used to build closeness with the audience, display Gen Z identity, and increase the attractiveness of content on TikTok." In this context, slang functions not only as a communication tool, but also as a medium to show personality and form more intimate social relations in the digital space.

2. To Show Intimacy

The function to show intimacy in TikTok slang illustrates how language is used to create emotional closeness and strengthen personal and social relationships in the digital space. For example, the phrase "Spilling the tea because he's not only my boyfriend but also my best friend" reflects emotional comfort and trust in relationships, where users feel free to share gossip with partners who are also their best friends. The expression spilling the tea, according to [27], is used to convey information or gossip in an informal context as a form of social intimacy.

A similar form of intimacy is also evident in the sentence "New boyfriend reveal hard launch no cap fr on god," which openly shows a romantic relationship with the use of hyperbolic slang such as no cap and on god to emphasize honesty and sincerity. According to Dictionary.com, no cap means to speak honestly, while on god reinforces the authenticity of the statement. This style of language suggests emotional openness to an audience considered part of a personal circle, as [38] explains that social media often serves as a space for sharing intimate feelings.

Meanwhile, the expression "NGL bro we haven't done anything stupid in a while" shows the familiarity between close friends with a casual and nostalgic style of language. The acronym NGL (not gonna lie) and the greeting bro are used to create an atmosphere of honest conversation. According to [33], NGL is commonly used to express honest opinions in informal contexts, while [38] notes that such forms are often used to build intimacy and solidarity in digital communication.

Expressions such as "Fam day" also reflect closeness to those closest to us, whether family or friends. According to [35], the word fam is slang for family or close friends, and its use in the context of social media shows a sense of warmth and togetherness within a group. [39] states that slang is used to strengthen group identity and create a sense of belonging, which in this context is evident from the use of inclusive and familiar terms.

3. To Form Intimate Atmosphere

The sentence "bed rotting with my bsf bc our worlds did in fact end when we lost our boys" represents an emotional coping, in which two friends accompany each other in their grief within a very exclusive circle. [42] The concept of the social sharing of emotions suggests that sharing emotional experiences like this brings two individuals closer. On the other hand, [43]in Digital Intimacy asserts that digital interactions that are intimate yet minimally public, such as the practice of "bed rotting" together actually strengthen emotional bonds and affective support among individuals.

IV. Conclusion

This study successfully uncovered the types and functions of slang developing on TikTok social media in 2024 by using [14] classification. Of the five slang categories they proposed, which are fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping of which were found in the data, showing that the linguistic creativity of TikTok users is very diverse and reflects the dynamics of digital communication. However, of the seven functions of slang according to Allan and Burridge, only three are dominantly found in this study, namely: (1) to express impression, (2) to show intimacy, and (3) to form an intimate atmosphere. This shows that the main function of slang in TikTok focuses more on creating self-expression and building emotional closeness among its users.

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