

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SLANG AND ITS USING CONTEXT IN TAIWAN: COMPLIMENTING AND REBUKING DICTIONS AS EXAMPLES

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Abstract: This paper aims to scrutinize: a) two slang categories of both complimenting and slightly rebuking people over the intended listeners' behavior, and the intended speakers' attitudes; b) sociocultural implications in slang used by Taiwan university students; and c) slang culture and its using contexts of two slang categories.

Keywords: slang culture and its using context, sociocultural implications, Taiwan's university students, complimenting and rebuking.

INTRODUCTION

As Peter Trudgill notes in chapter one of *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* (2000), "...the role played by language in conveying information about the speaker" is "aspect of linguistic behavior...and reflections of the fact that there is close inter-relationship between language and society..." (2). Language spoken in one particular society differentiates from that in another. Spoken language that belongs to a particular group forms under such circumstance as the ones who share the mutually admitted registered terms based on their common knowledge. Society is a kind of circle in which a particular group of people live, behave, and interact with one another in peculiar manners. However, this research questions the order along which men create verbal repertoire first rather than they are affected by the surroundings and adopt "culturally registered terms" (Jacques Derrida).

This research paper is divided into a) definition of "slang" as introductory section, b) motivation and objectives of author's doing this sociolinguistic study, c) methodology and basic concepts (phenomenon of university slang culture in Taiwan), that is - "verbal repertoire¹," d)

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¹ "Verbal Repertoire" means all language varieties that people can use. Different variants appear in human communication.

source of data, e) selected categories of university students' slangs, f) data analysis and g) finding of this social and cultural phenomenon, and h) conclusion which summarizes this research. Definition of “slang” prepares readers to understand its using context and speical features. Motivation and objectives segments record the author’s observation in which his interest has arisen due to listening to university students’ usage of slang as major communicative verbal repertoire. Source data and selected category include questionnaires and face-to-face interviews from which major utilized slang are classified.

Definition of “Slang”

According to Online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, slangs signify “very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example, children, criminals, soldiers, etc” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). Pragmatically, “slang” denotes two functional paradigms. One is that it is more utilized in spoken language than written language because of its informal sense of expression. And its usage is situational and belongs to a particular group which is made up of by people with the same sex, age, interest, social and ethnic background, and political tendency. People who come from Ethiopia for example share slangs that particularly originates from their race or ethnic. In other words, slang refers to a kind of spoken language that is commonly acknowledged and unconsciously employed over a wide range of topics when utilized.

	Spoken Form	Written Form
Formal	–	+
Informal	+	–

Table 1: The utility of “slang” is in spoken and informal context.

Linguistically, a bunch of phrasal collocations of “slang” can be used in spoken language. People combine “slang” with “word,” “expression,” and “term” that follow up. For example, “a slang word” can be replaced by “a slang expression,” and “a slang term.” Moreover, Slang can follow such words as teenage, black, and cultural as teenage, black, and cultural slangs, Children, during the time when they go to school, acquire commonly exchanged words that refer to something, someone, or a particular incident. And so do criminals in jails and soldiers in military service. In Taiwan’s military circle, soldiers usually joke and refer “top gun” to/ as powerful weapons that devastate their enemy. And “top gun,”

when spoken, also signifies men's penis which is configuration of masculine disposition and masculinity.

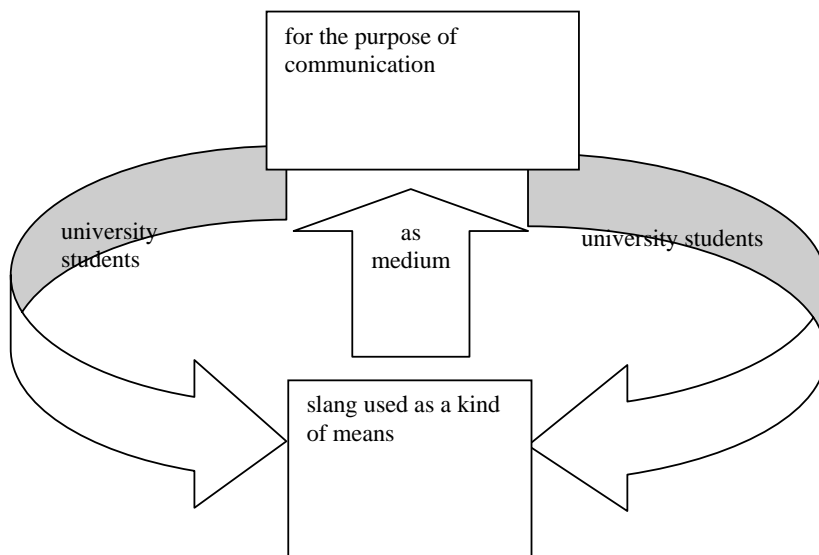


Table 2: Taiwan's university students utilize slang as a means for communication, which is less formal and proves casual.

Motivation and Objectives

The author (also the TEFL instructor) once sat in the departmental students' self-studying room during the noon break, sipping a cup of pearl milk tea. Several sophomore students suddenly flooded in. Among them was lots of slang exchanged when they communicated in Mandarin Chinese. They teased, joked about, and commented on their school fellows and intimate friends. Every five complete and incomplete sentences contained a bunch of slang, which, the author thinks, is worthy of being recorded and analyzed. They availed of the targeted registers to create a kind of situation in which they mutually know what one another meant when a particular slang is spoken whereas other people, outsiders of their social circle, might have no idea about what they meant and what the things are they refer to.

METHODOLOGY AND BASIC CONCEPTS

Source of the Data

The author designed questionnaire and carried out face-to-face interviews by which data come from. The questions on the questionnaire are as follows.

Q& A

Please answer each question with simple answers, which might include a word, a phrase, or compound words.

1. While chatting with your friends, do you use more complete and sophisticated sentences instead of simple sentences?
2. While chatting with your friends, do you use incomplete sentences, or words, and phrases instead of complete and sophisticated sentences?
3. Do you subconsciously use more complete and sophisticated sentences than incomplete sentences?
4. Do you consciously use more complete and sophisticated sentences than incomplete sentences?
5. Do you subconsciously use incomplete and sophisticated sentences than complete sentences?
6. Do you consciously use incomplete and sophisticated sentences than complete sentences?
7. Do you feel yourselves cool as using slang among your friends?
8. Do you feel a sense of belonging as using slang among your friends?
9. What do you think if you do not use slang to communicate with your friends? Do you think yourself still engaged with others?
10. What kind of slang do you quite often hear from your friends, acquaintance, and school fellows?

Table 3: It is author's designed questionnaire that was given to forty university students who are sophomore students.

CATEGORIES

This research explores two categories of Taiwan university students' slang. One investigates the circumstance in which the one expresses his viewpoints towards the other(s) when she/ he as intended speaker thinks

of the intended listener(recipient) doing something very awkward. In the other case, the author scrutinizes one's verbal expression and its impact when the intended listener (recipient) did something that marvels and surprises the intended speaker beyond the intended speakers' imagination, which turns out positive and negative aspects.

Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese that Refer Targeted Listeners to/ as Idiots

University Students' Slangs in Taiwan	
Mandarin Chinese (or Taiwanese)	
Slang Terms	Definitions
1. 7œ nau bau % *	“Nc7œF tou nau you dung + * % 1 + % 2 / œ ” means “reckless,” “stupid,” “doing things without careful plan.” When people think, speak, and behave with a very stupid tendency, they are described as 7œ ;% * ,” “7œ nau tsan % ,< ,” “B/7œ dou fu nau œ 2% % ,” “Nc7œF tou nau you dung % 1% œ,” “Sp jr chiue œ ,” and “LÒ jr jang œ .œ .”
2. 7œ nau tsan % " ,<	
3. B/7œ dou fu nau œ 2% %	
4. Nc7œF tou nau you dung % 1 % /œ	
5. Sp jr chiue œ	
6. LÒ jr jang œ .œ	
Usages in Contexts	
The terms above are used to refer to somebody who knows nothing about something that people are discussing. Or his/ her reaction to a particular thing goes beyond expectation, which is thought preposterous.	

Table 4: The terms in Table 1 above are university students' slangs that refer the targeted listeners to/ as idiots.

Analysis

Preposterous Thinking and Behavior:

The terms above show that the intended listeners thanks to their exaggerated behavior and acting like children are teased by the targeted spakers as idiots. Normally, in Mandarin Chinese, when one is described an idiot, his body part¹ head¹ becomes targeted for because “head,”

equivalent to Nc tau + , commonly associates with human intelligent quotient (IQ). On the contrary, if one is smart and talented, he will be described with compliment as “Nc7œ tou nau hau %”

%,” or “7œM~. nau jin ling min % 1- 1/< 1- %.”

Again, “Nc tau + ,” the body part is borrowed to refer to one’s awkward speaking and behavior. “Nc tau + ” as well as “7œ nau %” has configured as an index of showing one’s sense, instinct, understanding, and intelligence to remain basic social interaction among the others. One thing that is noticeable is the fact that the intended listeners receive from the intended speakers with the verbal repertoire with sarcasm. Yet, the intended listeners whenever hear slang from their university fellow not only shrink from rebuking those intended speakers but also feel a sense of belonging, as part of a “particular social group” in university.

Here is one real life example that Peter Kao observed when he sat at the departmental students’ self-studying room. He heard a group of sophomore students enthusiastically teasing, joking, and articulating words, phrases as means of communication. He finally realized the whole matter. Below is the content of conversation between two sophomore students.

Dialogue with Slang between Two Sophomores

<p>Sophomore Student A: 7œ nau bau ou! % + ! BA 9@N51† mai ge bian dang ye huei wang ji na kuai tz (% &• 1,œ . 6'% 2)œ 2.œ œ œ</p>	<p>Sophomore Student B: Ce7œ nau bau % ! eB77œ dou fu nau œ ...œ ye tai gei ta 6'œ œ ...</p>
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Table 5: The dialogue came from two sophomore students.

Cognitive Representation.Ignorance: “7œ nau bau % ,” under such circumstance, is slang that Sophomore A used to refer their friend to idiots when their friend’s ignorance is slightly ironized. The terms above are also used to mock people as if they suffered from brain damage as their ignorance creates effects that induce sarcasm.

Verbal Effect. Exaggeration:

A particular meaning also registers to indicate one's exaggerated speaking manners and behaviors, stupid and clumsy. Rhetorically, the effect of exaggeration is reached and “ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ * ” reveals one's response toward another's exaggerated thinking and behavior. “ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ;< ,” “ㄅㄨˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ + ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ * ” familiarize Taiwan's university students with the same effect brought about by saying “ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ * ,” “ㄆㄨˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ,” or “ㄌㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ ㄉㄠˊ .ㄉㄠˊ .”

Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese that Refer to Targeted Listeners' Behavior and Interaction with University Fellow

University Students' Slangs in Taiwan	
Mandarin Chinese (or Taiwanese)	
Slang Terms	Definitions
, diao 1* ㄉㄠˊ	The first four slang indicates that the intended speakers admire a certain behavior by the intended listeners. “, diao 1* ㄉㄠˊ” means “cool,” “fashionable, and even “innovative” with a sense of admiration from the intended speaker to the intended listeners. The last two slang on the left reveal the opposite meaning of the first four slang usage.
ㄉㄠˊ hen wei -ㄉㄠˊ	
ㄉㄠˊ wei ge 2) ㄉㄠˊ &	
ㄉㄠˊ ku bi le 2ㄉㄠˊ 1ㄉㄠˊ &•	
:s% ㄌㄠˊ chi 2ㄉㄠˊ 1	
F'¼ shiun bi le 3-ㄉㄠˊ 1 ㄉㄠˊ &•	
Usages in Contexts	
Among Taiwan's university students, they normally say, “很威 hen wei - ㄉㄠˊ ,” when something cool takes place and it, conversely, happens when something very awkward takes place and people say, “落漆 luo chi 2ㄉㄠˊ 1 ” to express their feeling and viewpoints.	

Table 6: The terms above are university students' slangs that refer the targeted listeners as cool or as the opposite.

Analysis

“, diao 1* ㄉㄠˊ ,” “ㄉㄠˊ hen wei -ㄉㄠˊ ,” “ㄉㄠˊ wei ge 2) ㄉㄠˊ & ,” “ㄉㄠˊ ku bi le 2ㄉㄠˊ 1ㄉㄠˊ &• ”—all signify something cool taking place or somebody very cool. For example, in Mandarin Chinese, when somebody invents something which is unprecedented, he

will be praised “G-¼ ku bi le 2☉ 1☉ &• .” Or for example, if somebody performs street dance, which is very difficult to imitate or practice and follow, he will be praised, “7 wei ge 2) &•.” Below is another example. The author was walking to campus library. He heard three senior university students praising somebody very cool and he realized what they meant by saying such terms as “¾ hen wei -2☉ ,” “diau 1* ~.”

Dialogue with Slang between Three Senior Students

Senior Student A: Our team made a record in today’s basketball competition. GG31L ¾ wo men shi duei chuang ji lu le 2%
 - • 1 (☉) ☉ . ☉ ☉ ☉ &• Their performance is outstanding. -U,¾ jen de hen wei - &•
 2☉

Senior Student B: Of course, our team leader is outstanding. He assisted other players to make a basketball several times. ¾ GGL¾
 ¾ y> Dang ran, wo men duei jiang shr wei ge, ta shie ju chi ta duei you Chiang lan ban hau ji tsz, wei ge . ,
 <
 2%☉ & \$ 1< 2☉
 1\$ 2)☉☉☉☉
 ☉ “7 wei ge 2) &• .”

Table 7: The terms above came from two senior students in university.

FINDINGS

This research implies the following three dimensions. First, much to the author’s surprise, slang with two examples used in distinct contexts and analyzed above shows a kind of tension under which “politically correct usage of slang” belongs to university students is mutually admitted among a company of university students. It also involves social interactions and interpersonal relationship among university students. Like any slang used in other contexts, Taiwan university students’ slang usage has its particular context and this phenomenon can be in advanced observed from their campus life.

Second, slang disseminates everywhere. Slang and its usage form not only from external stimuli but also from each student’s inner perceptions. They transform what they perceived into the exterior behavior as means to communicate and maintain interpersonal relationships. They

cognitively imitate with one another in terms of behavior, and mocking attitude externally. And slang and its usage are also internally generated from university students' thinking pattern and their minds and thoughts.

Moreover, Taiwan university students are very creative and innovative when use slang as a way of verbal articulation for interpersonal communication. They unconsciously bridge the gap among Taiwan's regional citizens from distinct urban and rural areas.

Like the two circles put together and a hidden zone that overlaps and lies behind the scene, slang forms a sense of belonging by which Taiwan university students embody and perform through external action, reaction, and interaction with feedbacks returned from the recipient.

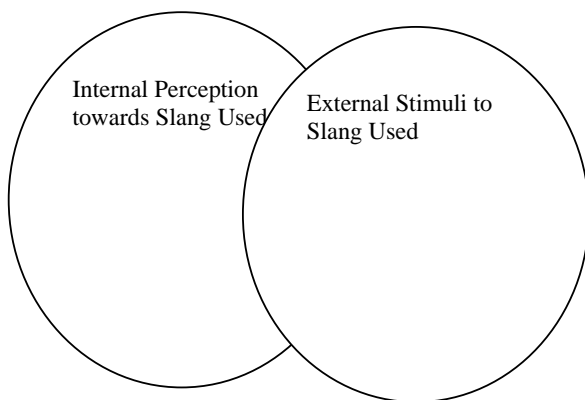


Table 8: The fact shows that any university using slang is truly affected by both internal perceptions and external stimuli towards a particular slang used.

CONCLUSION

“*Nc70FF* tou nau you dung %o 1%6E ,” as mentioned above is a kind of verbal expression that Taiwan's university students nowadays adopt to refer to somebody who did something stupid. 7 wei ge 2) & , for another example, indicates Taiwan's university students, very creative. This slang phenomenon forms a kind of culture among youth and booms diversity of campus life.

Slang in Mandarin Chinese and its usage spread among Taiwan university students. From the utilized slang, one can find the fact that Taiwan university students are very active and creative especially when making friends and maintaining “social interaction” at campus. Slang utilized in daily campus life is very profound in its syntactic and semantic connotations. They are engaged in creating new registers that

have transformed from the original meaning to the new. Taiwan university students when utilizing slang simultaneously convey their personal disposition, form of verbal articulation, and individual viewpoints towards the issue that they consciously think of or unconsciously feel about something during their social interaction with their company.

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