

Private and Public Language on Social Networks

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Ivona Čizmadija

Privatni i javni jezik na društvenim mrežama

Završni rad

Mentor: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak

Osijek, 2023.

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Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Tanja Gradečak, Ph.D. Associate Professor

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Abstract

Have social networks enabled an increase of private language in the public sphere? Social networks, better known as social media platforms are online communities that serve a purpose of connecting and communicating. A private language is understood as a language that is only understandable to an individual person. That language cannot be shared or understood by others. On the other hand, public language corresponds to a language that is shared and understood by a community or a group of people. Unlike private language, public language encourages individuals to share their thoughts, express ideas, and communicate with others effortlessly. It is used for sharing knowledge, expressing emotions, and engaging in social interaction. This paper focuses on a social media called TikTok and on analyzing different types of slang used by various groups of people who use TikTok. The slang that is researched for this paper is often used by younger people or the so-called generation Z.

Key words: public language, private language, social networks, TikTok, slang

1.1. Slang

To start this research, we first have to look up the definition of *slang*. The article “What Is Slang?: A Survey of Opinion” by *Haviland Ferguson Reves* provides this definition: “Slang is the changing vocabulary of conversation; it comes into sudden vogue, has a meaning, usually figurative, which is known by a particular set or class and which constitutes a sort of shibboleth during the brief period of its popularity, and then dies in the obscure corners of forgotten words and unabridged dictionaries, or passes into the legitimate speech. (216)” To shorten and simplify, slang is a type of language that comprises informal words and expressions. It is predominantly used in spoken language rather than written and is often limited to specific contexts or social groups. Social networks are a huge source of the slang used today. One of the popular terms nowadays is “lit”. Example: "That new restaurant in town is lit!" In this particular sentence, the term "lit" is a slang word meaning “excellent, amazing or impressive.”



Figure 1 Tik Tok Slang (Source: <https://gamequitters.com/wp-content/uploads/teen-slang-guide.jpg>)

1.2. TikTok

By the definition provided by Dictionary.com :“TikTok is a massively popular app that lets users create and share videos up to 60 seconds long. Lip-synced music videos are especially popular on it. The app has given rise to a number of young social media influencers.” This is a very general definition of TikTok, in my opinion TikTok is much more than that. The content a user sees depends on their liking. There are two options for the user to watch *TikToks*¹. The first option is called *Friends* and the second option is called *For You Page* or *FYP*. Within the option called Friends, the user can only see TikToks posted by their friends. The term “Friends” in this context means two people who mutually follow each other on TikTok. The second option called For You Page enables the user to access much wider content than the first one. On the For You Page, TikTok filters the content based on user’s likings. For example, a person who likes flowers, makeup and fashion, mostly sees that content or something closely related to that. Said person doesn’t see, for example, football content because that is not something that interests them. The user doesn’t have to follow any of the creators showing up, for said creators’ videos to show up on For You Page.

1.3. LGBTQ+ lingo

By the definition provided by Dictionary.com, LGBT+ language can be described as: “pertaining collectively to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and to people with gender expressions outside traditional norms, including nonbinary, intersex, and other queer people (and those questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation), along with their allies.” One of the reasons I have decided to include LGBTQ+ language in my research is because I

¹ TikToks are short video clips posted on the social media called TikTok

think it is important to spread awareness about minority groups and share their voices through simple, yet powerful tool called language.

2. Methodology

Many of these slang terms I have provided were already familiar to me, so that is why I chose them in the first place. However, when I researched each individual term, I became more informed and educated about their usage. I chose the slang terms I am familiar with and put them into categories that make sense to me and are easy to recognize in everyday life. I have also provided pictures or so-called *memes*. In this particular context the definition of meme is: “a cultural item in the form of an image, video, phrase, etc., that is spread via the internet and often altered in a creative or humorous way”. This definition is provided by Dictionary.com. Memes are important because they depict emotions and reactions behind every term. Memes also provide context for said terms and in some cases it is crucial for better understanding the context.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. TikTok Slang Regarding Expressions and Reactions

a) *Periodt*²

This slang term is used when the speaker wants to emphasize the correctness of the statement. In simple terms, the speaker wants to say that the statement is true and

² Source: www.tiktok.com/@gerredub/video/7220870326119435566?q=periodt%20&t=1686403188996

there is no further discussion about it. The term is often used as a phrase: “That’s on periodt.” Example: "He is the best dancer in this room and that’s on periodt.”



Figure 2 Periodt (Source: <https://cdn.dribbble.com/users/2133330/screenshots/14691073/238.png>)

b) *Fax no printer*³

"Fax no printer" is a variation of the slang phrase "facts no printer." It carries the same meaning of emphasizing the truth or accuracy of a statement, asserting that the statement is so factual that it doesn't require any additional evidence or proof. The inclusion of "fax" is a play on the term "facts" and "no printer" is added to further emphasize the certainty. Example: "She's the most talented singer I've ever heard, fax no printer. Her voice gives me chills every time." This sentence emphasizes the speaker's strong belief in the exceptional singing ability of the mentioned person, asserting that it is an undeniable truth without any need for further validation.

³ Source:
www.tiktok.com/@knowyourmeme/video/6961487046280137989?q=fax%20no%20printer%20explained&t=1686403654552.



Figure 3 Fax no printer (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.2452425968.2541/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.jpg>)

c) *It's giving*⁴

This phrase is used to describe a situation or a person that is embodying or expressing a particular quality, vibe, or aesthetic. It suggests that something or someone is exemplifying a certain characteristic or giving off a strong impression. Example: "She walked into the party with her stylish outfit and confident attitude. It's giving 'fashion icon' for sure!"



Figure 4 It's giving (Source: <https://wompampsupport.azureedge.net/fetchimage?siteId=7575&v=2&jpgQuality=100&width=700&url=https%3A%2F%2Fikym-cdn.com%2Fentries%2Ficons%2Ffacebook%2F000%2F038%2F978%2Fimage.jpg>)

d) *I'm dead*⁵:

⁴ Source:
www.tiktok.com/@estherbrunat/video/6899484909283462406?q=it%27s%20giving%20explained&t=1686403772561

This phrase is used to express extreme amusement, surprise, or disbelief. It is often used in response to something funny, shocking, or absurd. Example: "I just saw the funniest TikTok video. I'm dead! I can't stop laughing!"

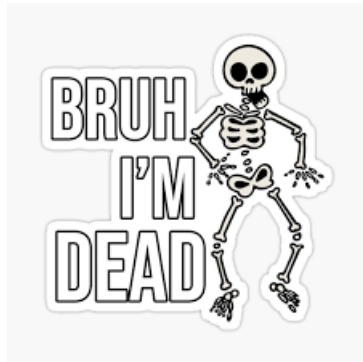


Figure 5 I'm dead (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.4247176005.5125/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.jpg>)

e) *Understand the assignment*⁶

This phrase is used to convey the expectation that someone should fully comprehend and meet the requirements or expectations of a particular situation or task. It is often used humorously to emphasize the importance of understanding and delivering on a specific objective. Example: "The theme for tonight's party is '80s fashion and she for sure understood the assignment!"



Figure 6 Understand the assignment (Source: <https://stayhipp.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/assignment.jpg>)

⁵ Source: www.tiktok.com/@applyboard/video/7185181836648172806?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

⁶ Source: www.tiktok.com/@harrietblue/video/7196528368869805313?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

f) *Ate left no crumbs*⁷

This phrase is used to indicate that someone has done something exceptionally well or completely mastered a task or situation. It implies that the person left no room for improvement or made no mistakes. Example: "She aced her presentation. Ate left no crumbs! Her delivery was flawless, and she covered all the important points."

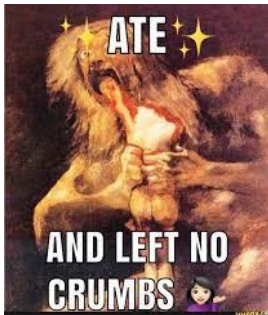


Figure 7 *Ate left no crumbs* (Source: https://img.ifyunny.co/images/a86d729dcc67b851a4ac291730a0018306e1f5a371f8a1f5d36661ed635c62a0_1.jpg)

g) *Sheesh*

The term "sheesh"⁸ is an exclamation used to express many different emotions like surprise, excitement, disbelief, or disappointment. It is often represented by an emoticon where the person places their fingers on their forearm and flicks them forward. Example: "Did you see that incredible dance move? Sheesh, he's so talented!"

⁷ Source: www.tiktok.com/@reverso_app/video/7155154468957457669?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

⁸ Source: www.tiktok.com/@antonioparlanti/video/7125776369102933254?q=sheesh%20meaning&t=1686487445600



Figure 8 Sheesh (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.2882839011.5517/st.small.507x507-pad.600x600.f8f8f8.jpg>)

h) *Sike*⁹

The term “sike” is used to retract or negate a previous statement. It is commonly used to indicate that something was said as a joke or to playfully tease someone.

Example: "I just won a million dollars! Sike! I wish!"

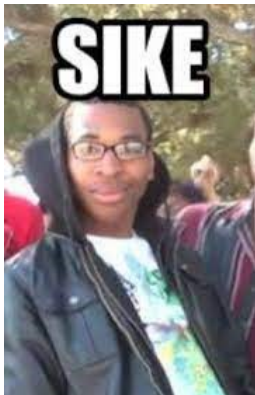


Figure 9 Sike (Source: <https://img.wattpad.com/cover/110852044-256-k23308.jpg>)

i) *Bfr*¹⁰:

"Bfr" is short for "Be for real." It is often used in its shorter form “Fr” which is an acronym for “For real.” This expression is often used to express the speaker’s annoyance or frustration. Example: “You cannot be serious right now, bfr!”

⁹ Source: www.tiktok.com/@memezar/video/7128114197874920709?q=sike%20meaning&t=1686487542896

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/Meaning-of-bfr>



Figure 10 Bfr (Source: <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/Meaning-of-bfr>)

j) *Delulu*¹¹:

"Delulu" is short for "delusional". This term is used to describe someone who has unrealistic or exaggerated beliefs or fantasies. It often refers to someone who is overly obsessed with a celebrity or fictional character and daydreams about them. Example: "She thinks she's going to marry Harry Styles. She's so delulu!" This term can be used as a noun as well. A popular phrase in this case is; "Feeding my delulus." This phrase can often be seen under tarot reading videos, saying their crush likes them or their ex- partner wants them back.

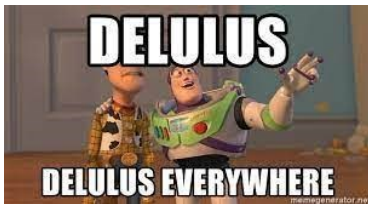


Figure 11 Delulu (Source: <https://i.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/002/553/891/d67.jpg>)

TikTok Slang Regarding Social Relationships

a) *Rizz*¹²:

¹¹ Source: www.tiktok.com/@niki_patton/video/7236208657971563819?q=delulu%20meaning&t=1686487599601

¹² Source: www.tiktok.com/@tahalikesyou/video/7185654906211110150?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

Rizz is a term used on TikTok to describe someone as flirtatious. The term rizz is a noun and it is used in a phrase with personal pronouns and verb “to have”: “She has a rizz.” An example in a sentence: “That boy is all over her, she has some good rizz.”



Figure 12 Rizz (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.4745050378.0306/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.u2.jpg>)

b) *Pick me*¹³:

"Pick me" is a phrase used on TikTok to describe someone, typically a girl, who tries to gain attention or favor by conforming to traditional gender roles or expressing exaggerated interest in certain activities to appeal to others. The article “Top Tiktok Slang Words and Phrases You Need to Know” further explains that those girls “are not like other girls” in order to attract men. Example: "She says she’s not like other girls, she doesn’t wear any makeup and only plays video games, she’s such a pick me girl."



Figure 13 Pick me (Source: <https://berkeleybeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Screen-Shot-2021-10-20-at-8.59.14-PM-900x569.png>)

¹³ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@jdp.adobo/video/7036860594984619265?q=pick%20me%20meaning&t=1686487683366

c) *Situationship*¹⁴:

A situationship refers to a romantic or sexual relationship that lacks clear boundaries, commitment, or labels. It is a relationship that is not defined as exclusive or official but involves some level of emotional or physical intimacy.

Example: "I've had a situationship with this girl, we were seeing each other but we did not date, it's complicated."

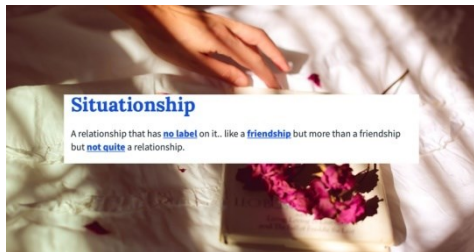


Figure 14 *Situationship* (Source: https://nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/fizzy/uploads/article/inside_top_image/de7b7cee-8ce2-4034-9573-c95cbdd8388a/relationships-dating-dating-advice-exes-situationship_insidetopimage_.jpg)

d) *Netflix and chill*¹⁵:

"Netflix and chill" is a slang phrase that originated on the internet, particularly on social media platforms like TikTok, and refers to inviting someone over to watch Netflix together with the underlying intention of engaging in sexual activity.

Example: "All he wants to do is Netflix and chill, we have never been on a real date!"

¹⁴ Source: www.tiktok.com/@applyboard/video/7185181836648172806?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

¹⁵ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@_ci.lan_/video/7181770516921912602?q=netflix%20and%20chill%20meaning&t=1686487780017



Figure 15 Netflix and chill (Source: https://theneonsign.co/cdn/shop/products/red_11e7eb60-18e7-4698-8a85-943993c7227b_700x700.png?v=1658856595)

e) *Quiet*¹⁶ *quitting*:

Quiet quitting is a term used on TikTok to describe the act of mentally or emotionally disengaging from a situation, such as a job or a relationship, without openly expressing or communicating one's decision to leave. Example: "She's been quiet quitting her job for months now; she only does the bare minimum required from her."



Figure 16 Quiet quitting (Source: https://inspiringhr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/9.27_QuietQuitting-1024x585-1024x585.png)

f) *Girl boss*¹⁷:

"Girl boss" is a term used to describe a successful, usually young woman who is confident, ambitious, and takes charge of her life and career. It is often associated

¹⁶ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@brutamerica/video/7135269983365483822?q=quiet%20quitting%20meaning&t=1686487906800

¹⁷ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@chocolatesaregood/video/7087944203614932250?q=girl%20boss%20meaning&t=1686487966294

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with female empowerment and entrepreneurship. It is an extremely popular term if it involves a girl working in a traditionally and predominately male field. Example: "She started her own construction company in Germany and turned it into a major success. She's a true girl boss."



Figure 17 Girl boss (Source: <https://i.icanvas.com/DPV17?d=2&sh=s&p=1&bg=g>)

g) *Material girl*¹⁸:

"Material girl" is a term used to describe a person, often a woman, who places a high value on material possessions, luxury, or wealth. The term itself originates from one of Madonna's songs called Material Girl. The song turned into a TikTok trend; therefore it became a new expression in TikTok slang. Example: "She's always flaunting her designer clothes and expensive accessories. She's definitely a material girl."

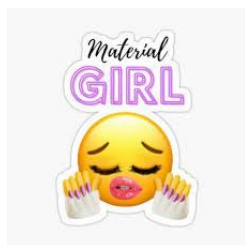


Figure 18 Material girl (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image/3098068686.6009/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.jpg>)

¹⁸ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@doggosounds/video/7070207223900720389?q=material%20girl%20meaning&t=1686488140459

3.2. LGBTQ+ Slang

Like any community or group of people, LGBTQ+ people also have their slang. After watching many TikToks, I have come to the conclusion that slang terms “queer” and “fruity” are the most commonly used. The reason might be because those terms have a quite general meaning. Both terms represent somebody who identifies as a part of the LGBTQ+ community, no matter which label suits them. It is important to note that slang terms can evolve and change over time, and their usage may vary within different communities and regions.

a) Queer¹⁹

“Queer” is an umbrella term for every individual who identifies as something other than heterosexual. Those identities are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, transgender, and many more. They defy societal expectations related to heterosexuality and traditional gender roles. It can be understood as a broad rejection of "normal" societal norms. The term “queer” is sometimes still used to insult people who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community by some heterosexual people, but queer people have accepted the term within their community and now they use it with pride and joy.

¹⁹ Source: www.tiktok.com/@now.livelifelife/video/7226412804599811354?q=queer%20meaning&t=1686488217791

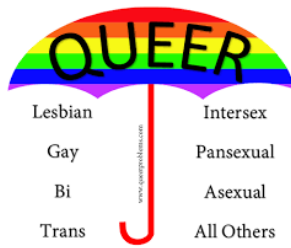


Figure 19 Queer (Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/e/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/queer.png>)

b) Coming out²⁰

The term “coming out” or “coming out of the closet” represents a person revealing their true identity, in this case, their LBGTQ+ identity. A person who “comes out” usually shares their identity publicly online or just with their close friends and family.



Figure 20 Coming out (Source: https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRN_d795xXYVFuNb8479mDyqbxDaFqXAM3iMg&usqp=CAU)

c) Yassification²¹

The terms “Yassification” and “yassified” are widely used on TikTok. It is used when something or someone traditionally heterosexual does something traditionally queer. It can be used when a person starts identifying as a member of the LGBTQ+ community or starts dressing “queer” like. Example: “Sarah came out as bisexual,

²⁰ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@cassieuyoco/video/7106429987686845722?q=coming%20out%20meaning&t=1686488290739

²¹ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@griffinmaxwellbrooks/video/7047579174055349550?q=yassification%20meaning&t=1686488393582

she got yassified.” Another meaning of “yassification” is to make a person appear more beautiful and feminine, definition provided by the article “A Content Analysis of Queer Slang on Tik Tok”: “Elements from the “Yassification” trend such as feminine symbols (. . .) and music from artists such as Meghan Thee Stallion and Saucy Santana were included; LGBTQ+ symbols (. . .) due to the trend’s origins” (Benitez 6).



Figure 21 Yassification (Source: <https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQkOg7uyRrmvxwWnnbrk4oiVuZ2njhK91K1czENqQa1b2xNjpCRtm5DkP7wognbPFNdejk&usqp=CAU>)

d) *Slay*²²

In LGBTQ+ slang, "slay" is a term used to describe someone who possesses exceptional style, confidence, or fierceness. It can also be used to hype somebody up and show admiration. For example, one person wears a nice outfit and another person uses the term “slay” meaning they like it. This term can be used outside the LGBTQ+ community, but what it makes especially queer is the emoticon that pictures painted nails. Example: “Slay 🍷”.



Figure 22 Slay (Source: <https://www.scribbler.com/Images/Product/Default/xlarge/JA1235.jpg>)

²² Source: www.tiktok.com/@harrietblue/video/7196528368869805313?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

e) *Sus*²³

"Sus" is slang for "suspicious." The term became popular when the online game called Among Us came out. In the game exists the role called impostor, therefore its players started to accuse each other of being "sus" meaning they are the impostor. It is also commonly used in LGBTQ+ slang and online communities to refer to something or someone that appears questionable, dubious, or untrustworthy. It is often used to describe suspicion about certain individuals identifying as heterosexual because they're showing an interest in the same sex. Example: "Did you notice how he kept checking out other guys and flirting with them? I think his behavior is a bit sus, like he might be into guys."



Figure 23 Sus (Source: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/YDj3JHtlviQ/maxresdefault.jpg>)

f) *Fruity*²⁴

"Fruity" is a commonly used term to describe somebody who is a part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is a synonym to another popular slang term "queer". The term simply means that person identifies as something other than heterosexual or cisgender. Both of these terms used to be used derogatory and in some cases still are, but today, the LGBTQ+ community has embraced those terms and uses them proudly. Example: "She's wearing a rainbow tote bag, she is definitely fruity."

²³ Source: www.tiktok.com/@harrietblue/video/7196528368869805313?q=gen%20z%20slang&t=1685361625303

²⁴ Source:

www.tiktok.com/@rainbowhistoryclass/video/7005825635079703810?q=fruity%20meaning&t=1686488462287



Figure 24 Fruity (Source: <https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.2419535405.7760/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.u1.jpg>)

g) *Butch*²⁵

"Butch" is a term commonly used among lesbians to refer to individuals who exhibit masculine or androgynous characteristics in their appearance, behavior, or gender expression. These individuals often defy or reject conventional gender roles and may have a more dominant or confident presence. Example: "She's a butch lesbian; she usually acts and dresses man-like."



Figure 25 Butch (Source: https://media.them.us/photos/5b7b36279344a7001f3a05e0/16:9/w_1280,c_limit/BUTCH.jpg)

h) *Femme*²⁶

"Femme" is a term predominantly employed within the lesbian community to depict individuals who display feminine characteristics in their appearance, behavior, or gender expression. Femme individuals actively embrace and express traditional femininity, which may involve wearing dresses, using makeup, and

²⁵ Source:
www.tiktok.com/@runwiththewildthings/video/6871706634641575170?q=butch%20meaning&t=1686488547758

²⁶ Source:
www.tiktok.com/@runwiththewildthings/video/6871706634641575170?q=butch%20meaning&t=1686488547758

other elements commonly associated with femininity. Example: “She’s a femme lesbian, she always wears makeup and pretty dresses.”



Figure 26 Femme (Source: https://media.glamourmagazine.co.uk/photos/643911c5faffaaf0fce7d598/1:1/w_1280,h_1280,c_limit/SOFT%20GIRL%20AESTHETIC%20140423%20rachelteetyler_L.jpeg)

i) *Straight*

The definition provided by *Queer Glossary*:” Slang term for “heterosexual”. It is often written as “str8”.It is commonly used as a noun as well, calling heterosexual people “straights.” Example: “Straights are protesting against the pride yet again.”



Figure 27 Straight (Source: https://cdn.theatlantic.com/thumbor/2dLjx92MTDQG4gXwoxjq--dOLY=/media/img/posts/2017/08/StraightPeopleSS_Post_thumb_615x300_81909-1/original.jpg)

4. Conclusions

To conclude, slang is a dynamic aspect of language that reflects social changes. TikTok has become a significant source of slang, influencing language trends. TikTok slang covers expressions and reactions, social relationships, and LGBTQ+ terms. Popular expressions like "periodt," "fax no printer," and "it's giving" add emphasis and description. Social relationship slang includes terms like "rizz," "pick me," and "situationship." LGBTQ+ slang serves identity recognition, safety, and community bonding. Terms like "queer," "coming out," and "yassification" express pride. Slang terms can evolve and vary across communities. Slang reflects and influences language, remaining an important part of communication.

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