IDEAS

The Input of a Successful EFL Learner
and the Mastery of Gen-Z Slangs

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Abstract

Language changes and one of the concrete poofs is the existence of new slang words. Slang is an informal language that is widely used by a teenager. Slang words differ for each country; therefore, this study aims to know the input of a successful English learner from Indonesia and the knowledge of Gen Z's English slang. The research was conducted using qualitative data analysis as the method design in order to get a deeper understanding of the respondent and research topic. The result shows that the respondent was exposed to both formal and informal input. Out of 25 questions given about slang words, the respondent was able to define three slang words correctly. The possible reasons why the respondent did not do well in the slang words test are because (1) the English education in Indonesia does not focus on teaching slang words, (2) the people the respondent follows on social media are not from gen z, (3) the respondent does not spend much time on social media, or the topics/ contents are not using general slang words, (4) the sources of input of the respondent were not published recently, (5) offline game cannot connect people worldwide, (6) the respondent might have heard or read one or two slang words but did not search for its meaning. In conclusion, even though the respondent of this research was the best graduate of the English Department, the respondent did not know and follow nowadays English language very well.

Keywords: EFL learner; gen z; language input; second language acquisition; slang

Introduction

As time progresses, technology takes a step into amazing advancement that contributes to societal life. Social media is an extensively utilized technology that appears to be inseparable from people's everyday activities. Unlike television and radio, which mostly transmit in one direction, social media platforms serve as

interactive platforms that allow users to share news and actively engage (Manning, 2014 in Sabrina, 2021). Damanik (2015) supports this notion, which stated in her study that technological advancements in Indonesia have significantly influenced communication operations. Globalization promotes cosmopolitan lifestyles defined by easy contact and access to a wide range of information, allowing individuals within a group to adopt new living styles as they wish. The result of this is new words emergence. New words keep appearing in our society. Most of them are usually informal, coming from the young generation or what is known as Gen Z. Gaidani (2019) refers to Gen Z as a group of people born in 1995-2010, in the digital era. They use slang words like "istg", "ig", "fr", "snack", etc. in their daily lives, especially in written form such as Instagram or chatting apps. Baby boomer generation (born in the 1940s-1950s) until millennials (born in 1980s- late 1990s) might not know what people from Gen Z talk about. This phenomenon is in line with what Holmes (2013) stated: that language changes from time to time.

The changes might be in how words are spelled or their meaning. The reason of this change is because language and words are similar to an agreement in society. Society agrees to adopt and use that certain language and words resulting in a linguistic change (Holmes, 2013). This is also supported by Blythe and Croft (2021). Blythe and Croft (2021) claimed that language is a multidimensional phenomenon. A language is a collection of linguistic conventions shared by a large population, that is, the speech community: it is a set of linguistic conventions typical of the population as a whole. Individuals, however, are the source of language. Individuals in a population use language to fulfill certain communicative goals, and the linguistic conventions of the speech community emerge via repeated encounters. These standards evolve over time, and when speech groups split, their linguistic conventions diverge, resulting in variance among languages. Another definition of language by Rabiah (2012) is that language is a communication tool everyone uses daily to transmit information and arguments to others. In this context, language cannot be separated from culture since language represents a nation and is closely related to the attitudes or behaviors of groups of language speakers. According to Finegan and Besnier (1989) in Erlinda (2010), language is like a coin with two sides: content and expression. Content refers to what is meant to be said, expression is how the content is articulated, and language is the mental code that connects the two.

Every country has their own slang. New slang words keep appearing in order to meet the speaker's needs. As Rahmawati (2012) specified, slang is typically used in informal settings. It may make a conversation feel more intimate. Slang terms are used in practically all oral languages to communicate people's emotions and creativity. A similar definition also found in the study conducted by Tambunan (2019) which says slang is a language used within society by people to communicate with their social circle; however, it is distinct from general language. Members of a specific group only understand this language. In addition, Pei et al. (2019) defined slang, also described as "the language of the streets" (Green, 2015), is a kind of informal

language composed of words and expressions shared by specific groups. The expressivity of slang is seen in the flexible use of words. Slang's expressive character demonstrates its social role, as it allows for effective communication and knowledge-sharing across groups with unique social identities. Lihawa et al. (2021) reported that people of gen Z utilize slang to keep insiders in and outsiders out or passers-by out of their conversation. When youngsters intend to hide secrets from adults, they do not use the same wording as adults. As a result, they require new vocabulary that is only known among them to keep their secrets hidden.

Several studies have investigated the slang language in the teenager conversation (Pradianti, 2013; Nuraeni & Prahamza, 2021), classroom interaction (Rullu, 2018; Yultisah & Mardiah, 2018), and social media (Trimastuti, 2017; Saputra & Marlina, 2019; Gazhali & Abdullah, 2021). Those studies only focused on the types of the slang language without exploring the input that might influence the people to use slang. This study aims to fill the gap by considering how the input or exposure can impact the use of slang as in learning a language, input is considered as a crucial factor. Krashen (1978), cited from Troike (2012), asserted that language input is the most significant aspect in learning another language. Grady et al. (2011) also underlined the importance of input in SLA, stating that in some situations of SLA, there are signs that at least some aspects, such as lexical development, are directly impacted by input. In other words, the availability of appropriate language input is critical to the language learning process. The language input or exposure depends on the learning environment. Colley et al. (2003) classified types of learning into formal and informal. Informal learning occurs through everyday activities such as listening to music, watching movies, or reading books, novels, or anything in the target language. In contrast, formal learning occurs in a formal environment, usually a classroom, at pre-defined times and following a set of curriculums.

In agreement with Krashen (1978), Ellis (2008), cited from Nugroho et al. (2020), suggested three types of comprehensible input. The first is unmodified input. Unmodified input refers to language input that is not modified. The second is pre-modified input, that is an input which is simplified or adjusted in order to improve the understanding. The last is interactionally modified input. In this input, meaning negotiation is used to make the interactionally changed input more understandable.

Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows:
1. What is the input of a successful English learner from Indonesia?
2. What is the respondent's knowledge of gen Z's English slangs?
3. What are the possible reasons for the respondent's slang words mastery level?

Method

This study was a case study qualitative research conducted by doing an interview, analyzing and measuring the respondent's knowledge of slang words. The data collection approach was by using an in-depth face-to-face personal interview to make it easier for the respondent to say what he wanted to say and a test with an open-ended answer type. This method was chosen so the researchers could get

better insights or a deeper understanding from the respondent's information. The instruments that were used were an interview and a test guide. The test questions were taken from a previous study about slang words formation by Lihawa et al. (2021) called Callahan's generation Z dictionary. The test questions were taken from the top twenty-five out of sixty-three slang words in the list. The respondent in this research was the best graduate of undergraduate program in the English Department, batch 2016, in Widya Kartika University, Surabaya.

There were steps in collecting the data for this study. First, the researchers listed the questions in line with the topic of language input. The researchers then took notes on what the respondent was saying during the interview. The interview would end after the interviewers found no more new data. After conducting the interview, a test about English slang words was given to the respondent in order to measure the respondent's knowledge of slang. The test was done by asking the respondent directly word by word whether he knew the meaning of the slang words and asking the respondent to define them. After that, the data taken from the interview were transliterated into written form and then analyzed and categorized according to the classification from Colley et al. (2003) and types of comprehensible input by Ellis (2008). Finally, as the last step, the researcher concluded all the data and presented them in the form of a written paper.

Results

The Respondent's English Language Input

After conducting the interview, the result is narrated as below:

The respondent was first exposed to the English language in kindergarten when he was three or four years old. He got a formal instruction type of learning in the classroom as English is a compulsory subject in Indonesia. The respondent also mentioned that since then, his aunt often brought him English cartoon comic books, 'Donald Duck', because in his family, only his aunt and uncle could speak English, even though he and his aunt or uncle rarely spoke to each other in English. The respondent said he had never joined any English private lessons. Hence the only formal input he received was only from the compulsory school subject. When the researcher asked if his parents could speak English, the respondent said not at all. On the contrary, they often asked the respondent the meaning of English words or sentences they found. Apart from class and books, the respondent said he also got input from his daily activities such as watching movies, listening to music, watching YouTube videos, playing video games and using social media.

The respondent said he likes to watch movies. The frequency is more or less about two or three movies per week. The respondent stated that if he watches English-language movies, he will watch them with Bahasa Indonesia subtitles. However, he always chooses English subtitles if he watches non-English language movies, such as Japanese movies. The subtitles motivate the respondent to search

for the meaning in case he does not understand it. The respondent explained that by looking at the subtitle, he learns how the word is spelled, making it easier for him to search for its meaning. However, if it is only an English conversation with no subtitles, and there is a word that the respondent does not know the meaning, the respondent usually just ignores it and lets it be because the respondent is unsure how the word is spelled. When the respondent was asked how to understand the complete story, the respondent added that he only predicts the word's meaning from the context, but the respondent rarely clarifies it using a dictionary or the internet.

The respondent used many social media; among them, Instagram and YouTube are the most frequently used. The respondent said he spent approximately one to two hours per day scrolling through Instagram. The respondent mentioned that people he follows on Instagram are mostly his friends from schools, some famous artists from Indonesia and overseas, football players, wrestling athletes, and Japanese singers. The ratio of the language in the respondent's Instagram feed is fifty percent English and fifty percent Indonesian. The respondent said he spent mostly about two to three hours a day watching videos from YouTube. Most of them are gaming-related content videos and Hololive Virtual YouTuber. The last input the respondent mentioned was from games. The respondent likes to play video games, all of which are in English. However, the games played are offline, which means it offers no option for its users to connect to people worldwide. The description of the data is presented in the table and graphs below:

Table 1. The classification of The Respondent's Types of Learning and Types of Comprehensible Input

No.	Activities	Types of Learning (Colley, 2003)	Types of Comprehensible Input (Ellis, 2008)
1.	English subject from school	Formal	Premodified
2.	Watching movies	Informal	Unmodified
3.	Listening to music		Unmodified
4.	Reading books		Unmodified
5.	Social media (Instagram and YouTube)		Unmodified
6.	Games		Unmodified

Based on the data found, the ratio of the types of the respondent's learning environment is charted as below:
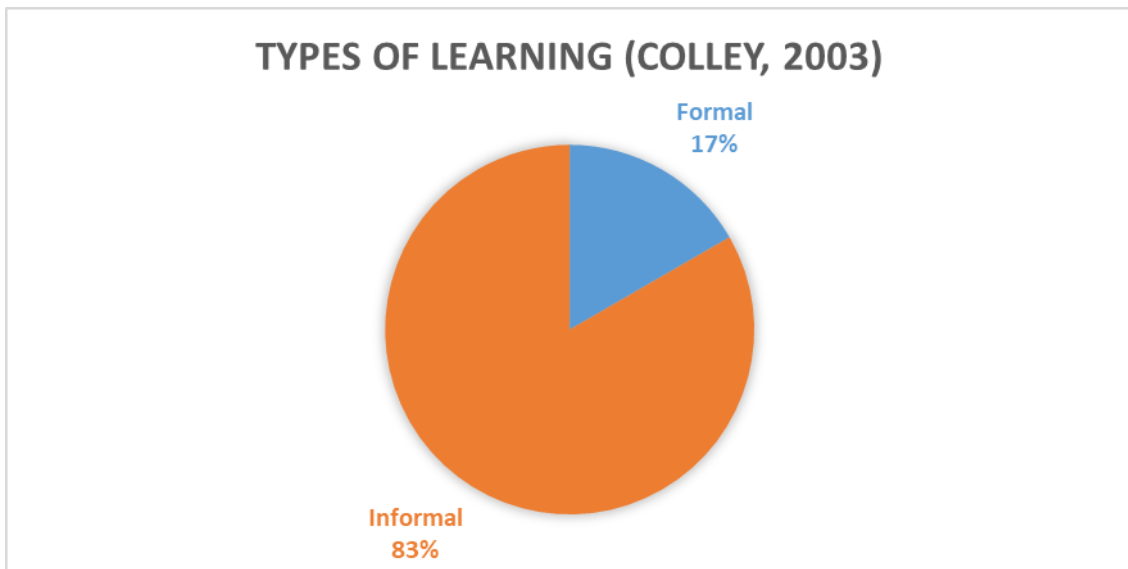
Figure 1. The Chart of The Respondent's Types of Learning by Colley, 2003

Based on Ellis (2008) classification of types of comprehensible input, the data are presented in the chart below:
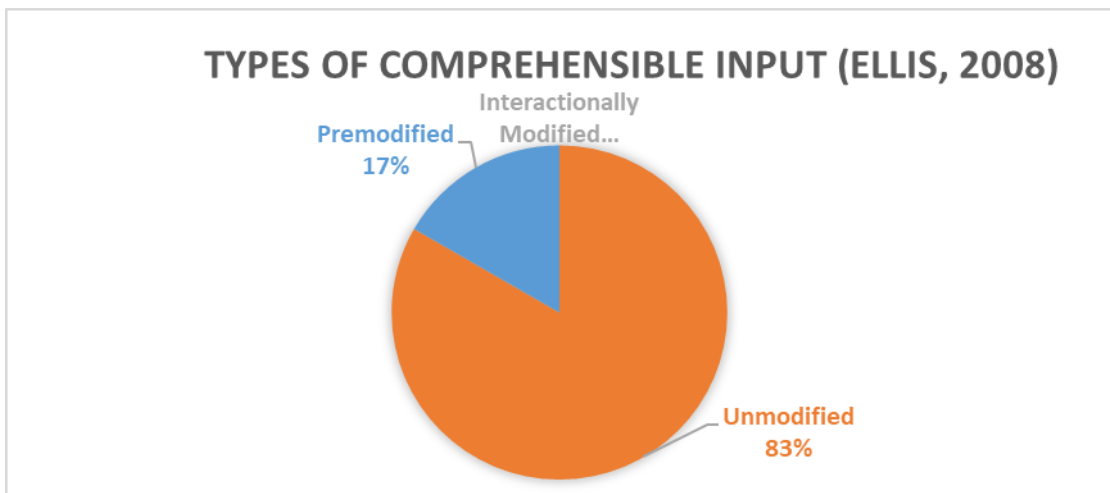

Figure 2. The Chart of The Respondent's Types of Comprehensible Input by Ellis, 2008

The last question given by the researcher was asking how well the respondent thinks he follows the trend in language, and the respondent declared "not well".

The Slang Words Test

The respondent was asked to define the meaning of the researcher's slang words. Out of twenty-five words from Callahan's generation Z dictionary list, three slang words were defined correctly. The chart of the data is as shown below:
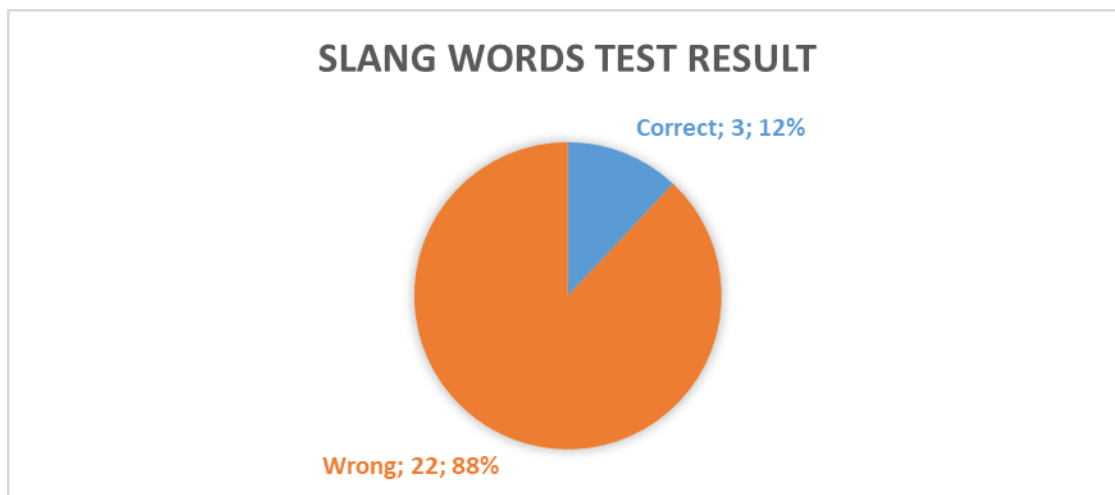
Figure 3. The Chart of The Respondent's Slang Words Test Result

The list of questions and the result of the slang words test is listed as below:

Table 2. The List of Questions and The Result of The Slang Words Test

No.	Slang Words	Answer Correctly	Answer Incorrectly	The Respondent's Answer	The Real Meaning
1.	A force		✓	The literal meaning of "force": to push or forcing someone	Unnecessary excessive effort
2.	Bang 30s		✓	The literal meaning of "bang": a blow, hit or punch; or something adult related	To fight someone, as in physical
3.	Beat your face / cake your face		✓	The literal meaning of "beat your face": to fight or beating people on the face	Apply makeup
4.	Bops		✓	First time hearing	A modern enjoyable song
5.	Bouta	✓		About to, will	I am about to …
6.	Bread		✓	The literal meaning of "bread": food	Future money

7.	Catch a fade / catch these hands		✓	Mocking people	To get punched and/ or knocked out
8.	Clap back		✓	Doing revenge physically	Respond to an insult with an equal or greater insult
9.	Clapped	✓		Person who got slapped	A crazy person; someone who was punched
10.	Crackie		✓	First time hearing	Someone who juuls/ smokes
11.	Cross fade		✓	The literal meaning of "cross": Cross road	Doubly inebriated
12.	Deadass		✓	An act of mockery	I am serious; Are you serious? may be used as a question or statement of fact
13.	Dead dogs / on dogs		✓	The literal meaning of "dead": a corpse	Same as "deadass"
14.	Don't do me dirty		✓	Don't cheat on me	Don't cross me
15.	Extra		✓	The literal meaning of "extra": additional	Too much
16.	Facts		✓	The literal meaning of "facts": reality	I agree with what you just said; a confirming question; may be used as a question or statement of fact
17.	Finesse		✓	Skill, or to hone/sharpen	To steal
18.	Finna		✓	Have ever heard but forgot the	I or We are planning

				meaning	something
19.	Flexed on		✓	To brag	A verbal gesture of dominance
20.	The game	✓		Work or life	Life
21.	Gassing / Hyping		✓	The literal meaning of "hyping": to make someone excited, or enliven something	Offering compliments; feeding one's ego; "I'm trying to be like you."
22.	Gotta blast		✓	The literal meaning of "gotta": have to and "blast": festive. To make something festive or lively	I have to leave
23.	Hardo		✓	The literal meaning of "hard": firm or solid	A try-hard
24.	High key		✓	To boast or overproud	Very obvious
25.	Hip / get hip		✓	First time hearing, don't know "hip" aside from body part.	Adopt a new trend

After taking the test, the respondent was asked how well he thought he did the test, and the respondent confidently said that the result should not be bad.

Discussion

Based on the above findings, it is apparently stated that the respondent has been exposed to English since he was a kid. The respondent got input from both formal and informal learning environments. The classroom learning is formal, while the respondent's daily activities that helped him attain more language input are categorized as informal. Based on the classification from Ellis (2008), the classroom input is the example of premodified input. It is categorized as premodified input because the teachers modify or adjust the students' ability to make the students understand the notion more easily. The respondent's daily activities, such as watching movies, listening to music, reading books, playing games, or using social

media, are categorized as unmodified input because the author or writer does not modify their contents to adjust to the respondent's comprehensive skill; the respondent received the input as it is.

The respondent did not receive any input from another person from Indonesia. People have different attitudes toward Indonesian who speaks English to fellow Indonesian, even though it is only as little as using code-switching. Reinindra et al. (2020) affirmed that there are many reasons why code-switching received negative attitudes. Some of them are because the language becomes harder to understand, it acts as a threat that replaces Bahasa Indonesia as their daily language, which consequently results in language loss, and if code-switching were not used properly, it would be inappropriate in some contexts. While the respondent did not receive any input from Indonesian, the respondent did not receive any input from native speakers directly either.

Out of twenty-five slang words definitions from Callahan's generation Z dictionary list that were asked, the respondent was able to answer three questions correctly. After analyzing the respondent's answers, it was found that the answers were mostly the literal meaning of the slang word or that the respondent had never heard the word before. Eleven slang words out of twenty-five were defined by the respondent literally and the respondent had never heard three slang words. For example, according to the respondent's assumption, the slang word "beat your face" was the situation where people are fighting and punching in the face and the actual meaning is to apply make-up. The same goes with the slang word "gotta blast" which the respondent assumed that it was made from the word "gotta" which means have to; and "blast" which means "festive". Therefore, the respondent assumed the slang means something must or have to be festive or lively while the real meaning is the same as "I got to go".

This is in line with what RahmtAllah (2020) found in his research. RahmtAllah conducted a study to know the familiarity of internet slang among EFL learners in the English Department. The result revealed that the knowledge of the students (Barchelor of English Language at Unaizah College of Sciences and Arts, Qassim University) in terms of internet slang is limited, and they are unfamiliar with it. This result finding also complies with what Troike (2012) wrote in his book: "English learners can never be totally native linguistic competence." Troike (2012) stated that many learners' aims for L2 usage do not involve identification with native speakers of the language or membership in its native speech groups, hence "native-like" production is neither planned nor sought.The result of this study is also the same as what Indera and Ali (2021) found. Indera and Ali investigated the relationship between internet slang and English learning. The results indicated no substantial relationship between internet slang and English language learning.

Based on the interview and the respondent's answer, the researcher made assumptions about why the respondent was unfamiliar with English slang words despite the fact that the respondent was the best graduate of English Department

major.

First of all, English education in Indonesia never focuses on teaching students about slang. The respondent has learned English since he was in kindergarten, and it continues until college. The main focus of what the respondent learned was about grammar or standard English. Second, the people that the respondent follows on social media (Instagram and YouTube) are not from gen Z, as seen from the respondent says that they all use standard English. Several studies on the average age of the people the respondent follows are found to validate the assumption. The article published by Latyshev et al. (2021) determined that the average age of wrestler athletes is around 26.5 ± 3.6 years, while the average for football or soccer players is 25.75 ± 4.14 years, according to Kalén et al. (2019). The next assumption is that the respondent does not spend much time on social media, or the topics or content that the respondent follows do not use many general English slangs. The average time people spent on social media is 2 to three hours per day, according to Li X and Liu Q (2020). The amount of average time spent on social media by Li X and Liu Q (2020) is already in accordance with the respondent, which leaves the assumption that the topics the respondent follows on social media are not using general slang words open. As far as the researchers are concerned, sports rarely use general slang words that many people use, supported by Kawahara (2003) "Sport slangs such as ballpark figure, only sport-fans can understand." They have their own game terms and phrases, which only their enjoyers know. The same goes with Japanese singing content. The videos or posts will be mostly in the Japanese language. It is also possible because the respondent's input sources (such as books or songs) are not published recently. Thus, it does not follow nowadays trend in terms of languages. The fact that the respondent's activities, like gaming, does not facilitate its users to connect with other players worldwide is also notable as a partake in the respondent's low slang words mastery level. The last assumption is because there might be one or two slang words that the respondent has heard or read but was not searching for its meaning, which make the words forgotten and remain unknown. It is in line with Sitohang (2018) has found in their study that the students who do not really understand more do not care to look for meaning of the slang by themselves.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the previous chapter, the respondent is exposed to both formal and informal learning input. The formal input consists of classroom learning activities, while the informal input consists of watching movies, listening to music, reading books. playing games, and using social medias. Based on Ellis (2008) theory, the input from classroom learning activity is categorized as premodified input because the teachers are modifying their output in order to make the students able to comprehend it better. The input the respondent acquires during his daily activities is categorized as unmodified input because the creator does not modify the contents

to adjust to the respondent's comprehensive skill. However, despite receiving both formal and informal input, the respondent could only define three slang words correctly out of 25 questions. Thus, the researcher made some assumptions about why the respondent was not familiar with English slang words. (1) the English education in Indonesia never focus on teaching slang to the students, (2) the people that the respondent follows on social media are not from gen Z, and (3) the respondent does not spend much time on social media, or the topics or content that the respondent follows are not using many general English slangs, (4) the respondent's sources of input (such as books or songs) are not published recently, thus it does not follow nowadays trend in terms of languages, (5) the activities that the respondent does, like gaming, does not facilitate its users to have a connection with other players worldwide, (6) the respondent might have heard or read one or two slang words, but did not search for its meaning. As s suggestion, future research would be better to conduct the related study with more respondents from the different field of studies to obtain more information how the use of slang is influenced by not only the input or exposure, but also the environment.

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