



RESEARCH PAPER

Between the Lines: Sociolinguistic Insights into Balti Teenage Slang

¹Dr. Muhammad Issa, ²Mr. Muhammad Naseem and ³ Siddiqua Batool

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan
3. Research Scholar, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

naseem.hasrat@uobs.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The study at hand attempts to unveil the sociolinguistic aspects of teenage slang in the Balti language. Slang, regardless of the prominence of the language, has been an integral part of human communication, serving various sociolinguistic purposes and enabling interlocutors to convey and interpret intended meanings. This study was conducted using a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the issue in the context of Baltistan. Data was collected through random sampling from both male and female teenagers, using semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool. Fairclough's three-dimensional model served as the basis for data analysis. The results show that Balti teenagers use slang in casual and informal conversations to express opinions, emotions, and attitudes. Furthermore, the study confirms that Balti slang exhibits gender-specific connotations and usage patterns. There appears to be a need for a more exhaustive etymological study on slang in Balti.

Keywords: Balti Language, Slang, Teenage, Gender-Specific, Sociolinguistics, Gilgit-Baltistan

Introduction

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Teenage Slang in the Balti Language is a vital tool for human interaction, facilitating communication and expression of thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Language variation enriches this interaction, making communication more engaging and interesting. Variety shows that not every speaker talks in same language at all. According to Akmajian et al. (1998) there are some examples of language variations like lingua francs, pidgins, creoles, taboo language and slang language. This division of language into categories has evolved over time through various linguistic, social, and cultural processes. This paper focuses only on slang as language variation.

According to Holmes (2001) slang language refers to informal, nonstandard words, phrases, or expressions that are commonly used in social settings, particularly among specific groups, cultures or generation. Moreover, slang language is a type of language use that emerges from the social and cultural practices of a particular group or community. Furthermore, slang is often characterized by its informal nature, regional or cultural specificity, ephemerality, and playfulness. Slang plays a significant role in shaping language, culture, and identity. In addition, slang can serve as a symbol of membership signaling affiliation with a particular group, culture, generation. Moreover, slang can reflect and influence social attitudes, values, and norms, providing a window into the cultural and historical context in which it emerges. It can create barriers between groups, making it difficult for outsiders to understand or participate in conversations. Furthermore, slang terms can quickly become outdated, and it can be viewed as inferior to standard language, leading to negative attitudes towards slang users.

Generally, every country, region, or community have their own slang in their languages. In Gilgit Baltistan, slang could be found in daily conversation and most of teenagers or young people use it and Balti language, is used in Baltistan region of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Both male and female teenager of Balti speakers in Baltistan region extensively use slang language, which plays a crucial role in shaping their identity and social interactions. In Balti language, slang could be used in day to day conversation and specially majority of teenagers use it, for example, *ly (to call)*, *apo (boss)*, *kick se dug (warning to be careful)*, and so on. Research has shown that slang language is dynamic and ever-changing, reflecting the creativity and innovation of language users (Frasasti Wahyu Nuraeni & John Pahamzah 2021).

Frasasti Wahyu Nuraeni, John Pahamzah (2021) in their studies have analyzed English slang language used in teenager interplay via Quantitative approach, and they come up with the end result that "...the sorts of slang language utilized in youngster interaction confirmed various result in every kinds, along with acronym with the overall 33 words or 37.ninety three%, clipping with the full 25 phrases or 28.seventy five%, clean and innovative with the whole 16 words or 18.39%, compounding with the whole eight phrases or nine.19%, and the remaining changed into imitative with the overall 5 phrases or 5.seventy four%." Maitland, J (2010) mentioned American slang dictionary in his article through qualitative approach and piled out all the slang words alphabetically with their meanings and part of speech inside the form of dictionary. Elisa Mattiello (2013), revealed about the dominant role of slang inside genuine conversations, and the excessive ability of morphological and semantic innovation which it is successful to gain and unfold throughout sorts, but this research paper targets at reading distinctive Balti slang sorts utilized in youngster interplay- gender primarily based analysis, and reasons behind the usage of slang language by using Balti teens.

Despite widespread use of Balti slang language by teenagers and the growing interest in slang language, it remains understudied. There is a scarcity of research paper on Balti slang language. This study bridges this gap by focusing on the structure, types, its usage among Balti teenagers, and exploring the underlying meanings and intentions of the Balti slang words using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis-an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language and communication that focuses on analyzing how language is used to reinforce or challenge power, ideology, and social structures.

Literature Review

The use of slang language among teenagers has become a common phenomenon in all over the world particularly among teenagers and young adults. Slang language is a main area of study within sociolinguistics as it is tied to social identity, group membership, and cultural context slang, vulgar, obscenity, and profane languages all come under informal or nonstandard language but there are differences between them based on content, context, intent, and level of offensiveness. Vulgar language is often impoliteness, used in informal or casual settings to annoy or shock someone, and is not much offensive (moderately offensive). Obscenity often consists of explicit sexual content, used in private or restricted settings to offend someone and is highly offensive. Profane is showing disrespect for sacred or religious things often used in conditions where religious or sacred things are involved to contempt and is highly offensive for religious people. Slang is informal, colloquial use in specific social groups and cultures to create a sense of playfulness or intimacy and is not offensive but rather playful or creative (Doterer, Gordon,& Valle,2020). Hence, slang is a secret and unique language that is group-specific and ever-changing. This is most common in teenage interaction as they use it to separate other groups from them.

According to Frasasti Wahyu Nuraeni and John Pahamzah (2021), "Slang is the secret language that everybody can recognize but nobody can define". It means that slang is

something that is the unique language of any particular group (i.e. teenager, male or female, and adult group) that is different from group to group and undefinable for other groups. It creates a linguistic stratification of speakers based on age and gender. One particular type of slang is teenage slang, a language style used by adolescents or in other words a generation-specific use of language (Nuraeni and Pahamzah, 2021). Zakariya, and Mashood citing Eble (1996) define slang as “an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social or cohesiveness within a group”. Slang changes over time like a fashion and becomes a trend for a specific time and vanishes through replacement when the slang word becomes familiar to all groups.

Numerous studies have investigated the use of slang language among different social groups. For instance, Salma (2013: 67) revealed that the most frequent slang words that were used among teenagers are acronym, loan or borrowing, and substitution.

Moreover, Ning, Dai & Zhang (2010: 127) mentioned male speakers often use tabooed words and slang in their daily speeches. To be exact, tabooed words and slang can be found more frequently in men’s language than in women’s, though they are of the same educational level. This finding also showed that male had different topic while talking with female. They stated that Slang word or tabooed topic including criminality, vulgar language more frequently used by male. While for female, they usually talked about certain topic like fashion, relationship, cosmetics etc.

In addition, Zhou & Fan (2013: 2210) stated that gender difference in use and tolerance of slang was leveling out in contemporary and that the stereotype of males being the primary slang users was open to question. The slang words that are particularly used by females are related to fashion, cosmetics, emotions, and relationship while male used slang words specially related to criminality along with sports, relationship, technology and emotions (Issa et al, 2023).

Despite the existing research on slang language, there is a scarcity of studies on Balti slang language. The present study seeks to address this research gap by exploring the frequency and types of slang words used by male and female students in their daily conversations.

Thus, this literature review has provided a comprehensive overview of the existing research on slang language, its definition, characteristics, and usage among different social groups. The review has also highlighted the need for research on Balti slang language, which will be addressed in the present study. By exploring the use of Balti slang language among male and female teenagers, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of slang language.

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative approach and explorative research design to analyze Balti slang language through Fairclough Three-Dimensional Model. According to this theory, language is shaped by social factors such as culture, identity, and power dynamics (Fairclough, 1992).

The population of this study consisted of Balti-speaking teenagers from Skardu. The sample included 100 teenagers, chosen randomly from the Skardu district, comprising both males and females. These participants were divided into small focus groups. The groups were asked to engage in casual and informal discussions. The slang used during the conversations was noted, and later, the participants were interviewed to gain clarity regarding their use of slang and the intentions behind it.

The present study can be analyzed from multidisciplinary approaches, like theories from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, social identity theory, and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model.

Sociolinguistics theory provides a framework for understanding the relationship between language and society. According to this theory, language is shaped by social factors such as culture, identity, and power dynamics (Fairclough, 1992). In the context of this study, sociolinguistics theory can be used to analyze how Balti slang language reflects the social identity and cultural values of teenagers in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Discourse analysis is a methodology that examines language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1992). This approach can be used to analyze the linguistic features and structures of Balti slang language, as well as its use in different social contexts.

Social identity theory posits that individuals derive a sense of belonging and identity from the groups they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the context of this study, social identity theory used to analyze how Balti slang language is used by teenagers to establish and maintain social relationships, as well as to signal their membership in specific social groups.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (1992) provides a framework for analyzing discourse at three levels: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. This model will be used to analyze the linguistic features of Balti slang language, as well as its use in different social contexts and its relationship to broader sociocultural practices.

This study investigated the Balti slang words from the Fairclough's Three-Dimensional perspective, especially from the text dimension. The text dimension of the model focuses on the linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, and style to uncover underlying meanings and ideologies.

Results and Discussion

The study analyzed by applying Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, specially focusing on text dimension, which aimed to explore the use of Balti slang language among teenagers in Gilgit-Baltistan. There are 26 Balti slang expressions discovered from the respondents during their group discussion

Phay skusay ong set

This Compounding Slang is a Balti word generally used by girls to criticize others who wear extra cream on their faces. Here, the word "phay" is associated with cream due to its similar features. The word "phay" is also associated with cream because it shares a resemblance to "phay" (Flour), which is also white. Instead of using direct language, they use this slang to separate and exclude others from their group.

Surmay truck Po loqsat

This is compounding slang, used by teenagers (girls) when someone wear extra kajal in eyes. The word surmo is village name in khaplu and the suffix "ay" indicates possession. Thus, the word surmay is used by modifying the word surma (kajal) to make it suitable to use with the truck (that belongs to surmo village). Loqsat is used in term of excess. The expression symbolically represents excessive use of kajal.

Kha

This is monosyllabic word used as noun. It is slang word specially used by boys for vulgar and taboo words in informal settings. It asserts masculine norms and attitudes within Balti culture, potentially excluding or marginalizing others.

Kobe

It is a monosyllabic word used as a verb, which means to sleep. It is used in intimate friend circles as a slang word. It asserts the Balti tradition and heritage used by societal groups in informal settings. It shows aggression towards the listeners or recipients.

Abgosh

It is a disyllabic word used as an adjective that means foolish. It is especially used by teenage boys in their interaction. It reflects informal, playful communication among Balti community members. It expresses amusement or frustration.

Zbomat

It is a disyllabic word used as an adjective, which means weird or awkward. It reflects informal and intimate communication for expressing discomfort or unease. It is used to show power dynamics between nice and awkward, emphasizing social hierarchy.

Trafak

It is a disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots, used as an adjective. It means informal person. It reflects informal communication for expressing annoyance and contempt. It emphasizes the societal and cultural norms of formality and well-mannered.

Lhanja

It is a disyllabic word borrowed from Urdu language ,which means problem. It is used as a noun. It reflects informal and serious communication for expressing stress and problems.

Feral

It is disyllabic word used as an adjective , which means abnormal or disable. It reflects informal communication among peers. Efficient language for expressing hopelessness and discomfort. It emphasizes Balti cultural norms of normalcy.

Naq thung

It is compound slang word, derived from balti roots, which is used as noun. This slang word means someone who drink weed. It reflects informal and mocking communication for expressing bad attitude and habit. It emphasizes the traditional and religious norms of weed as forbidden and bad habit.

Han hon

It is compound slang word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as an adjective. It means someone lazy, passive and behave in an eccentric manner but actually he is not disabled or mad. It reflects informal and frustrated communication for expressing extreme dissatisfaction towards someone's passive actions. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and traditional norms of being conscious and alert about their surroundings.

Atuwal

It is disyllabic slang word, derived from Balti linguistics roots used as a noun. This slang word means someone who are involve in different type of drugs. It reflects informal and disrespect communication for expressing anger and disapproval. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and religious norms of hatred towards the drinker.

Chik far

It is compound slang word , derived from Balti linguistic roots used as an adjective. It means lonely. It reflects informal communication among teenagers' interaction for expressing negative attitude toward the person who lacks companionship. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and societal norms of friendship and unity.

Banchat

It is disyllabic word, derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It means devil. It reflects informal and aggressive communication for expressing burden and hatred towards someone presence. It emphasizes Balti cultural and religious norms of being good and blessings.

Rabchat

It is disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It means a person who lacks family legacy. It reflects informal and abusive communication for expressing insult and denunciation. It emphasizes conformity to the Balti cultural and traditional family norms of fertility.

Gorgial

It is disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a verb. It means to do what he please. It reflects informal communication for expressing uncomfortable towards someone's willfulness attitude. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and societal norms of obedience and cooperation.

Zn kaka

It is a compounding slang word, derived from Balti linguistic roots used as noun. It means someone who do anything for others just to eat delicious meals. It reflects informal and critical communication used among peers to express funny and shameful attitude towards the person. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and traditional norms of self-respect and pride.

Chang Chung

It is compound slang word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as an adjective. It means mentally immature. It reflects informal communication for expressing someone's childish and immature attitude. It emphasizes Balti cultural norms of understanding others and maturity.

Las thal

It is compound slang word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It means a person who always does incomplete and inappropriate work and that needs to be accomplished again. It reflects informal communication for expressing disappointment and crushed. It emphasizes the societal norms of appropriate and skillfulness.

Thang khi

It is a compound slang word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It refers to vagabond who do nothing but wander here and there without any reason. It reflects informal communication for expressing disrespect and disgraceful attitude towards vagabond. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and traditional norms of being respectable and model citizen.

Gotang

It is disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as an adjective. It means weird and unacceptable attitude. It reflects informal and playful communication for expressing foolishness and absurdity. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and societal norms of casual and formal behaviour.

Nanpa

It is disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as an adjective. It means characterless. It reflects informal and secret communication for expressing immoral and exclusion. It emphasizes the Balti cultural societal expectation of being moral respectful.

Fungchan

It is disyllabic word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It refers to the person who tells a lie. It reflects informal and joyful communication for expressing mocking and untrustworthy attitude. It emphasizes the Balti cultural and religious norms of speaking truth.

Gotita

It is trisyllable word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a noun. It refers to a person who has short temper. It reflects informal and playful communication among peers for expressing avoidance and irritation. It emphasizes the Balti societal expectation of being cool-minded and patient.

Apo

It is a monosyllabic word, used as a noun. It is derived from Balti linguistic roots, which means boss. It reflects the informal and secret communication among friends to exclude others from their conversation. It emphasizes the Balti linguistic values in intimate and significant everyday conversations.

Kick se dug

It is a compound slang word derived from Balti linguistic roots used as a verb. It means a warning to be careful. It reflects informal and intimate communication for expressing care and protection. It emphasizes the friendship and relationship norms of love, care and protection.

Khyor

It is a monosyllabic slang from the Balti linguistic root used as a verb. It means come. It reflects the anger and disrespect for the person who is asking permission to come. It is usually used by the older person toward the younger people.

Hrkoug

It is a monosyllabic slang from the Balti linguistic root used as a verb. It means sleeping. It is used when someone says sleep in anger. This is an informal word for sleep.

Bgoung

It is a monosyllabic slang from the Balti linguistic root used as a verb. It means to eat. The is an informal word for eat which is usually used between peer. It emphasizes the frankness between friends.

Khiri-Ro

It is a disyllabic slang from the Balti linguistic root used as a noun. The first word "Khiri" means your and the second word "Ro" means corpse. It is used as slang when someone give misinformation and makes a huge error, then it is used. It emphasizes how people react to errors.

The findings of this study provide insights into the use of Balti slang language among teenagers in Gilgit-Baltistan. The study analyzed by applying multidisciplinary approaches, like theories from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, social identity theory, and Fairclough's Three-dimensional Model. Fairclough especially focusing on the text dimension, which aimed to explore the use of Balti slang language among teenagers in Gilgit-Baltistan. The analysis of the data revealed that Balti slang language is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that serves multiple functions in the social interactions of teenagers. The findings suggest that Balti slang language is used to signal membership in a particular social group, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among group members. The findings of this study have implications for our understanding of language use among teenagers in multilingual contexts. The study contributes to the existing literature on slang language by providing insights into the use of Balti slang language in a specific cultural context. The study has several limitations, including the small sample size and the limited scope of the study. Future research directions could include exploring the use of Balti slang language in different social contexts, such as in educational settings or in online communities.

In a nutshell, the findings of this study provide insights into the complex and dynamic nature of Balti slang language used among teenagers in Gilgit-Baltistan. The study highlights the importance of language in shaping cultural identity and values, and contributes to our understanding of language use among teenagers in multilingual contexts.

Conclusions and Discussion

Language is a medium to interact with others. There are many variations of language, one of them is slang language. Through analysis and observation, it is found that the teenagers used slang during their interaction with many typed, like fresh and creative, compounding, borrowed, acronym, and clipping. Moreover, they used the slang language for various reasons. Many researchers have already worked on analysis of slang language used in teenagers' interaction through quantitative method and their researches are of slang language of English but this research paper attempted to generally worked on Balti slang language. The paper has shed some light on the gender base usage of slang language. Analysis of the data through the perspective of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model reveals the slang words' linguistic features- grammar, structure and vocabulary, and the underlying meaning of the slang words.

This paper has analyzed few Balti slang words through the lens of Furlough's Three-Dimensional Model and there are many more slang words in Balti language which can be

analyzed through different other approaches like Social Identity Theory (SIT), it examines how slang reflects and constructs social identity, group membership, and power dynamics. Symbolic Interactionism studies how slang words or phrases shape social interactions, meaning construction, and identity negotiation. Sociolinguistics Variation Theory analyzes language variation, change, and style-shifting. It is recommended for future researchers to apply any of the above approaches to analyzed Balti slang language used in teenagers' interaction with different methods and analysis.

Recommendations

This linguistic aspect of the Balti language requires further exhaustive research across its various dimensions. Future researchers may investigate Balti slang through multiple theoretical frameworks such as Social Interaction Theory, Social Identity Theory, Sociolinguistic Variation Theory, and others. In addition, a separate quantitative comparative study could be conducted to examine the frequency and types of slang used, the social contexts in which it is preferred, and the attitudes towards slang among male and female speakers.

References

- Akmajian, A., Demers, R. A., Farmer, A. K., & Harnish, R. M. (1998). *Linguistics: An introduction to language and communication* (4th ed.). MIT Press.
- Crowley, H., & Himmelweit, S. (1994). *Knowing women: Feminism and knowledge* (1st ed.). Polity Press.
- Doterer, A. J., Gordon, M. L., & Valle, D. M. (2020). *Language files: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics* (12th ed.). Ohio State University Press.
- Holmes, J. (2001). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Longman.
- Issa, M., Khan, H. K., Hussain, M. S., & Ali, M. A. (2023). Language erosion: an overview of declining status of indigenous languages of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *Language*, 25(2), 816-828
- Maitland, J. (2010). *The American slang dictionary*. Amazon.
- Mattiello, E. (2005). The pervasiveness of slang in standard and non-standard English. *Mots Palabras Words*, 6(7), 7
- Ning, H., & Dai, X. (2010). On gender difference in English language and its causes. *Asian Social Science*, 6(2), 127–130. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v6n2p127>
- Wahyu Nuraeni, F., & Pahamzah, J. (2021). An analysis of slang language used in teenager interaction. *Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra Dan Pengajarannya*, 20(2), 313-322..
- Salma, A. (2013). Gender influence on slang used by teenagers in their daily conversation at school. *Passage*, 1(2), 63–70
- Shahraki, S. H., & Rakesh, A. E. (2011). Check this one out: Analyzing slang usage among Iranian male and female teenagers. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 201–207. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n2p201>
- Zakariya, M., & Mashood, A. (2020). A linguistic study of slang among students of Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. *Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 1(3), 158-168
- Zhou, Y., & Fan, Y. (2013). A sociolinguistic study of American slang. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(12), 2210–2214. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.12.2210-2214>