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An Analysis of Slang Words and Their Formal Equivalents in *rickandmorty* Instagram Reels for Teaching Vocabulary

(*Analisis Kata-Kata Slang dan Padanan Maknanya dalam Instagram Reels rickandmorty untuk Pembelajaran Kosakata*)

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Abstract

Indonesian EFL learners encounter informal English through social media, while classroom instruction mainly emphasizes formal language. Previous studies have largely focused on identifying slang forms in digital media without examining their application in teaching vocabulary, particularly in short-form audiovisual content such as Instagram Reels. This study aims to analyze the types and the functions of slang words found in Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account and to examine the application of their formal equivalents in teaching vocabulary. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study analyzed slang expressions in spoken dialogues and written captions from 40 Instagram Reels videos. The findings reveal five types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping, with flippant slang appearing most frequently (24%). The expressions served various communicative functions, including expressive, evaluative, referential, directive, and interpersonal functions. Furthermore, each slang expression could be associated with its formal equivalent, such as gonna and going to, wanna and want to, and mom and mother. These findings highlight the potential of Instagram Reels as supplementary vocabulary materials for introducing informal expressions and their formal equivalents, helping learners develop vocabulary knowledge and register awareness.

Abstrak

Peserta didik bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) di Indonesia sering menjumpai bahasa Inggris informal melalui media sosial, sementara pembelajaran di kelas umumnya lebih menekankan pada bahasa formal. Penelitian sebelumnya sebagian besar berfokus pada identifikasi bentuk-bentuk bahasa gaul di media digital tanpa menelaah penerapannya dalam pembelajaran kosakata, terutama dalam konten audiovisual berdurasi pendek seperti Instagram Reels. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis dan fungsi kata-kata bahasa gaul yang ditemukan dalam Instagram Reels yang diunggah oleh akun rickandmorty serta menelaah penerapan ekspresi formalnya dalam pengajaran kosakata. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menganalisis ungkapan-ungkapan bahasa gaul dalam dialog lisan dan keterangan tertulis dari 40 video Instagram Reels. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya lima jenis bahasa gaul: segar dan kreatif, sembrono, meniru, akronim, dan pemendekan, dengan bahasa gaul sembrono muncul paling sering (24%). Ungkapan-ungkapan tersebut memiliki berbagai fungsi komunikatif, termasuk fungsi ekspresif, evaluatif, referensial, direktif, dan interpersonal. Selain itu, setiap ungkapan slang dapat dikaitkan dengan padanan formalnya, seperti gonna dan going to, wanna dan want to, serta mom dan

mother. Temuan ini menyoroti potensi Instagram Reels sebagai bahan pelengkap kosakata untuk memperkenalkan ungkapan-ungkapan informal dan padanan formalnya, yang membantu peserta didik mengembangkan pengetahuan kosakata dan kesadaran akan register bahasa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English has long been taught as a foreign language in Indonesia; however, many students still have difficulty understanding and using informal English. Vocabulary learning remains challenging for Indonesian EFL students, as conventional teaching methods often fail to maintain students' interest (Putri et al., 2026). Classroom instruction generally emphasizes grammar and standard vocabulary, which may limit students' ability to understand informal expressions in everyday and digital communication.

Slang helps EFL learners recognize authentic English expressions (Linuwih & Handayani, 2022). It also reflects social identity and group solidarity in online communities (Indra & Marhamah, 2024). On Instagram, slang serves several communicative functions, including emotional expression, identity construction, humor, and communicative efficiency, with emotional expression being the most dominant (Anisa & Utomo, 2025). Without sufficient exposure, learners may misunderstand pragmatic meanings in authentic communication (Kesek et al., 2024). Nevertheless, informal expressions are often overlooked in vocabulary teaching (Alisoy, 2023). Thus, introducing slang alongside its formal equivalents can help students understand different language registers and choose appropriate expressions according to context.

Digital technology offers opportunities to access authentic English through social media (Lestari et al., 2025). Instagram provides exposure to natural English expressions and supports vocabulary learning through visual content, captions, and interactive features (Hikmawati et al., 2023). It also offers engaging ways for students to learn vocabulary (Baruti, & Subekti, 2023). Instagram Reels combines audio, visuals, and text to support vocabulary comprehension, retention, and motivation (Arun et al., 2025). Such materials support vocabulary understanding through visual and auditory information (Anggraeni et al., 2021) and can increase students' interest and positive attitudes toward English learning (Amalia, 2023). These features make Reels a useful medium for introducing slang through authentic contexts and comparing informal expressions with their formal alternatives.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential of Instagram Reels for vocabulary learning, particularly in presenting vocabulary naturally and demonstrating expressions in authentic communication (Hasani et al., 2025). However, these studies mainly focused on general vocabulary. Previous slang studies have mainly examined its types and meanings in Instagram posts (Kesek et al., 2024) and webtoons (Edison, 2021). Few studies have linked slang types and functions to their formal equivalents in vocabulary teaching. This study addresses this gap by analyzing slang types and functions and examining the application of formal expressions in vocabulary teaching through Instagram Reels.

Based on this background, this study analyzes slang words found in Instagram Reels videos uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account and examines the application of formal equivalents in teaching vocabulary. This account was chosen because it often displays informal conversational English accompanied by captions and contextual visuals, making it suitable as an authentic learning resource. The objectives of this study are therefore to (1) analyze the types and the functions of slang words found in Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account and (2) to examine the application of their formal expressions in teaching vocabulary.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the types and the functions of slang words found in Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account and to examine the application of their formal expressions in teaching vocabulary. The data source of this study consisted of Instagram Reels videos uploaded by the *rickandmorty* Instagram account. The Reels were selected from the most recent uploads and traced back chronologically to earlier uploads until a total of 40 Reels was obtained. The data included spoken dialogues and written captions containing slang expressions that were deliberately

selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. This study was conducted online, with the research setting being the Instagram platform, particularly the Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* Instagram account. The data were collected and analyzed during January 2026.

The primary instrument of this study was the researcher. The researcher observed the selected Instagram Reels videos, transcribed the spoken dialogues and written captions, identified slang expressions, and interpreted their meanings as well as their formal or standard English equivalents. Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by systematically observing and recording the linguistic data found in the Reels content.

The data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The identified slang words were classified based on the taxonomy of Allan and Burridge (2006) namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. The findings were then discussed in relation to their potential application in teaching vocabulary, particularly in developing learners' awareness of informal and formal language use.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, theory triangulation was applied by comparing the identified slang expressions with relevant references, slang dictionaries, and previous studies. In addition, peer checking was conducted through consultation with the research supervisors regarding the classification and interpretation of the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the study regarding the types, functions, and pedagogical relevance of slang words found in Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The discussion is organized according to the research questions and is interpreted using Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification of slang and Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence. The findings are also compared with previous studies to highlight their theoretical and pedagogical contributions.

3.1 Types of Slang Words Found in *rickandmorty* Instagram Reels

Table 1. Distribution of Slang Word Types Found in *rickandmorty* Instagram Reels

No.	Types of Slang Words	Frequency	(%)
1	Fresh and Creative	5	20%
2	Flippant	6	24%
3	Imitative	5	20%
4	Acronym	4	16%
5	Clipping	5	20%
	Total	25	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of slang word types found in the Instagram Reels uploaded by the Rick and Morty account. Flippant slang appears most frequently, indicating that emotionally intense and humorous expressions dominate short-form audiovisual interactions, while the other four types occur in relatively balanced proportions.

Table 2. Examples of Slang Expressions and Their Formal Equivalents

Type of Slang	Slang Expression	(Reels)	Formal Equivalent
Fresh & Creative	wubba lubba dub dub	Wubba Lubba Dub Dub!	I am in great emotional pain
Flippant	fuck	Rick Gets Angry	damn / very upset
Imitative	gonna	I'm Gonna Be Rich!	going to
Acronym	CEO	I'm a Tech CEO	chief executive officer
Clipping	mom	Mom, Hold My Calls	mother

Table 2 provides representative examples of slang words along with their formal equivalents, illustrating how informal language in audiovisual media can be systematically linked to standard English forms for pedagogical purposes in vocabulary teaching.

3.1.1 Fresh and Creative

Five fresh and creative slang expressions were identified in the analyzed Instagram Reels, namely *Let's fucking go*, *Wubba lubba dub dub*, *Nepo baby*, *Pickle man*, and *drama implant*. These expressions demonstrate linguistic creativity through the use of novel forms, unconventional meanings, and imaginative word combinations. They are primarily used to express emotions, identity, humor, and social commentary in informal communication.

The utterance "*Let's fucking go*" is spoken by Rick in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The expression *let's go* is used to show excitement and encouragement, while the intensifier *fucking* strengthens the emotional expression. This term is categorized as fresh and creative slang because it reflects a creative shift from a literal meaning to an expressive motivational phrase commonly used in contemporary informal English. Its function is expressive, conveying enthusiasm and solidarity in an informal context. The formal equivalents of this expression are *let us proceed* or *let us begin*. This example

shows how intensifiers in slang can convey stronger emotion than formal expressions, giving learners insight into expressive strategies in casual English.

The utterance "*Wubba lubba dub dub*" is spoken by Rick in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The expression *wubba lubba dub dub* is categorized as fresh and creative slang because it is an invented phrase with no literal meaning in standard English. It represents a creative linguistic expression unique to the speaker and the series, functioning as an emotional outlet rather than conveying propositional meaning. The slang serves an expressive function, showing strong emotion and identity, and strengthens solidarity within an informal context. The formal equivalent of this expression is *I am in great emotional pain.* Learners can observe how invented expressions convey emotion and identity, illustrating creativity in language use beyond lexical norms.

This utterance "*Nepo baby"* is used to label someone perceived as benefiting from family privilege. The term *nepo baby* is considered fresh and creative slang because it is a relatively new expression formed through creative word combination (*nepotism* + *baby*) to convey social criticism in an informal and concise way. Its function is expressive and evaluative, allowing the speaker to criticize while maintaining an informal tone. The formal equivalent of this term is *a person who benefits from nepotism*. Such slang demonstrates social commentary embedded in casual language, providing learners with pragmatic insights about cultural references.

The utterance *"Pickle man"* is spoken by Rick in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The expression *pickle man* is categorized as fresh and creative slang because it is a playful and unconventional label created by combining an ordinary noun (*pickle*) with *man* to form a humorous and non-literal identity. The phrase does not exist in standard English and gains meaning only through the narrative context of the series. Its function is expressive and humorous, emphasizing absurdity and character identity in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this expression can be interpreted as *a man who has transformed himself into a pickle*. Humor in slang can serve as a mnemonic device for vocabulary learning, making expressions memorable for learners.

The utterance *"I'm part of an experimental line of Morty with a drama implant"* is spoken by Morty in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The expression *drama implant* is classified as fresh and creative slang because it represents a newly coined phrase formed through creative word combination (*drama* + *implant*) to describe an exaggerated emotional condition in a humorous, fictional manner. The phrase is not part of standard English and functions metaphorically rather than literally. Its function is expressive, allowing the speaker to dramatize emotional sensitivity while maintaining an informal and comedic tone. The formal equivalent of this expression is *a condition that causes excessive emotional response*. Learners can compare metaphorical informal expressions with literal formal language, which enhances figurative language comprehension.

The findings indicate that fresh and creative slang primarily functions as a means of expressing identity, humor, and emotional experience. These expressions often depend on contextual understanding and cultural references rather than literal meaning. This finding supports Allan and Burridge's (2006) argument that slang serves as a creative linguistic resource through which speakers construct social identity and express personal attitudes. Similar findings were reported by Mawa (2026), who found that creative slang in social media functions as a marker of identity and group membership. However, unlike previous studies focusing on written social media discourse, the present study demonstrates that audiovisual elements such as voice intonation, character interaction, and visual context significantly contribute to the interpretation of creative slang. These findings suggest that understanding fresh and creative slang requires not only lexical knowledge but also awareness of the communicative context in which the expressions are used.

3.1.2 Flippant

Six flippant slang expressions were identified in the analyzed Instagram Reels, namely *bullshit*, *motherfucker*, *bitch*, *piece of garbage*, *eat my pennies*, and *goddamn*. These expressions are characterized by their emotionally charged, irreverent, and often humorous nature. They are commonly used to express strong feelings, evaluation, sarcasm, or frustration in informal communication.

The utterance *"Bitch and let me see what you got"* is categorized as flippant slang because the term *bitch* is used casually and irreverently to address someone without concern for politeness or respect. The expression trivializes social norms by reducing the addressee to an offensive label, functioning to create shock value and humor rather than serious insult. Its function is expressive, emphasizing informality and disregard for conventional language use. The formal equivalent of this term is *a person*, used here as an offensive form of address. This example demonstrates how flippant slang conveys emotional intensity and tone simultaneously. For learners, observing such expressions can help them recognize subtle cues in spoken English, including sarcasm, humor, and informal hierarchy, which are rarely taught explicitly in formal classrooms.

The term *bullshit* in *"You derivative bullshit"* is classified as flippant slang because it dismisses an argument or idea in a casual and contemptuous manner. The expression minimizes the seriousness of the situation by rejecting it without explanation, showing irreverence and lack of respect. Its function is expressive and evaluative, allowing the speaker to mock and discredit others informally. The formal equivalent of this term is *nonsense* or *invalid argument*. Learners can see how evaluative slang expresses personal judgment and attitude. Understanding these expressions allows them to interpret opinions, criticism, or humor in authentic English communication, bridging the gap between textbook English and real-world conversational norms.

The term *motherfucker in "Get over here, motherfucker!"* is categorized as flippant slang because it is used impulsively to address someone in a dismissive and aggressive way without communicative precision. The expression prioritizes emotional release over meaningful content, reflecting a lack of seriousness and politeness. Its function is expressive, conveying anger and dominance in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this term is *a person*, expressed through an offensive address. Exposure to such slang helps learners understand social and emotional functions of informal language, including how tone, stress, and context influence meaning. This knowledge is crucial for interpreting spoken English authentically, especially in high-emotion or humorous scenarios.

The utterance *"You're a piece of garbage"* is categorized as flippant slang because the expression *piece of garbage* is used metaphorically to insult someone in a casual and dismissive way. The phrase reduces the addressee to a worthless object, showing irreverence and lack of respect rather than conveying a serious descriptive meaning. Its function is expressive and evaluative, allowing the speaker to demean others in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this expression is *a worthless person* or *someone of no value*. Observing metaphorical flippant expressions helps learners see the interplay between literal and figurative meaning. It also develops their pragmatic competence, enabling them to interpret intentions, emotions, and social attitudes behind informal insults or humorous exaggerations.

The utterance *"Eat my pennies"* is categorized as flippant slang because the expression is used as a dismissive and irreverent insult rather than a literal command. The phrase functions to belittle the addressee in a mocking and casual manner, prioritizing emotional expression and humor over clear propositional meaning. Its unconventional wording trivializes social politeness norms and serves as a sarcastic rejection or provocation. The function of this slang is expressive, conveying contempt and ridicule in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this expression is *go away* or *I reject you completely*. Slang like this illustrates pragmatic exaggeration, which allows learners to understand how informal speakers convey humor, sarcasm, or emotional intensity. Recognizing these patterns improves learners' ability to interpret real-life English interactions beyond literal meanings.

The utterance "*Goddamn*" is spoken by Rick in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The term goddamn is categorized as flippant slang because it is used impulsively to express strong negative emotion such as anger or frustration in an informal context. Its function is expressive, conveying feelings with emphasis and informality. The formal equivalent of this expression is very upset. Single-word flippant expressions demonstrate how emotion can be efficiently conveyed in short-form media, highlighting the power of lexical choice, intonation, and context in expressing affective meaning in spoken English.

The predominance of flippant slang suggests that emotional expression and humor are central characteristics of the Reels content. The frequent use of such expressions reflects the satirical and exaggerated communication style commonly found in animated entertainment media. This finding supports Allan and Burridge's (2006) view that slang frequently functions as emotional release and social boundary marking. Similar findings were reported by Kesek et al. (2024), who identified emotionally charged slang as a dominant feature of informal online interaction. The results indicate that slang functions not merely as non-standard vocabulary but also as a communicative tool for expressing evaluation, emotion, and interpersonal relationships.

3.1.3 Imitative

Five imitative slang expressions were identified in the analyzed Instagram Reels, namely *gonna*, *wanna*, *lemme*, *outta*, and *prayin'*. These expressions are commonly formed through phonological reduction and represent informal spoken English. Such forms frequently occur in everyday conversations because they facilitate fluent and natural communication while maintaining the intended meaning

The utterance "*I'm gonna be rich!"* is categorized as imitative slang because it imitates natural spoken pronunciation of *going to* in rapid, informal speech. The form reflects phonological reduction commonly used in everyday conversation rather than standard written English. Its function is to create a casual and spontaneous tone in informal interaction. The formal equivalent of this term is *going to*. Learners can observe how spoken reductions occur naturally in informal English. Recognizing *gonna* helps them

understand casual pronunciation patterns, which is essential for both listening comprehension and producing more natural speech.

The term *wanna* in *"I wanna conquer the planet!"* is classified as imitative slang because it represents a spoken imitation of want to produce through sound simplification. This form mirrors natural speech patterns and is widely used in informal contexts. The slang functions to express intention casually and informally. The formal equivalent of this expression is *want to*. By learning imitative slang like *wanna*, learners gain awareness of how spoken English often differs from formal writing. This exposure also helps them adjust their pronunciation and fluency when interacting in informal settings.

The term *lemme* in "*lemme see"* is categorized as imitative slang because it imitates the reduced pronunciation of *let me* in spontaneous spoken English. The expression reflects informal speech habits rather than grammatical innovation. Its function is to maintain conversational flow and informality. The formal equivalent of this term is *let me*. Learners can practice connecting reduced forms with their full equivalents, enhancing listening skills, understanding natural speech rhythms, and responding appropriately in conversations.

The term *outta* in *"Let's get outta here"* is categorized as imitative slang because it imitates the reduced spoken pronunciation of *out of* in rapid and informal speech. This form results from phonological reduction commonly used in casual conversation rather than standard written English. Its function is directive and expressive, conveying urgency in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this term is *out of*. Exposure to forms like *outta* allows learners to recognize connected speech phenomena, which is critical for understanding native speakers in natural conversations, media, and digital content.

The term *prayin'* in *"I'm on my knees Stacy prayin'…"* is categorized as imitative slang because it imitates the informal spoken pronunciation of begging in casual English. This form reflects phonological reduction commonly used in rapid speech. Its function is expressive, conveying urgency and emotional appeal in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this term is *begging*. Learners can observe how stress, intonation, and reduction shape meaning in speech, supporting the development of listening comprehension and natural pronunciation skills.

The findings demonstrate that imitative slang reflects the influence of spoken English on digital communication. Such forms allow speakers to communicate more efficiently while maintaining conversational fluency. From the perspective of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), learners must understand not only grammatical forms but also authentic language variations that occur in real-life communication. Similar findings have been reported in studies of digital discourse, which show that reduced forms frequently occur in informal spoken interaction because they facilitate natural communication and linguistic efficiency.

3.1.4 Acronym

Four acronym slang expressions were identified in the analyzed Instagram Reels, namely *CEO*, *DNA*, *9-1-1*, and *PB&J*. These expressions are formed by shortening longer words or phrases into abbreviated forms that are widely recognized in everyday communication. Although some of these acronyms originate from professional, scientific, or institutional contexts, they are frequently used in informal interactions because they are concise, practical, and easily understood.

The term *DNA* (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) in *"This is a human with hakf my DNA …"* is categorized as acronym slang because it is formed from the initial letters of a longer scientific term and is used directly in informal spoken interaction. Although originating from scientific discourse, *DNA* is commonly used in everyday conversation to simplify complex concepts. Its function is referential, conveying technical meaning in a casual and accessible manner. The formal equivalent of this term is *deoxyribonucleic acid*. Acronyms like *DNA* show learners how formal terms can be adapted into casual conversation, enhancing their ability to understand and use technical vocabulary in informal contexts.

The term *CEO* (Chief Executive Officer) in *"I'm a tech CEO …"* is classified as acronym slang because it abbreviates a formal occupational title into a short and easily recognizable form. Its casual use in dialogue reflects informality and efficiency in communication. The slang functions to convey professional identity without formal elaboration. The formal equivalent of this term is *chief executive officer*. Recognizing acronyms in casual speech helps learners identify professional and technical references efficiently, supporting comprehension in both formal and informal media.

The term 9-1-1 in *"Hey Siri, call 9-1-1"* is categorized as acronym slang because it is formed as a numerical abbreviation representing emergency services and is commonly used in informal spoken interaction. Although it functions as an official emergency code, its everyday usage simplifies a longer formal expression referring to emergency assistance. Its function is directive, allowing the speaker to request immediate help efficiently in an informal context. The formal equivalent of this term is *emergency services*. Learners gain insight into how numeric or acronymic shortcuts operate in English, enhancing their ability to interpret and use emergency or urgent expressions accurately.

The term PB and J (*peanut butter and jelly*) in *"and that time he invented PB and J?!"* is categorized as acronym slang because it is formed from the initial letters of a longer phrase and is widely used in informal daily conversation. The use of this acronym reflects efficiency and familiarity in casual speech. Its function is referential, enabling the speaker to mention a common concept without formal elaboration. The formal equivalent of this term is *peanut butter and jelly*. Understanding acronyms in everyday English improves learners' ability to decode and produce concise, natural expressions, which is particularly useful in social or digital communication.

The findings indicate that acronym slang reflects the tendency toward linguistic economy in contemporary communication. Such forms simplify complex expressions while maintaining communicative effectiveness. Similar patterns have been identified in previous studies on social media communication, where acronyms function as practical tools for increasing communication efficiency. The results suggest that acronym usage represents speakers' adaptation to fast-paced digital interaction while preserving meaning and comprehensibility.

3.1.5 Clipping

Five clipping slang expressions were identified in the analyzed Instagram Reels, namely *mom*, *dad*, *kids*, *lab*, and *pics*. These expressions are formed by shortening longer words while retaining their original meanings. Clipping is commonly used in informal communication because it allows speakers to convey messages more efficiently and naturally. The frequent use of clipped forms reflects the tendency of everyday language to favor brevity and familiarity.

The utterance *"Mom, hold my calls"* is spoken by Rick in an Instagram Reels video uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account. The term *mom* is categorized as clipping slang because it is a shortened form of the word *mother*. This clipping process occurs through the removal of the final syllable, resulting in a more informal and familiar form. The use of *mom* reflects a close personal relationship between the speaker and the addressee and is commonly used in casual spoken English. In terms of function, the clipped form helps create an informal and intimate tone in the interaction. The formal equivalent of this term is *mother*. Clipping shows learners how language reflects social intimacy, allowing them to recognize relationships and tone in spoken English more naturally.

This utterance *"Dad, stop helping"* is delivered by Beth in an informal family interaction. The term dad is classified as clipping slang because it is a shortened form of *father*. The clipped form is widely used in everyday conversation to indicate closeness and emotional familiarity between family members. Its function is interpersonal, as it signals an intimate relationship and maintains a casual conversational tone. The formal equivalent of this term is *father*. Familiar forms like *dad* help learners understand how English speakers signal emotional and social connections in informal contexts.

The utterance *"Blazen, you got kids?"* is spoken by Rick in an informal context. The term *kids* is categorized as clipping slang because it is a shortened and informal form of *children.* This clipped form is frequently used in spoken English to simplify expression and create a relaxed conversational atmosphere. Its function is referential, allowing the speaker to refer to family members in a casual manner. The formal equivalent of this term is *children*. Observing such clippings helps learners understand everyday vocabulary reductions, making spoken English more accessible and natural.

The utterance *"Get back to the lab!"* is delivered by Rick in an informal scientific context. The term *lab* is classified as clipping slang because it is a shortened form of the word *laboratory*. This clipping process involves removing the final syllables to produce a shorter and more practical form commonly used in everyday speech. Its function is referential, allowing the speaker to refer to a place efficiently while maintaining an informal tone. The formal equivalent of this term is *laboratory*. Clippings like *lab* demonstrate how informal language prioritizes efficiency while maintaining meaning, an important skill for interpreting casual English.

The utterance *"I need some pics for this"* is spoken by Rick in an informal context. The term *pics* is categorized as clipping slang because it is a shortened form of the word *pictures.* This clipping process removes the final syllables of the original word, resulting in a brief and casual expression commonly used in spoken and digital communication. Its function is referential, as it efficiently refers to visual images while maintaining an informal conversational tone. The formal equivalent of this term is *pictures*. Exposure to clipped words like *pics* helps learners recognize common informal forms used in media, social networks, and conversation, supporting practical comprehension.

The findings show that clipping slang is frequently used to create familiarity, intimacy, and conversational efficiency. Such forms reduce linguistic complexity while preserving meaning, making them particularly suitable for informal communication. This result supports Allan and Burridge's (2006) argument that slang often functions as a marker of interpersonal closeness and social solidarity. Similar findings have been reported in studies of everyday spoken English, where clipping is recognized as one of the most productive forms of lexical reduction.

3.2 Application of the Formal Equivalents of Slang in Teaching Vocabulary

Linking slang to formal equivalents helps learners develop register awareness and understand appropriate contexts for vocabulary use. This finding is consistent with Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes the importance of knowing when and where particular language forms should be used. Through comparisons between slang and formal expressions, learners become better able to distinguish informal communication from academic or professional discourse. This process can also support learners in developing more flexible vocabulary use across different communicative situations, particularly in digital and academic contexts.

The findings also support recent studies emphasizing the value of authentic digital materials in vocabulary instruction. Instagram Reels provide learners with multimodal input through visual images, voice intonation, gestures, and contextual cues, which facilitate vocabulary comprehension and retention. Exposure to authentic language allows learners to encounter vocabulary as it is naturally used in real communication rather than in isolated textbook examples.

Furthermore, integrating slang and formal expressions into vocabulary instruction may help bridge the gap between classroom English and everyday language use. Such an approach allows learners to develop both lexical knowledge and pragmatic competence, enabling them to communicate more effectively across different social contexts.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study examined English slang words found in Instagram Reels uploaded by the *rickandmorty* account and analyzed their application in teaching vocabulary. Five types of slang were identified in the analyzed Reels, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. Among these types, flippant slang appeared most frequently, indicating that emotionally expressive and humorous language is a prominent feature of the content.

The findings reveal that slang expressions perform various communicative functions, including expressive, evaluative, referential, directive, and interpersonal functions. Fresh and creative slang was mainly used to express identity, humor, and emotions, while flippant slang conveyed strong feelings and evaluation. Imitative slang reflected natural spoken pronunciation, whereas acronym and clipping slang demonstrated linguistic economy and communicative efficiency.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that each slang expression could be linked to a formal English equivalent. This relationship between informal and formal language forms supports learners' understanding of language registers and provides insights into the use of vocabulary across different communicative contexts. The findings indicate that slang analysis can contribute to vocabulary learning by helping learners recognize the meanings and functions of informal expressions and relate them to appropriate formal forms. This study also highlights the pedagogical potential of Instagram Reels as an authentic source of language input that exposes learners to real-life language use while supporting vocabulary development. Therefore, the integration of slang and formal expressions in vocabulary instruction may assist learners in developing both lexical knowledge and awareness of appropriate language use in different social situations. Overall, this study contributes to EFL vocabulary teaching by demonstrating how informal digital language can be systematically integrated into instructional practices to enhance learners' linguistic awareness.

4.2 Recommendations/Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, English teachers are encouraged to utilize authentic digital content such as Instagram Reels as supplementary materials for vocabulary instruction, particularly for introducing informal language and its formal equivalents. The use of Instagram Reels may help learners develop vocabulary knowledge, improve pragmatic competence, and increase their awareness of language variation through authentic communication contexts. Teachers are also encouraged to incorporate audiovisual materials into vocabulary lessons to provide learners with meaningful exposure to authentic language use.

Future research is recommended to investigate the long-term effects of Reels-based slang instruction on learners' vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence. Further studies may also examine slang use across different social media platforms, learner proficiency levels, or cultural contexts to obtain broader insights into the pedagogical application of informal digital language in EFL learning.

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