

**THE USE OF SLANG AMONG BLACK YOUTH
IN GAUTENG**

by

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SUMMARY

Gauteng is one of South Africa's nine provinces, and is representative of a diversity of languages and cultures. It is a linguistic and cultural melting pot with all eleven official languages spoken in the province. Because of the language contact situation in this province, languages tend to influence one another and this results in situations wherein a majority of speakers are bi- or multilingual. Instances of code-switching, code-mixing, and lexical borrowing (or adoption) are also abounding.

In Gauteng, young and old black people tend to use black urban speech varieties. Non-standard black urban speech varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho have been studied extensively in South Africa. The study of black urban language varieties in Gauteng, particularly in English, has not received much attention from sociolinguists and has only been discussed in passing by scholars (see Calteaux, 1994). Studies on Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho have attempted to discuss the structure of and reasons for the employment of these varieties. In conducting the research on black youth slang in English, this study is an attempt at contributing to available research on slang in South Africa. Studies on slang have focused on other language groups and regions. However, no attempts have been made at describing the slang of black youth in Gauteng Province, particularly those who are not L1 speakers of English.

The present study aims at contributing to the study of non-standard black urban speech varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho. The current study tries to provide a sociolinguistic description of the slang used by black youth in Gauteng, who use English as a second language (L2) or additional language (AL).

The research begins with definitions and explanations of concepts relevant to the investigation. The study defines such terms as 'slang', 'black', 'youth' and 'youth culture' amongst others. The theoretical approach used in this study is also discussed in this section.

Black youth slang in English (hereafter referred to as BYSE) in Gauteng (GP) is discussed in relation to other non-standard black urban language varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho. This serves to explain how BYSE differs from the two varieties. The functions of slang as outlined by previous researchers on the subject are also discussed, with the intention of using these as a benchmark to the present study.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. These included a combination of written questionnaires, interviews (group discussions), and personal observations. The two methodologies were necessary in an attempt to arrive at a better comprehension of the slang used by the group under investigation. The data gathered served to investigate the reasons for using slang and the functions the words they employ serve, by looking at the slang as used in particular contexts as well as at the lexical items they employ. The study also looks at how their use of slang tends to draw on the lexicon from other languages spoken in the Province.

The data gathered from the written questionnaires was then sent to Statkon, at the University of Johannesburg, for analysis. The researcher further used interviews (group discussions) and personal observations to augment the results from the questionnaires.

The researcher adopts the notion of slang as a register according to use and discusses the findings according to Halliday's theoretical stance of language as social practice (1978). Emphasis is on dimensions such as field, mode and tenor of discourse as relevant to this study in an attempt to explain the contexts of situation in which the youth under investigation use slang. The research also considers other social aspects of language variation as relevant to this study.

The study concludes with recommendations on the need for further research on the language of youth. Amongst others is the recommendation it makes about the study of youth language (particularly slang) and its educational implications in the language classroom.

KEYWORDS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following are some of the keywords and abbreviations used in this study:

BYSE: Black youth slang in English

BSAfE: Black South African English

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

AL: Additional Language

GP: Gauteng Province



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is a sociolinguistic investigation of the use of slang among black youth in the Gauteng Province. The study focuses mainly on black youth who are not L1 speakers of English. This chapter will provide a brief background and the statement of the research problem. It will further outline the aims of the research, as well as explain the methodology adopted for the study. The chapter will conclude with a chapter outline.

1.2 Background to the Study

Gauteng Province (hereafter referred to as GP) is one of the cultural and linguistic melting pots of South Africa representative of diverse cultures with all 11 official languages spoken by its inhabitants. Because of this contact, it is inevitable for cultural and language contact to occur. Black youth in Gauteng tend to adopt certain lexical items from languages spoken in the Province and incorporate these to form part of the slang they use.

Studies of youth language in Europe (Germany: Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003) and America (Eble, 1996; Partridge, 1935) have received much greater attention than in South Africa. However, the study of youth language (and of slang) is not an entirely new phenomenon in South Africa.

Among the research that has thus far been conducted by South African sociolinguists is that by Mfusi (1992) on Soweto isiZulu slang, with focus on black youth; on isiZulu slang by black youth in Natal (Ndlovu, 1963); De Klerk's study is on the slang by youth who are L1 speakers of English in Cape Town (1991); and Bailey's study on the origins, form, and function of slang in English among youth in Natal who are also L1 speakers of English (1985). Although these studies provide valuable information on the nature of slang used by the groups investigated, they do not explore in detail the aspect of slang as a language

variety, as a register according to use (as proposed by Bailey in his definition of slang). Linguists have neglected the study of slang in English in Gauteng and have focused their attention more on other black urban speech varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho (Ngwenya, 1995; Ntshangase, 1993).

One of the idiosyncratic aspects of youth, besides fashion and hairstyles, is their form and use of language, particularly slang. Youth shape and reshape language to suit their individual needs and status. In as much as language is used for conducting certain functions, it is also subject to change in form, particularly in terms of its lexicon to suit the needs and demands of its speakers. Slang is part of how language is used and it forms an integral element of linguistic innovation. To disregard the existence and richness of slang as a language variety would be to ignore one of the essential aspects of language, as well as the identity of the youth who use it to serve various functions in their lives.

1.3 The Problem Statement



The central research problem of the present study is that slang is not only a social, but also a controversial phenomenon. The fact that slang is often associated with young people, often perceived as deviating from the norms set out by the larger society of which they are a part, is an interesting aspect of the study on youth language in general and slang in particular.

Another perception is that of slang as non-standard, ephemeral, in flux, and acts as an identity-marker (Partridge, 1935; Thorne, 1997; Eble, 1996). Apart from slang being a fashion item, it is also seen as a marker of identity and a delineator of groups -as a marker of an in-group from the out-group (Eckert, 2000; Labov, 1972). The secretive and deviant nature of slang has been associated with what Halliday (1978: 164) refers to as 'antilanguages' which are codes (often secretive) of deviant subcultures such as criminals, entertainers, and beggars. Antilanguages are characterized by features such as secrecy, relexicalisation, overlexicalisation, resocialisation (it creates an alternative reality) and

reconstruction, the language of an antisociety, and arise as counter-reality. Based on the generalizations above about slang, one wonders whether the use of slang among black youth in the present study fits some of the above characterizations.

Apart from the fact that research on slang in South Africa has received inadequate academic attention from sociolinguists, no description has hitherto been provided of the slang of black youth in Gauteng who use English either as a L2 or as an AL. A sociolinguistic description of slang by the group under investigation, in this study, is necessary to provide a better understanding of the slang that they use and the functions it serves for its speakers.

1.4 Aims of the Research

South African English (SAfE), for instance, is largely influenced by the many languages spoken in this country. Black South African English (BSAfE), as a variety of English, has its own unique characteristics somewhat distinct from Standard English variety. It is in this variety that this study aims to focus its attention. The research endeavours to explore black youth slang within the context of Gauteng Province, mainly the urban areas of the East Rand, Johannesburg, and Tshwane (Pretoria).

This study aims to investigate, identify, and describe the speech patterns of black youth in Gauteng Province, particularly the slang they employ. The study aims to provide a sociolinguistic description of the slang used by black youth in Gauteng when using English as the base language. It is about the urban life peculiar to these youth as well as the diversity of languages they encounter. The aim is to describe the users of this variety; to approach it as a variety according to use and to determine the contexts wherein the youth under investigation use it. The study further aims at providing a sociolinguistic description of slang as well as an explanation of the reasons they employ the variety (i.e. the intent of the users). It is also the intention of the current study to demonstrate how their use of slang reflects the multilingual composition of Gauteng Province. Features of their language use

will include the innovative nature of the slang words they use, which are characteristic of their daily interactions among themselves and as constructors of their black, urban, youth identity.

Although it is an undeniable fact that various sub-cultures exist within the larger youth culture, it is not the aim of this study to focus on the former but rather on the latter, particularly on the use of slang among a general group of black youth without emphasis on their individual sub-cultures.

1.5 Presuppositions

This study makes the following presuppositions:

- That slang is a social practice;
- That there is a close connection between who the users of slang are and the words they choose to employ;
- That the slang of black youth in this study serves particular functions;
- That the slang of this group is used in particular contexts of situation; and
- That the slang in English that the youth use is influenced by American English, as well as the many languages spoken in Gauteng Province.

1.6 Methodology

This study had initially made use of questionnaires as data collection strategy. However, because language use and variation is best understood within the reality of the situation, additional strategies such as group discussion interviews and participant observation were also used to complement the written responses in the questionnaires.

The aim of using the written questionnaire in this study was to gather data on the demographics of the respondents; on their frequency of and reasons for using slang; the contexts wherein they use slang; as well as samples of the lexical items and phrases that

they use. Such data would assist in the compilation and discussion of the lexicon they use. The questionnaires were disseminated to male and female black youth between the ages 14 and 21, who reside in Gauteng. The researcher focused on parts of the West Rand such as Johannesburg and Soweto, the East Rand (Springs, Kwa-Thema, Boksburg, Vosloorus), and Tshwane (including Mamelodi, Centurion, Atteridgeville). The questionnaires were disseminated to the youth at the various youth organizations in GP, at senior secondary schools (two 'Model-C' high schools and one 'private' school on the East Rand; one 'private' school in Pretoria), as well as to youth in Kwa-Thema who attend(ed) 'township' high schools. Volunteer teachers at the schools as well as members of the youth organizations assisted in the distribution and collection of the completed questionnaires (refer to Chapter 3 of this study for a detailed exposition of the research methodology).

Conducting group interviews was necessary in order to understand the reasons why youth use slang as well as the contexts wherein they use it. The interviewees would assist in verifying and clarifying some of the responses provided in the questionnaires, in addition to their own.

The researcher also engaged in personal observations in order to understand how the youth use slang, as well as the contexts wherein they use it. Examples of the observations were tape-recorded and transcribed. The researcher conducted personal observations of 5 male and 3 female youth in Kwa-Thema township on the East Rand; and personal observations at the East Rand Mall, at parties or social gatherings such as *Moonsoon Lagoon* dance club (Emperor's Palace on the East Rand). The researcher conducted interviews (informal discussions) of 14 black male and female youth (aged between 17 and 21) at Sibikwa Youth Community Centre in Benoni on the East Rand of Gauteng.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 of this study is a literature review of the research conducted on slang thus far. The chapter begins with definitions of terms relevant to this study, and discusses black

youth slang in English in relation to other black urban speech varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho. It also provides a discussion of the general functions of slang. This chapter further outlines the theoretical framework for the research and discusses the sociolinguistic theories relevant to this study.

The **third** chapter presents the research methodology for this study. The approach best suited for this research is quantitative and qualitative, with a combination of methods such as questionnaires, participant observation and interviews as data-collection strategies. The chapter discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

The presentation and analysis of the data collected for this study are discussed in **Chapter 4**. The data collected is statistically based on the participants' responses to the five sections of the written questionnaire. The data is further described and discussed according to the participant observations and group interviews conducted by the researcher. The chapter concludes with a discussion and analysis of the lexical items and phrases gathered from the questionnaires received.

Chapter 5 concludes the research and offers recommendations and suggestions for further research on the subject of slang.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to the study on slang as well as a discussion of the literature relevant to this research. For purposes of clarity on the study of slang, the chapter includes brief definitions to and discussions of concepts central to the investigation. The chapter looks at definitions of concepts such as ‘youth’ and ‘youth culture’, and ‘slang’ among others.

The second section of this chapter will focus on black youth slang in English in relation to black urban language varieties such as Tsotsitaal and I’scamtho. This is followed by a section that outlines the general functions of slang.

The next section will look at slang as a language variety, a register according to use as well as a social variety reflecting its users. Focus is on Halliday’s theoretical position on language as social practice (1978).

The last section of this chapter will be a brief overview of the language situation in the Gauteng Province (hereafter referred to as GP).

2.2. Definitions and Explanations of Terms

2.2.1 ‘Youth’ and ‘Youth Culture’

Different scholars provide different definitions of the term ‘youth’. According to Roche, et al., “Youth is often defined as a phase in the life course between childhood and adulthood and ‘young people’ as that group of people going through that phase” (2004: 90). The term is sometimes inaccurately used to describe similarities in behavior style of some adolescents and young adults.

Other definitions of 'youth' refer to the age range between 15 and 24 (www.web.worldbank.org). A sociological definition of the term involves "...an ascribed status, or socially constructed label, rather than simply the biological condition of being young" (Marshall, 1994). Marshall points out to the three ways in which the term is used. Firstly, it is used generally to cover a set of phases in the life-cycle, from early infancy to young adulthood; secondly to adolescence with emphasis on teenagers and their transition to adulthood; thirdly to a set of supposed emotional and social problems associated with growing up in urban industrial society. For purposes of the current study, the researcher focused on the age groups 14 to 21.

The term 'youth culture' generally refers to

the existence of a collective, age-bound world of thought, being and practice fundamentally separable and distinct from the culture of the larger society in which youth find themselves (Davis, 1971: 3).

Amit-Talai and Wulff (1995: 224) explain youth culture as not "...necessarily a subculture, [but] a distinct culture, particularly that of youth as different from that of adults". Youth culture therefore is an identity marker placing the youngster within a particular and or specific age group, sharing the values, norms and standards of that culture. For the sake of clarity, the term youth culture will be used in this study to refer to the shared experience and commonality among youth, not as members of a counter-culture, but members of their own meaningful society.

2.2.2 'Black' and 'Black South African English' (BSAfE)

The term 'black' is a pan-ethnic one (Schmied, 1991: 47), which is used in this study to refer to black Africans who are representative of a group who use indigenous African languages as their predominant language.

A definition of 'Black South African English' (BSAfE) is difficult since it is not easy to determine whose English it is. De Klerk and Gough (in Mesthrie, 2002: 356), ask whether BSAfE

- is the English of those learners who have encountered only a smattering of English in informal contexts and use it occasionally for business or work purposes?;
- is the variety of English used by those who have emerged from the education system at some stage after grade 10?;
- is a composite of all these varieties?

BSAfE refers to the variety of South African English commonly spoken or used by mother-tongue speakers of South Africa's indigenous African languages. It is further described as fitting the 'new English' category in that it has developed through the education system as an L2 where English is not the language of the majority and has developed localized forms to serve the purpose of intra-regional communication (Platt et al., 1984: 2-3).

In relation to the above categorizations on South African English in general and BSAfE in particular, the study focuses on the English of black youth who are mother-tongue speakers of a South African indigenous language and who use English as an L2 or additional language (hereafter referred to as AL). This includes those youth who have encountered English both informally (through informal contexts), as well as formally (i.e. in school, etc.). The following section (2.2.3) deals with the categories of black youth who speak English in GP:

2.2.3 The English of 'Model-C', 'Private' and 'Township' School Youth

- 'Private' School and 'Model- C' English

Khumalo (1995:134) refers to the language that is used by black pupils who attend English medium schools as of paramount importance because it is accommodative and receptive to other languages, where English is used as a base language and whereby an African language is embedded. These learners encounter English in school as the medium of instruction and use it to some extent in their daily interactions. However, the English of this group becomes a non-standard language variety once it mixes with an African language that is used outside the school context. As a result, code-mixing and code-switching are common features found in the English of black youth who attend English medium schools (Khumalo, 1995: 134-135) (Some of the examples taken from data collected for this study are presented in Chapter 4).

- 'Township' English

Black youth who attend schools in the township often encounter English in formal situations such as school, and sometimes from their friends who attend English medium schools who often reside in the township. However, from personal observation and informal interviews, the researcher found that these youth also pick English up from watching television and listening to the radio which broadcast predominantly in English (refer to Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of these findings).

2.2.4 The Origins and Definitions of 'Slang'

Slang is not an entirely new phenomenon. It emerged because of diverse peoples meeting in market places in medieval cities. It was not until the 19th century that it became a part of life of the modern cities, as well as part of modern society in general (Asher, 1994: 3960). A well-documented period that marked a change in behaviour of Western society values and codes was the era between the 1940s and 1950s, when young people started displaying even greater differences in their manner of dress, hairstyles and speech than previous generations. This further developed into what became known in Britain as the "Teenage Revolution or Movement". This concept spread across America and to other neighbouring

countries and continents characterized by its focus on the importance of acknowledging and recognizing youth as individuals with rights to determine their own rules and language, free of adult interference. The youth of that time had become what they had never been before, a subculture (Hudson, 1983:1-2).

The word “slang” is of uncertain origin, and is believed to date back to approximately 1750 (Asher, 1994: 3960). Slang has also originally denoted cant, “the restricted speech of the low often criminal classes of society” (Asher, 1994: 3961). The expression underwent gradual evolution and came to denote unconventional vocabulary as well as sub-cultural speech. It was not until about the 1890s that the term “slang” took on its sense of language below standard usage and restricted speech.

The most common problem that linguists face lies in their attempt to define the term ‘slang’. A linguistic definition of the term is not only difficult but also equally frustrating. Several attempts have been made to define it, but many have been unable to come up with a distinct meaning. In addition to the complexity involved in finding a more accurate definition to the term, is the attitude that the public and scholars alike have about slang. The word 'slang' evokes mixed reactions among the general public, scholars and linguists in particular. These reactions are often antagonistic and discordant, ranging from a perception of slang as simply 'bad' English to slang as a creative language variety worthy of academic investigation.

Some scholars define ‘slang’ in terms of level of formality. They say it is a highly informal style category within a language, which chooses to occupy a rather extreme position within that language's formal structure when looked at from a linguistic point of view (Asher, 1994: 3961; Thorne, 1997: iii). One of the criteria that Dumas and Lighter (1978: 14-15) propose for qualifying a term as slang is if the presence of the term "will markedly lower, at least for the moment, the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing".

Other researchers define slang in direct opposition to the conventional and standard language, and view it in terms of its deviant and rebellious nature. They argue that slang is improper, unsystematic, unacceptable language usage, and unconventional vocabulary that diverges from that of standard lexicon (Munro, 1997: 7; Burke, 1939: vii; Lighter, 1994: xvi). Sornig (1981: 71) describes slang as "...a stigmatized language variety or deviant variant when compared with the codified standard language..." There are those who dismiss slang as 'informal', 'illegitimate', 'non-standard', 'low', 'disreputable', 'sub-standard', 'disreputable' (Thorne, 1997: iii). These negative attitudes towards slang fail to consider its relevance in language studies. Attached to these attitudes are social and psychological complexities captured in slang vocabulary, which make the term difficult to define with precision. What all these definitions above fail to address is the user's intention of employing slang as De Klerk (in Mesthrie, 1995: 265) argues "...the importance of the user's intention is frequently neglected in [slang] definitions". According to Bailey (1985: 2), the best way to finding a solution to a more universally accepted definition of slang is to describe it in terms of a "register or variety according to use, a style whose distinguishing feature is the intention" of the speaker or user of slang. It is from this perspective that slang should be defined according to *who* uses it. In other words, added to the intention (the *why*) of using slang, should be the focus on *who* uses slang.

For purposes of this particular study on youth slang, a more precise definition of slang should include the reasons why slang is used and by whom -in this case, the youth. In this study slang can be understood as a language variety, a register according to use employed by its users (the youth) to fulfil certain functions within discourse -whether spoken or written.

2.3. Black youth slang in English (BYSE) in relation to other non-standard black urban language varieties

The following are some of the non-standard language varieties used by blacks in urban speech communities. A brief description of each is necessary in explaining the origins, characteristics, domains of use, and base language used in each variety.

2.3.1 Tsotsitaal

According to Makhudu (in Mesthrie, 2002: 398), Tsotsitaal (also known as 'Flaaitaal') originated because of language contact within a multilingual setting in nineteenth century South Africa. The rise of urban and township communities sped up the development of the variety. Tsotsitaal is associated with particular townships such as Soweto, Atteridgeville, Sebokeng, and the East Rand. Calteaux (1994: 221) refers to the fact that regional varieties of Tsotsitaal can be distinguished and that the base language of this variety can differ from one area to another. Mfusi (1992: 40) predicted that less contact between later generations and the Afrikaans-speaking community would lead to the development of African language based varieties of Tsotsitaal used in Soweto. Calteaux (1994: 229) reiterates this point and says that "Tsotsitaal with an Afrikaans base is dying out".

Calteaux (ibid: 227) elaborates by saying that Afrikaans-based Tsotsitaal is rarely spoken in the home, but that isiZulu-based Tsotsitaal has expanded its use and is used in the home by fathers to their sons mainly in informal social situations. The lingua franca is believed to be a largely urban male phenomenon (Makhudu in Mesthrie, 2002: 399). Tsotsitaal is believed to fulfil the following functions for its speakers: for identification; to ascertain which group one belongs to and to identify its users as 'amajita', 'magents', 'clevers' (streetwise males); it is used by the speaker to accommodate the listener; it is used for secrecy; and it is used as a lingua franca for speakers of various ethnic groups (Ngwenya, 1995; Calteaux, 1994).

2.3.2 Is'camtho

Ntshangase (in Mesthrie, 2002: 407-415) provides an explanation of the difference between Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho by focusing on the linguistic structures of each. He provides a brief history of the origin of each and argues that Tsotsitaal emerged from the townships of the Western areas of Johannesburg such as Sophiatown, Martindale, and Alexandra. Is'camtho emerged from an argot called 'Shalambombo' among the speech communities of Orlando, Pimville, the Eastern Native Township, and Moroka Emergency Camp in Soweto.


Ntshangase (in Mesthrie, 2002: 407) argues that whilst Tsotsitaal draws its lexical base largely from Afrikaans, Is'camtho leans more strongly towards isiZulu and Sesotho for its lexical base. Is'camtho has no structure of its own but relies on the language structures of the languages from which it operates. In other words, it is a language used through another language - a type of basilect (Ntshangase, *ibid*: 407). However, Is'camtho also cuts across ethnic and political boundaries and incorporates into its structure lexicon from South Africa's 11 official languages (Ntshangase, *ibid*).

Is'camtho, like Tsotsitaal, is believed to be generally spoken by young males (often born in Soweto) and who have resided in that area "long enough to have acquired its habits" (Ntshangase in Mesthrie, 2002: 411). However, Ntshangase notes that there is growing evidence that more females are becoming accepted users of Is'camtho (*ibid*: 412). Calteaux (1994: 228-229) says that Is'camtho is used where people socialise, sometimes in homes between fathers and their sons; between people who know each other; and is seldom used to address strangers, parents, employees or other superiors. Calteaux (*ibid*: 234-235) provides the following functions of Is'camtho: it performs a unifying and separatist function, and marks one as urban, hip, and sophisticated. Although Calteaux (*ibid*) believes Is'camtho is sometimes associated with criminal subcultures, Ntshangase (in Mesthrie, 2002) argues otherwise and says Soweto Is'camtho is no longer limited to crime-related topics, locales and interlocutors and that it is being used by non-gang members as well. Is'camtho has a social function whereby it is used to negotiate social relations between its

speakers, acts as a marker of solidarity and is beginning to break down ethnic barriers (Ntshangase, 1993: in Calteaux, 1994: 235). Is'camtho has gained popularity amongst Kwaito musicians and they use it in their lyrics. It is often referred to as the 'language' of Kwaito.

2.3.3 BYSE

The present study is about a non-standard English language variety used by black youth in GP, who often draw lexical items from both American English slang as well as from South African languages. Calteaux (1994: 115-116) posits that slang is “mainly adopted from Black Americans and is often picked up from television, films, videos, radio and music...” She further explains that, as in the case of Tsotsitaal, those unfamiliar with the variety often do not understand slang. The following is an example of BYSE (taken from the data gathered in this study):

- 
- A: *Yo was'sup bra? Saw this cool pair of shoes.. real tight...*
B: *Hola, mfana! Where, ntate?..*

From the above example of BYSE, anyone unfamiliar with the slang words *was'sup?*; *bra*; *cool*; *tight*; *hola, mfana*; and *ntate* would be confused and probably not know what the speakers are talking about.

The users of slang in this study are black youth who speak English as a L2 or as an AL amongst themselves, even though they have an indigenous African language as their predominant language. It is about the slang lexical items and phrases they employ when they use English as a base language. BYSE differs from Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho in that Tsotsitaal has Afrikaans as its base language, Is'camtho has Nguni (particularly isiZulu) or Sesotho as its base language, whilst BYSE has English as its base language.

2.4 The Functions of Slang

Slang is believed to fulfil various functions for its users. Some scholars believe that slang users employ the variety for social identification purposes, when they wish to indicate to others their origins (i.e. which town they come from, etc.). Slang may be used for humorous effect; to regulate social interaction whereby a group uses particular words for particular purposes such as in greeting and farewells (Bailey, 1985). Partridge (1935) provides a long list of the possible reasons for using slang, among them being the following: for fun, humour, playfulness; to be creative; to shock others; to reduce the excessive seriousness of a conversation; to be secretive; for group identity and solidarity. De Klerk (in Mesthrie, 1995) also believes that slang reinforces group membership and acts as a marker of social and linguistic identity. Eble (1996) reiterates some of the reasons outlined by Partridge and adds to these by referring to the function of slang as a means of opposing established authority. The various functions of slang mentioned above were used in the questionnaire (see APPENDIX A) as a yardstick to establish whether the youth in this study use slang for similar reasons (refer to the findings in Chapter 4).

2.5 Slang as a Language Variety

The users as well as the use of slang and the functions it serves for its speakers form an integral part of this study. In order to comprehend the nature of the slang the youth use, it is imperative that one understand the variety according to use in conjunction with the social characteristics of its speakers. Trudgill (1979: 108) states that “Language...varies not only according to the social characteristics of the speaker (such as his social class, ethnic group, age, and sex), but also according to the social context in which he finds himself”.

2.5.1 Slang as a register according to use

Bailey (1985: 2) believes that “[S]lang is best described as a register or a variety according to use”. This study endeavours to use this perspective as a basis for the research on the use

of slang in English amongst black youth in GP. Halliday says that register is necessary in order to explain what people do with their language, and that the register one chooses to employ depends largely on the context of situation, “the convention that a certain kind of language is appropriate to a certain use” (Halliday et al., 1964: 87). The current study will focus on this definition of register in attempting to explain the contexts wherein the youth are most likely to use slang. Halliday classifies registers according to the dimensions of *field*; *mode*; and *tenor* of discourse.

**Field of discourse:*

Field is the ongoing activity and the particular purposes that the use of language is serving within the context of that activity (Halliday, 1978: 62). This includes the content of discussion and the social setting. Halliday (ibid:33) cites Pearce (in Doughty et al., 1972: 185-186) who says:

Field refers to the institutional setting in which a piece of language occurs, and embraces not only the subject matter but the whole activity of the speaker or participant in a setting.

Researchers on slang often argue that it is used in informal settings (Eble,1996; Andersson and Trudgill, 1990). They refer to the inappropriateness of using slang in formal contexts and to the awkwardness of using certain linguistic features in given contexts.

The topics the participants engage in are also determined by the contexts they find themselves in. The following are some of the examples taken from the data gathered in this study through personal observations and group discussions with youth at Sibikwa Youth Community Centre in Benoni (on the East Rand) on some of the topics they tend to engage in. Some of the topics related to sex, cars (especially males), fashion trends, body parts, and drugs to name but a few: (Refer to Chapter 4 and APPENDIX B of this study for more examples):

Sex and body parts:

6-9: to urinate
milkshakes: large female breasts

Cars:

G-string: the BMW 3-series (car)
G-5: the new VW Golf 5

Fashion:

SABC 1: repeating the same outfit over and over again/ when one is seen wearing the same attire on a number of occasions (particularly at a social gathering such as at parties).
Fong-Kong: cheap clothes (often imported from Hong Kong).

Dating:

My boo: my boyfriend/ my girlfriend
A dish: a beautiful or very attractive female

Drugs, alcohol and being under the influence:

E: Ecstasy (a drug)
MJ: Marijuana
Weed: Marijuana
Smashed: drunk

Field of discourse is related to the ideational function of language and it “does something” (Gregory and Carroll, 1978: 27). In the case of slang, the ideational function is to transmit information from speaker to hearer, including the interlocutors’ life experiences. This

exchange will, however, be determined by what the speakers are doing at the time as well as the topic they are engaged in.

**Mode of discourse:*

Halliday (1978:33) cites Pearce (in Doughty et al., 1972: 185-186) who says:

Mode refers to the channel of communication adopted: not only the choice between spoken and written medium, but much more detailed choices [we might add: 'and other choices related to the role of language in the situation']...

Mode of discourse refers to whether the medium of communication is spoken or written, and it determines the role played by the language in a situation (Crystal, 1997: 244). The slang of the youth under investigation can be either spoken or written, depending on the situations in which the youth find themselves (refer to Chapter 4 of the current study). The participants as well as the topic during a particular time will determine the mode of discourse of the slang users. These circumstances will dictate to the users which medium they could employ.

**Tenor of discourse:*

Halliday (1978: 33) defines tenor of discourse as:

...the relationship between participants not merely variation in formality...but such questions as the permanence or otherwise of the relationship and the degree of emotional charge in it.

Tenor also includes the social status, age and background of the participants, as well as the level of formality between them. The study of slang as a stylistic variety focuses on the relationship between the interlocutors and the level of formality of the situation wherein

they locate themselves. In other words, speakers take into account whom they are addressing and alter their own speech style accordingly and this is known as 'style-shifting' (Thomas et al., 2004: 169). They refer to the concept of 'audience-design' as a means through which speakers account for the way they talk depending on the situation and contexts in which they are talking.

Setting relates to who the interlocutors are, where they are, as well as what they are talking about at that time. For instance, two young friends at a party are most likely to employ a more relaxed variety as compared to them addressing their Biology teacher within the classroom situation, analyzing or explaining a scientific concept. However, the same youngsters may address their teacher in a less formal variety when they meet him/ her at a social gathering such as a party.

The speakers' relationship with each other is of great importance: whether they are friends, parent-child, teacher-pupil, etc. As Thomas et al., argue that "...speakers take into account whom they are talking to and alter their speech accordingly" (2004: 169). How the speakers address each other will depend on their statuses and the context wherein they interact. In terms of the formality scale, participants who find themselves in a formal situation will adapt their code choice accordingly. Slang is representative of the informal situation, spoken predominantly in casual settings between friends or with people who are familiar with one another. Consider the following example from the researcher's personal observations:

Setting: English-medium school on the East Rand, immediately after school (on school grounds)

Participants: 3 black male youth, aged between 16 and 17 (1 is 16, 2 are 17 years old)

Conversation 1 (Day 1): [**Not their real names*]

* *Thabo:* Wassup, Blacks?

* *Sipho:* Yo, cool my man! I'm cool!

- * *Mongezi:* *Yo bra, cool man! What you been up to lately?*
- * *Thabo:* *Ag, just this and that...*
*Hey, have you guys heard *Bonga is having a 411 this weekend? Has he invited you guys?*
- * *Mongezi:* *Neh, not me...*
- * *Sipho:* *Me neither, bra. Wassup wid de brother, has he forgotten who his homies are?*
- * *Mongezi:* *Clearly!*
- * *Thabo:* *For sure! Eish, how soon we forget! Anyway, it's cool like that...it's cool. We'll gate-crush anyway. I'm taking my chick with me.*
- * *Mongezi:* *Yeah, right Bro, which one? *Maki? Or maybe *Carey?*
- * *Sipho:* *C'mon man, why you go and diss the brother like that? What do you mean which one? You know nigger here smaaks Carey. Aigh't bro?*
- * *Thabo:* *For sheezy, bro!...*

The same speakers above are most likely to adjust their speech pattern when in a more formal situation when speaking to the principal of their school on matters related to their schoolwork. However, the age and relationship between the interlocutors is also significant. If, for instance, the principal is young (e.g. about 25 years old) and the ages of the youth in the example above were closer to his (e.g. 19, 20, 23), chances are that they would address him in a more relaxed manner in informal situations.

2.5.2 Slang and the social aspects of language variation

Language often serves as a marker of desired group identity. The relationship between language and identity is pivotal to the study on BYSE, as the slang that the youth use cannot be separated from the identity or identities they choose to assume in their interactions with one another. The use of language or its variety articulates volumes about its speakers and locates them within a particular group in society- as an in-group or out-

group. An individual's utterances also reveal a certain image that they wish to portray to others as belonging to a particular sector within society, and this involves the speaker's social characteristics such as their age, sex, region, social class, etc.

*age:

Holmes (1992: 183) says that there are age-graded patterns of speech that are appropriate for 10-year olds or teenagers which disappear, as they grow older. Hudson (1996: 15) defines it as "a pattern of use in which linguistic items are used by people of a particular age, who then stop using it when they grow older". However, this does not necessarily imply that the vocabularies youth use disappear altogether but that they often diminish, as they grow older and have young children of their own.

The concept of age-grading emphasizes age-appropriate linguistic patterns which are, to a large extent, socially-determined. Not only does society expect of its members' behaviour patterns that are appropriate to the various age-groups, so does it expect that certain speech patterns are more appropriate to a particular group than to another. Downes (1984: 190) refers to the significant role that age plays in language, pointing out that younger speakers (particularly male adolescent peer groups) within a speech community tend to be closer to the vernacular form.

De Klerk (in Mesthrie, 1995: 267), in her study of slang by English speaking adolescents in South Africa, concludes that it is expected for slang to be used particularly by teenagers since they are 'insecure' and require a sense of belonging and articulation of their identity. De Klerk's argument, therefore, seems to suggest that the main reason for teenagers to use slang is due largely to their sense of insecurity. This perception, with the emphasis on limitation, restricts other more fundamental reasons why they use slang. Bailey (1985: 5) believes that younger people use slang more. The two arguments take us back to the one above on societal expectations on speech behaviour patterns, and suggest that slang is an age-graded phenomenon and an age-related language variety. In his study on Soweto

isiZulu slang Mfusi (1992) found that the variety is not only restricted to the youth who are believed to be the main users, but that it is also used by the older generation.

*gender:

In relation to the study on language and gender, Downes (1984: 190) points out that male adolescent peer groups often use extreme forms of variant vernacular speech patterns. Bailey (1985: 5) argues that "...slang is used more by males than by females". However, in her study, De Klerk (in Mesthrie, 1995: 268) questions whether males use more slang than females and concludes, "comfortable theories about 'nice', non-slang-using females are now overdue for recognition", since her findings reveal that females do use slang and derogatory terms.

*ethnicity:

"Ethnic groups are formed by persons who share, or believe they share, common cultural characteristics...and a shared language or set of communicative conventions" (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 108). Black youth in this study share some slang lexicon that is characteristic of their ethnicity. In an attempt to account for people's speech patterns, Holmes (1992: 190) provides examples of the relevance of ethnicity to language use and says that people who belong to the same group often speak in a similar manner:

Even when a complete conversation in an ethnic language is not possible, people may use short phrases, verbal fillers or linguistic tags, which signal ethnicity. So interactions that appear to be in English, for example, may incorporate linguistic signals of the speakers' ethnic identity... (1992: 191).

In using these short phrases and fillers, the young speakers in the present study are assuming, expressing and affirming their identity as young, black, and urban. Consider the following example:

Setting: At the mall (East Rand)

Participants: 2 black males approximately between ages 17 and 18.

[Exchanging greetings with each other]

A: Hey, hola *Mfana!*

B: Hi, *black!* Where you been, *nigga* it's been what...three four months?

A: *Haa bra* I'm around Ntate. Just exams.

B: *Eish*, don't talk about exams *baba!* I've got two more papers.

A: *Sho!* ...

B: ...ei I gotta run bra. Catch you later!

A Haa *sharp gazlam*. Later!

B *Sho!*



From the conversation above, there are certain words that would identify the speakers as belonging to a particular ethnic group, and to an urban black youth culture. These words would serve as markers of black identity and solidarity. The word *black* above, for instance, is used among black males as a form of greeting and a marker of black urban identity. From the personal observations and group discussion with the youth in general and at Sibikwa, the words *nigga* (*nigger/ nigga*) are considered in a positive light when used by and amongst black males. Black youth, in their defiance of social taboos attached to these words, use them as markers of black, male solidarity amongst themselves. However, the same words are perceived as derogatory when uttered by anyone other than a black person. The words have a sense of exclusivity about them.

However, there are certain lexical items that were originally used by and among blacks that have now transcended that element of exclusiveness by being adopted and used by other language and ethnic groups. Previously, mainly blacks used the word *eish!*. Recently

members of other ethnic and language groups tend to use the word freely, reflecting the multicultural and multilingual nature not only of Gauteng Province but also of South Africa in general.

*region:

A group of speakers' language variety in a particular region will be somewhat different to that of another group in another region, and the use of slang varies from region to region (Fromkin and Rodman, 1974: 301). Holmes (1992: 135) says that there are vocabulary differences in the varieties spoken in different regions. The slang that the participants in the present study employ, for instance, may be similar in many respects but differ somewhat in others. For example, although they may share common slang vocabulary patterns, other words are specific to them in a particular region within the same Province. This is because of the various languages that the youth encounter within their regions and the influence they have on the lexical items they use. From the lexical items collected in the questionnaires (refer to Appendix A), the youth in Tshwane included words such as *sphatlo* (from Setswana, *phatloga*: to split up) which is bread cut into quarter and filled with chips, polony and aचार; *aowa* (from Sepedi) meaning *no*. Some of words taken from the questionnaires by youth on the East Rand and West Rand of Gauteng included numerous isiZulu vocabulary such as *izinyoka* (isiZulu: snake): thieves; *skhokho* (isiZulu: crust): a hero/ a role model. This influence is no surprise given the predominant languages spoken in these sub-regions of Gauteng (refer to 2.6 below).

2.6 The Language Situation in Gauteng

The study of BYSE in GP would be incomplete without a brief overview of the language situation within the Province, which is of great influence on the slang used by the youth. This will include a discussion on the influences that other languages within the Province have on the slang in English by the youth under investigation.

It is worth noting that the current study does not claim to define the language contact situation in the whole of Gauteng, but that it does so only on the areas of focus relevant to this investigation. These areas of focus in Gauteng include parts of the East Rand, the West Rand and Pretoria. GP is one of the provinces in South Africa that is representative of diverse cultures and languages. The official languages spoken in the Province include English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, siSwati, isiZulu, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Because of the multilingual nature of Gauteng, language contact becomes inevitable where most of its speakers are either bi- or multilingual.

According to Census 2001 (www.statssa.gov.za/census2001), Gauteng people speak a variety of languages as a first language. These languages include isiZulu (21.5%), Afrikaans (14.4%), Sesotho (13.1%), English (12.5%) and Sepedi (10.7%). IsiZulu is the language most spoken at home in Gauteng, and only 0.5% of blacks use English frequently in the household. A majority of the black people (98.5%) speak an indigenous language. The most dominant home language in the Johannesburg area (West Rand) and East Rand is isiZulu, whilst the most dominant home language in the Tshwane area is Sepedi.

2.6.1. Bilingualism and multilingualism

According to Wardhaugh (1992: 102), a bilingual, or multilingual, situation can produce other effects on one or more of the languages involved and can result in either loss or in diffusion with features of one language spread to another language on a syntactic level.

Calteaux (1994: 21) articulates the fact that a speaker has a linguistic repertoire from which to choose the linguistic variety appropriate to a particular situation, and the repertoire may include more than one language. The youth in this study are either bi- or multilingual, and use English as their L2. They tend to code-mix and code-switch when speaking amongst themselves. BYSE is fraught with elements of code-switching and code-mixing tendencies, and this is a result of speakers and their languages encountering one another. In Gauteng,

there is evidence of code-switching and code-mixing with various reasons for the occurrence of these phenomena.

2.6.2 Lexical borrowing

Another aspect typical of BYSE in Gauteng is that of lexical borrowing. Crystal (1997: 46) provides a brief definition of ‘borrowing’ as “a linguistic form being taken over by one language or dialect from another” and is usually known as a ‘loan word’. Linguists often prefer the concept ‘adoption’ to describe the notion of borrowing, since “the loaned items are rarely returned to the donor language” (Calteaux, 1994: 26). Lexical borrowing plays some part in the present study on BYSE in Gauteng, in an attempt to explain the features of certain slang items used by the participants as well as the dynamics involved in the use of certain words taken from languages other than English.

2.7 Conclusion



This chapter has discussed terms relevant to the study of slang. It further outlined a theoretical framework to the research, by providing the angle from which it aims to approach the study of slang as used among black youth. Focus was on slang as a register according to use with emphasis on Halliday’s *field*, *mode* and *tenor* of discourse (1978). The chapter also included a brief discussion of slang as a social variety according to its users. The next chapter is a discussion of the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study is an attempt at investigating and describing the use of slang in English by black youth in Gauteng Province (refer to 1.4 above for the aims of this research).

3.2 The Aim of the Empirical Study

The purpose of the empirical study is to gather data in order to provide a sociolinguistic description of the slang used by black youth to determine the contexts wherein they are most likely to use it, as well as the reasons they use it.

3.3 Methodology

The study used the following research strategies and data collection methods:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews (informal discussions and conversations)
- Personal observation

[Other research strategies included:

- listening to local radio stations such as YFM, MetroFM, 5FM, and 94.7;
- watching youth television programs such as *Channel O* on DSTV]

3.3.1 Questionnaires:

The questionnaire comprised of five sections (see Appendix A). Section A consisted of questions relating to the demographics of the respondents as well as a question on the radio stations. The last question in Section A was on the frequency of slang use and was used for cross tabulations. The purpose of the cross tabulation was to determine whether there was

any relation between such aspects as the frequency of slang use by the respondents and the radio stations they listen to. It was to establish, for instance, whether the radio stations they listen to have any bearing on their frequency of slang use.

Section B of the questionnaire consisted of one question requiring the respondents to indicate to what extent they learnt slang from friends, peers, siblings, watching television, reading magazines, or listening to the radio. The purpose of this question was to establish the extent to which these influenced their use of slang.

In Section C of the questionnaire, the respondents were provided with possible reasons why they might use slang and requested to indicate the reasons applicable to them. The second part of that section requested that the respondents write the three most important reasons from the list provided. The aim was to ensure that the reasons they indicated from the list corresponded with what the respondents thought were important reasons. The last question of this section required the respondents to write down any other reasons why they use slang. The reason for this was to determine whether there might be reasons other than the ones the researcher had presented to the respondents.

The next Section (D) comprised of questions that required the respondents to indicate (from a list provided) the contexts wherein they would use slang. As in Section C above, the respondents were requested to provide any other contexts besides the ones provided by the researcher. The aim was to see if there were possible situations or domains of slang use that the researcher may have overlooked.

Section E aimed at collecting slang words and phrases that the youth use. The aim of this question was to establish the vocabulary that they use in order to provide a description thereof.

The researcher disseminated 400 questionnaires as follows:

- Veritas College (a private Catholic school in Springs, East Rand): 50 questionnaires (11 returned); The school is from Grade 0 to Grade 12, and the researcher focused on the Secondary school group within the specified age groups;
 - Christian Brothers College (a private Catholic school in Tshwane): 50 questionnaires (33 returned);
 - Boksburg High School (Boksburg): 50 questionnaires (39 returned)
 - Sunward Park High School (Sunward Park): 50 questionnaires (44 returned);
 - The researcher disseminated questionnaires to volunteer township youth in Kwa Thema in Springs: 50 questionnaires (24 returned)
 - Movement Into Dance Mophatong (youth dance organization in Johannesburg): 50 questionnaires (23 returned); and
 - the South African Association of Youth Organizations (SAAYC in Florida, to disseminate within the specified areas in Gauteng): 100 questionnaires (41 returned).
-
- Advantages and disadvantages of written questionnaires

Each data-collection strategy has its own strengths and limitations. The fact that the researcher is able to gather large data from the respondents within a short time is one of the advantages of using written questionnaires as a data-collection method (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 52). Another advantage is that the written questionnaires disseminated to the respondents to complete in the absence of the researcher, tend to elicit responses that would otherwise not be achieved in the presence of a fieldworker.

The lexical items, phrases, and the definitions collected from the written questionnaires were many and varied somewhat and the researcher became inclined to enquire how they

are used in context. As a result, the researcher decided to embark on a qualitative approach in order to experience the actual use of slang.

3.3.2 Interviews

Milroy and Gordon (2003: 61) point out the importance of interviews in producing qualitative data that can complement the quantitative data collected and analysed. The type of interview adopted in this study was that of tape-recorded group interviews (discussion). The researcher conducted a tape-recorded interview in the form of group discussion rather than a rigidly structured interview with 14 black youths (8 males and 6 females) at the Sibikwa Youth Centre in Benoni. Although the researcher used structured questions similar to the ones in the questionnaire, she made provision for the respondents to communicate freely about slang. The researcher chose this option rather than a one-to-one interview, since the youth tended to speak more freely in a group of familiar people with whom they interacted on a daily basis. In this way, the participants appeared more relaxed and at ease with one another and to a certain extent with the researcher. The advantage of using the interview as group discussion method of data-collection is that the researcher gains more insight into *who* the subjects are as well as how they talk (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 61). The disadvantage of conducting group interviews such as the one above is that the participants tend to deviate from the questions and topics of discussion.

The findings from the interviews served to substantiate the data gathered from the questionnaires. The researcher integrated and represented the findings of the group discussion by providing some examples (in the form of short transcripts) of the responses provided by the participants as part of Chapters 2 and 4 of this study.

3.3.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation is often employed by researchers to overcome the observer's paradox (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 68). The advantage of this method is that the researcher

is able to gain a better understanding of the language used within its realistic and somewhat 'natural' occurrence or context. The disadvantage of participant observation stems from the fact that the researcher has to immerse himself/ herself in the community he/ she is investigating for extended periods.

Not only is this method time-consuming, it requires the researcher to engage extensively in the observation of a large sample group. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 72) argue that it would not be sufficient to study one high school or one small town with the view of attempting to explain variation within a region.

In this study, the researcher conducted personal observation of black youth within specific regions in Gauteng. The researcher observed black youth in informal contexts such as the shopping malls (East Rand Mall, South Gate Mall), at social gatherings such as at a dance club called *Monsoon Lagoon* at Caesar's Palace, at parties, and in the township of Kwa-Thema (Springs). The personal observations at the malls and social gatherings were done without the knowledge of the subjects, and the ones in the township constituted a combination of subjects being consciously aware of her role as a researcher, as well as those who were oblivious to that fact. The researcher would then make notes immediately after each observation, to capture the data relevant to this study. The focus of the participant observation was to confirm the findings in the questionnaire. The researcher drew examples of the findings from personal observation and integrated these as part of the data analysis.

3.4 Conclusion

For purposes of relevance to the study of slang among black youth in GP, the researcher decided that a mixed methodology should be adopted. The researcher chose to embrace the use of written questionnaires, interviews in the form of group discussions, and participant observation as data-gathering methodologies.

The next chapter is a statistical analysis of the data gathered through the written questionnaires, and a presentation of the results of the data collected through interviews and personal observations.



CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data gathered using written questionnaires, personal observation and group discussion interviews. The chapter, therefore, will present the data with the view of describing the reasons why black youth in the specified areas of GP use slang; the domains wherein they use it; and to analyse some of the structures of the lexical items and phrases they use.

The data gathered from the written questionnaires will be discussed in the following manner:

SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS:

This section provides the demographics of the respondents such as their age, gender, predominant language, area of residence, and level of education. This information was used to compile a sociolinguistic profile of the respondents.

Question 7 of Section A (see Appendix A) was used to determine the correlation between the frequency of slang use and the respondents' age, gender, and their listening to a particular radio station.

SECTION B: HOW DID YOU LEARN SLANG?:

This section of the questionnaire focused on the extent to which the participants learnt slang from friends/ peers; parents; etc (refer to Appendix A). This question was important in explaining the major influences on the slang of the respondents.

SECTION C: WHY DO YOU USE SLANG?

The respondents were given various possibilities for using slang (adopted from the findings of existing research on slang) and asked to select the reasons *they* use it. The purpose of these questions was to establish the functions the slang serves for the group under investigation. Section C also included a question that requested the respondents to write down other reasons, besides the ones provided, on why they use slang (refer to Appendix A for questionnaire). The unedited, written responses provided by the participants are included in the data analysis and discussion of this section.

SECTION D: WHERE, WHEN and WITH WHOM DO YOU USE SLANG?

(Slang as a variety of language in a contextualised situation):

The respondents were given various possibilities of domains wherein they might use slang and asked to indicate the frequency of using slang in each. As in Section C of the questionnaire, Section D also included a question that requested the respondents to write down other contexts, besides the ones provided, where they use slang (refer to Appendix A for questionnaire). The unedited, written responses provided by the participants are included in the data analysis and discussion of this section.

SECTION E: SLANG WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

(Slang lexical items and phrases):

This section of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) required the respondents to write down the slang lexical items and phrases that they use, so that the researcher could have an idea of what the words are and the meanings they have within particular contexts. The aim was to study the speech patterns (particularly their use of slang) that characterise them as young, black, and urban.

The data gathered from the written questionnaires was complemented by the use of other data gathering instruments such as interviews and personal observations.

4.2 Analysis of the data gathered

- Description of the population sample:

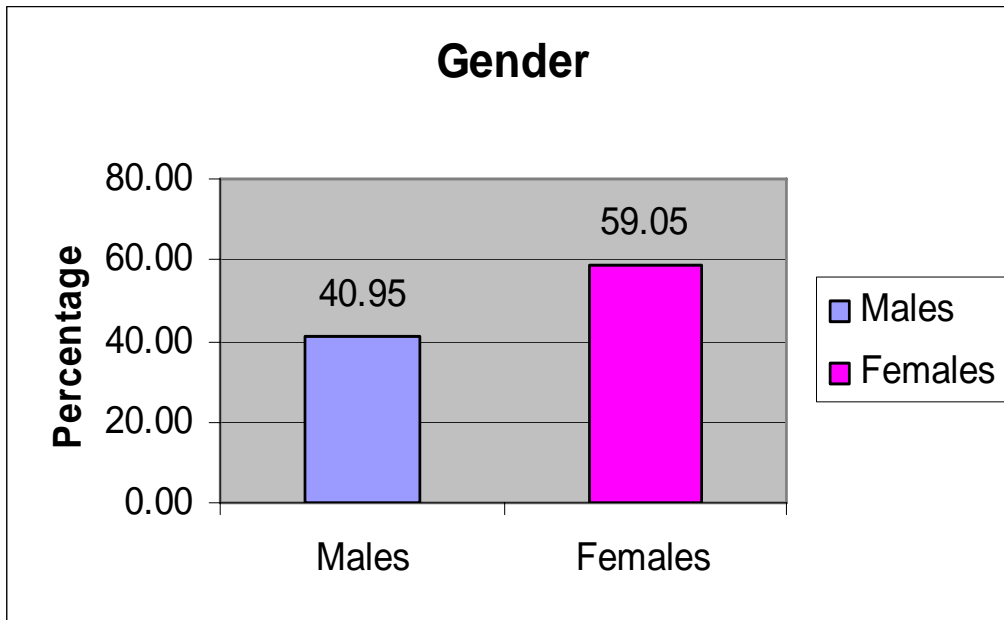
400 questionnaires were disseminated to male and female black youth between the ages 14 and 21, who reside in the Gauteng Province. Two hundred and fifteen (215) completed questionnaires were returned. However, five of the completed questionnaires had to be eliminated because respondents outside the specified group completed them. The 210 questionnaires were statistically analysed by Statkon (at the university of Johannesburg). The distribution areas in Gauteng were selected, namely the East Rand (Springs, Kwa-Thema, Boksburg, Vosloorus, Benoni), the West Rand (parts of Johannesburg and Soweto), and parts of Tshwane (including Centurion, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville).

4.2.1 SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS :

- Demographics of the respondents

The written questionnaires were specifically aimed at black youth between the ages 14 and 21, who are not L1 speakers of English. The greatest number of respondents who completed the questionnaires is females (see *Graph 1* below). The majority of the participants are between the ages 14 and 17 (see *Graph 2* below), living on the East Rand of Gauteng (see *Graph 4* below), who speak isiZulu as a predominant language (see *Graph 3* below), and with Grades 9-10 level of education (see *Graph 5* below). The following figures indicate the demographics of the respondents:

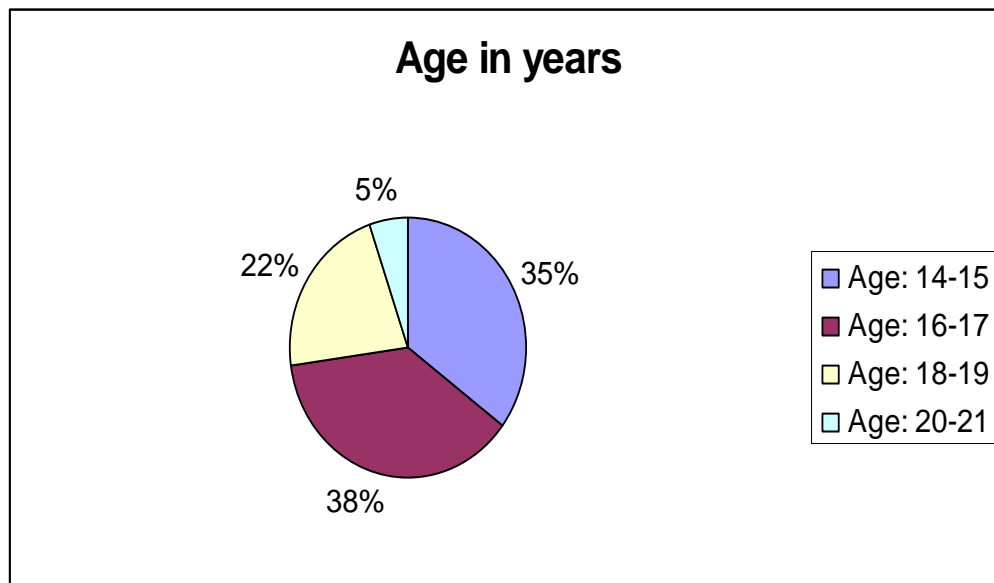
*** Gender:**



Graph 1: Gender

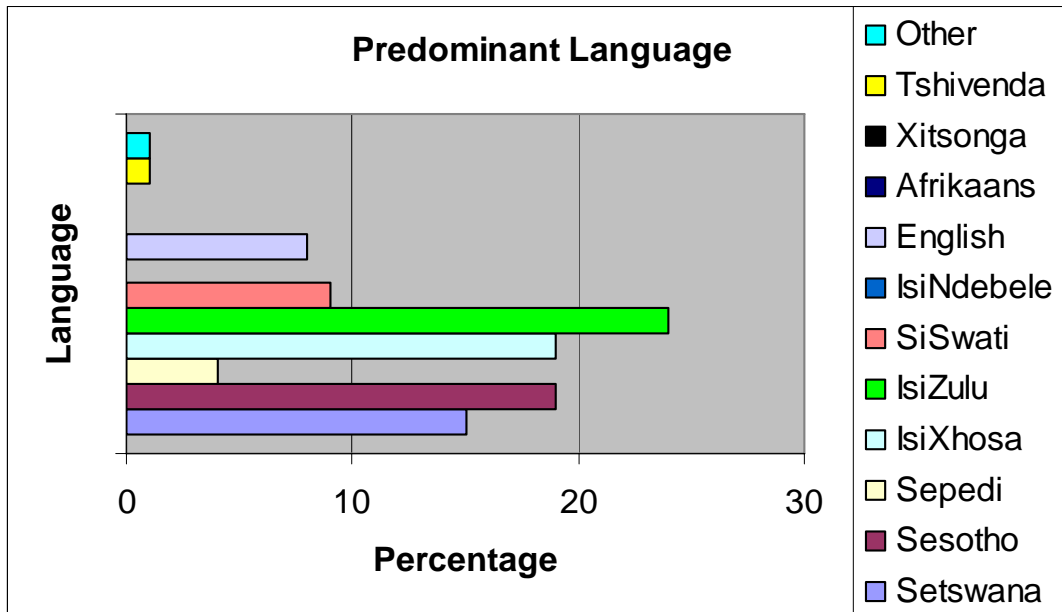


*** Age:**



Graph 2: Age

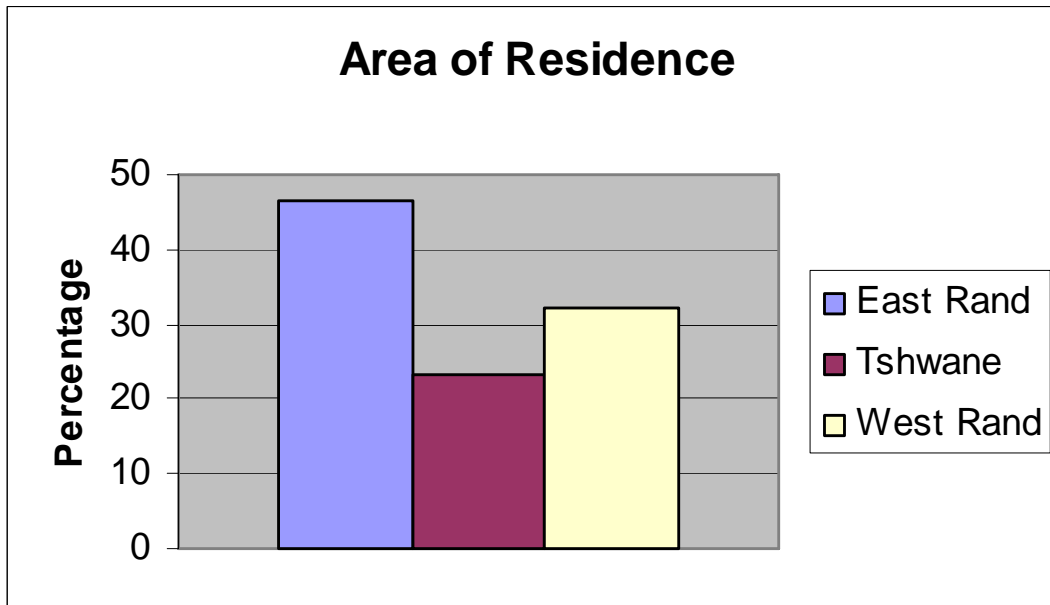
***Predominant language:**



Graph 3: Predominant language

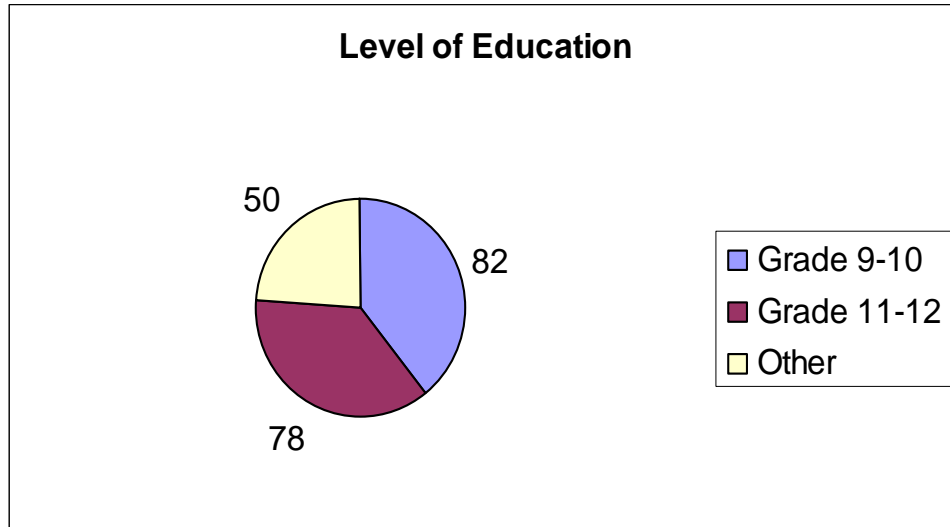


*** Area of residence:**



Graph 4: Area of residence

***Level of Education:**



Graph 5: Level of education

- Gender and frequency of using slang (Cross tabulations)

Crosstab

			Frequency Using Slang			Total
			Never/Seldom	Often	Very Often/Always	
Gender	Male	Count	14	30	42	86
		% within Gender	16.3%	34.9%	48.8%	100.0%
	Female	Count	34	48	42	124
		% within Gender	27.4%	38.7%	33.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	48	78	84	210
		% within Gender	22.9%	37.1%	40.0%	100.0%

Table 1: Gender and frequency of using slang

Although the majority of respondents to the question on frequency of slang use were female (124), results show that 83.7% of males say they often/ very often/ always use slang as

opposed to 72.6% of females. Data gathered from the written questionnaires, personal observations and interviews revealed that the use of slang by the respondents serves as gendered patterns of language use by this group. Although there are words that are common to both male and female groups, there are also those that are peculiar to one gender and not to another. There are certain lexical items that demonstrate how males construct their masculine identities and how females construct their femininity.

The following are some of the examples taken from the lexical items collected for the present study that illustrate that males and females tend to use certain words to reaffirm their gender and to refer to members of the opposite sex:

Examples:

(Refer to Appendix B)

Reference to females:	Reference to males:
<i>Bird</i>	<i>Boo</i>
<i>Biznitch</i>	<i>Cat</i>
<i>Charma-girl</i>	<i>Charlie</i>
<i>Cherrie</i>	<i>Charma-boy</i>
<i>Cheese-girl</i>	<i>Cheese-boy</i>
<i>Chick</i>	<i>Dada-man</i>
<i>Child</i>	<i>Dark-dindi</i>
<i>Cow</i>	<i>Dawg</i>
<i>Dark-dindi</i>	<i>Dude</i>
<i>Dudette</i>	<i>Fine-ass-brotha</i>
<i>Glebb/ glepp</i>	<i>Gangsta</i>
<i>Grot</i>	<i>Nigga (often used by females when angry or irritated with a black male)</i>

<i>Haffer</i>	<i>Pimp</i>
<i>Ho/ hoe</i>	<i>Playa</i>
<i>Honeys</i>	<u>Reference to male body parts:</u>
<i>Hooka</i>	4-5
<i>Maidie</i>	<i>pinkie</i>
<i>Mama</i>	<i>pencil</i>
<i>Minga</i>	
<i>Mommy</i>	
<i>My 10</i>	
<i>My girl</i>	
<i>My boo</i>	
<i>Pigeon</i>	
<i>Ghetto-queen</i>	
<i>Roll-on</i>	
<i>Rug-muncher</i>	
<i>Slenda-neva-tired</i>	
<i>Talent</i>	
<i>Whoe</i>	
<i>Loxion-kulcha</i>	
<u>Reference to female body(parts):</u>	
<u>*breasts:</u>	
<i>gazungas/ gazangas</i>	
<i>jugs</i>	
<i>milkshakes</i>	
<i>personalities</i>	
<u>*female genitalia:</u>	
<i>beaver</i>	
<i>gwang</i>	
<i>punani</i>	

An interesting observation, when looking at the lexical items provided by each gender with reference to members of the opposite sex, is that males seem to have numerous words (particularly taboo ones) as compared to females. The males are more at ease in demonstrating their verbal prowess and boldness as compared to their somewhat reluctant female counterparts. When questioned about this observation, some of the female youth participants at Sibikwa argued that they still have to grapple with the idea of being “blunt” and “too direct” in using certain words, which are generally taboo, and particularly offensive to members of the opposite gender. On elaboration, they argued that it was a matter of respect for oneself and others, especially in the company of adults. Given these responses, one could argue that it appears to be more of a conscious decision on the part of these female respondents to refrain from using words which society would frown upon when heard uttered by, not only a female, but a black female youngster. In this sense, the issues of gender identity and social expectations become determining factors on the use of taboo words by females in this group. Although they use taboo words amongst themselves, female respondents in this study do so with some degree of reservation.

- Age and frequency of using slang

Crosstab						
			Frequency Using Slang			Total
			Never/Seldom	Often	Very Often/Always	
Age	14 - 15	Count	18	29	27	74
		% within Age	24.3%	39.2%	36.5%	100.0%
	16 - 17	Count	17	25	37	79
		% within Age	21.5%	31.6%	46.8%	100.0%
	18 - 19	Count	12	18	16	46
		% within Age	26.1%	39.1%	34.8%	100.0%

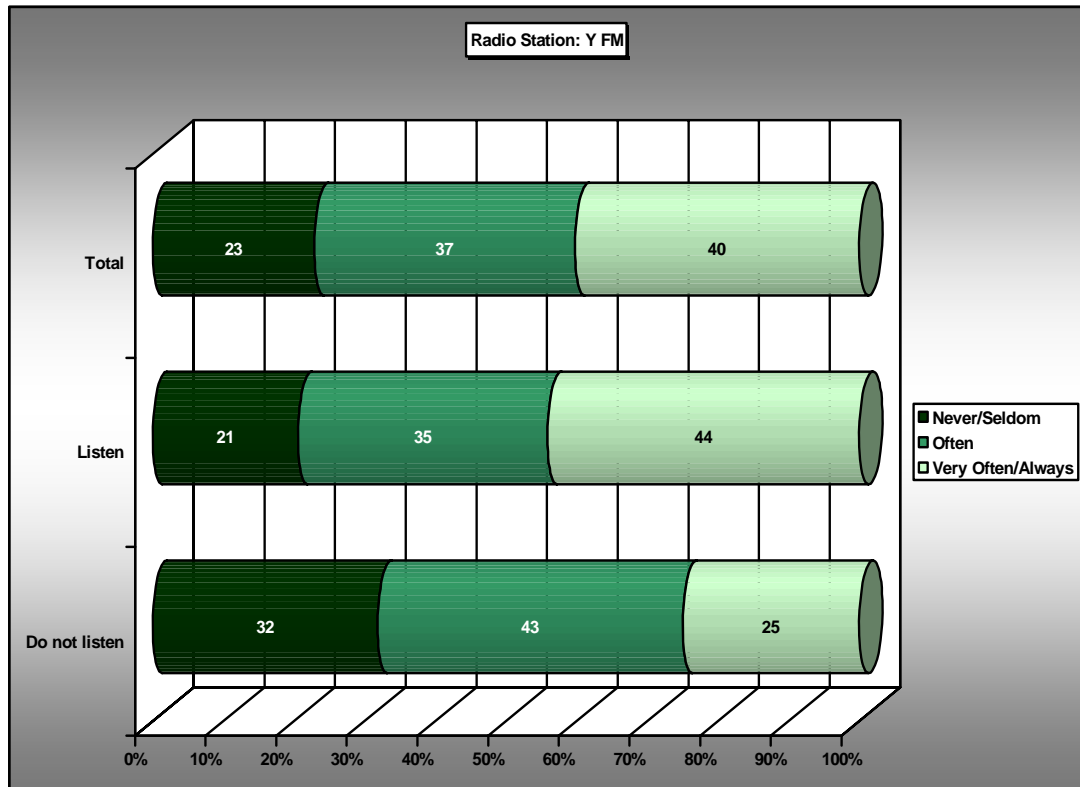
	20 - 21		2	3	6	11
Total	Count		49	75	86	210
	% within Age		23.3%	35.7%	41%	100.0%

Table 2: Age and frequency of using slang

Table 2 above shows that 75,7% of the respondents in the age category 14-15, and 78,4% of the respondents in the age category 16-17 use slang often/ very often/ or always. This finding supports the one by De Klerk (1991:68-82) who also argues that it is expected for slang to be used particularly by teenagers and adolescents. Eckert (2000: 8) states that linguistic style is an important part of age-appropriate behaviour and notes that adolescence has been pinpointed as a turning point in the speaker's sociolinguistic competence.

From the data gathered in the present study, it can be argued that the use of slang by mainly adolescent youth is a reflection of the construction of these participants as young and linguistically adventurous. They are at a crucial stage in their linguistic development to be experimental and creative with language and to claim language as their own, subject to change in form and function for purposes suited to them. They take possession of a standard variety of language, in this case English, and do with it what adults would not anticipate nor be innovative enough to do. These youth mould and construct words in Standard English to suit their own needs particular to them and their age, as well as to their culture as black, urban, trendy youth. The use of slang by the above-mentioned age- group serves to set them apart from their younger counterparts, from their peers who are not frequent users of slang, and from the adults.

- Listening to the radio and frequency of using slang



Graph 6: Radio Stations: Listening to YFM and frequency of using slang

In terms of the relation between the use of slang and listening to particular radio stations, this study found that 44.1% of the youth who are “very often”/ “always” more inclined to use slang are those who listen to YFM as compared to those who never or seldom listen to the radio station (31.7%). This finding is in direct relation to the one that requests the youth to state to what extent listening to the radio has influenced their use of slang (Section B, question 8 of Questionnaire). It was found that 59.1% of the youth indicated they had learnt or acquired slang largely from listening to the radio.

YFM is one of South Africa’s most popular youth radio stations, with a listenership of 1.9 million (according to the statistics on the YFM website: www.yfm.co.za). From the researcher’s personal observation, (i.e. listening to YFM on a daily basis) she could attest to the station’s vibrant and youthful characteristic, which makes it appealing to the many youth who listen to it. The Disc Jockeys (DJs) of the station use predominantly English and

include other South African languages when presenting their shows. Many of the DJs tend to code-mix and code-switch freely between English, the African languages and some Afrikaans and this is more evident in their use of Is'camtho (also referred to as 'township lingo' of the urban black youth). This is evident in the liberated, almost unrestricted manner in which youth use language on YFM. The DJs in the studio, and the listeners who call the station, seem to be at ease with demonstrating their verbal independence and creativity (based on the researcher's personal observation and listening to the radio station). Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that YFM is intended mainly for the young generation (and, of course, the young-at-heart) and has the youth as central figures to the station, giving them the freedom to express their opinions in the most honest and unrestricted manner through speech.

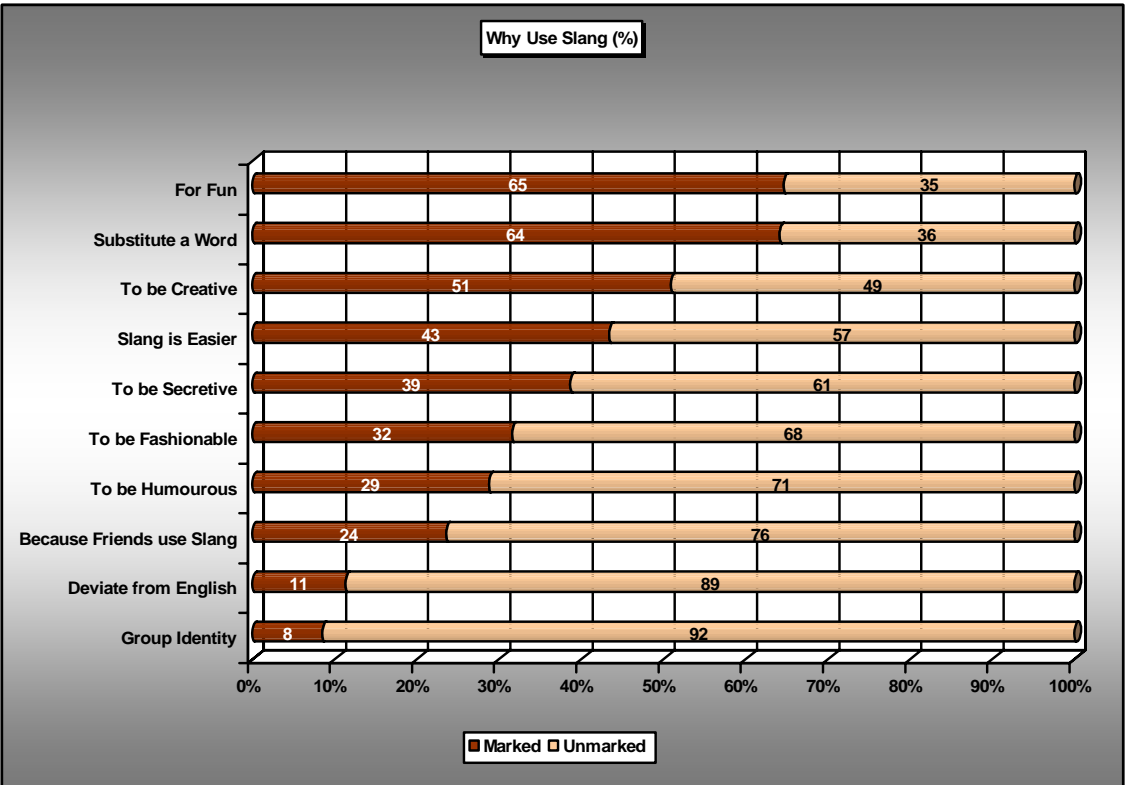
The researcher found, from personal observation and listening to YFM, that the station's DJs play music from various genres including Hip Hop (American), local Hip Hop (Hip Hop Pantsula), Rap, R&B (Rhythm and Blues), Kwaito, to name but a few. As a result of listening to a combination of mostly American music and South African music genres, the DJs' and the callers' use of language is often clad with American and local slang lexical items and phrases. However, those who use English, tend to incorporate more Americanisms and sometimes localize these, giving the lexicon what they call an *Mzansi* flavour (i.e. a South African flavour). Given these reasons, it is no surprise that the majority of the youth in this study who listen to YFM are more inclined to use the vibrant speech patterns loaded with Americanisms and local slang.

4.2.2 SECTION B: HOW DID YOU LEARN SLANG?

This question required the respondents to indicate to what extent they had learnt (or learn) slang from siblings, friends/ peers, their parents, from reading magazines, watching television, and listening to the radio. Of the 205 (95.4%) who responded to this question 74% indicated that they learnt or 'picked up' slang from friends and peers. Another influence on the slang of these youth is the radio. Of the 164 (76.3%) who responded to this

question, 59.1% indicated that they pick it up or learn it from the radio. Television has also been found to be one of the major influences on the slang. Out of 167 (77.8%), a majority of youth (54.5 %) claim to pick it up to a moderate or large extent from television. From these results, it can be said that the three greatest influences on the slang of these youth are their friends/ peers, the radio, and television.

4.2.3 SECTION C: WHY DO YOU USE SLANG?:



Graph 7: Reasons for Using Slang

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, youth have generally been known to use slang for various reasons such as the following: For concealment or to be secretive; for humour, fun, creativity or innovativeness; to belong or for group identity and solidarity; to be fashionable or trendy; to substitute a word or phrase; because it is easier to use slang; as a form of protest or deviation from the norms set by society.

In the current study, it was found that the respondents indicated that they use it mainly for fun, to substitute a word, and to be creative. Contrary to popular perception of youth as linguistically deviant and rebellious, the need to deviate from Standard English was one of the lowest rated reasons. The elements of fun and creativity were also echoed by the Sibikwa youth during a group discussion (interview). One of the interviewees (a female) at Sibikwa argued that slang serves the important function of showing off one's linguistic talent and creativity whilst having fun with words. Her peers in the group (2 males and 1 female) that supported her argued that the intention of slang users is to be innovative and come up with new words all the time. They argued that one's peers admire one if one demonstrates an ability to be creative and use language in a fun and innovative way. The following are some of the other functions of slang gathered from interviews (mainly from Sibikwa and Kwa-Thema youth) and personal observation (refer to Appendix B for meanings):

*in greetings:



GREETING:	RESPONSE:
<i>was'sup?</i> (Amer.) <i>Hallo, how are you?</i> e.g. <i>Yo, was'sup, black/ skin/ nigga?</i>	<i>Cool, nigga!</i> <i>Mellow, shwarka, maintaining, pashash, shweet</i>
<i>Hola!</i> (from Spanish: <i>Hallo</i>), <i>Hoezit?</i> <i>Hola-7</i>	<i>Heita!/ Hola-hola!, Sharp/ Moja/ Grand</i>
<i>Heita!</i> (from Tsotsitaal/ Is'camtho: <i>Hallo</i>), often used by males	<i>Heita!</i>
<i>Vede</i> (from Afrikaans, 'verder': further): <i>How are you?</i>	<i>[neh] Grand/ sharp</i>

*in farewells:

<i>later!:</i>	<i>see you later/ goodbye</i>
<i>See you second-half:</i>	<i>see you later/ goodbye</i>
<i>Tweede</i> (from Afrikaans: 'second'):	<i>see you later/ goodbye</i>
<i>Sharp!:</i>	<i>fine, goodbye</i>

The examples above provide various discourse functions that the slang of the respondents serves for its speakers. Besides using certain words (*was'sup?/ vede?*) to initiate conversation, the speaker in his use of words such as *Yo was'sup, nigga/ black/ skin?*, is immediately delineating himself and the addressee as black (*nigga/ skin/ black*). The words act as markers of an identity that the interlocutors wish to highlight, to demonstrate to other people (who are not participating in the speech act) that they (speakers) are urban, male, young, trendy, streetwise and black. In this sense, the slang words they select as part of their speech repertoire define whom the speakers are and how they wish to be perceived by the rest of society in which they exist.

Other words collected for this study serve to conclude or end a conversation.

Examples:

Sure!: In response to *tweede!* (*goodbye!*)

Sharp: *goodbye!*

Hola!: can serve as both *Hallo* and as *Goodbye!*

The words mentioned above as well as others such as *baba* (usually used by males), *ntate* (usually used by males), *mongane* (usually used by females), *tsala* (usually used by females), serve another function of demonstrating black, urban male/ female solidarity. In general, the words reflect a black, urban youth culture.

An interesting finding (also taken from the information provided by the youth who participated in a group discussion at Sibikwa) is that the choice of words such as *was'sup?* and *hola!* depends to some extent on “who you are”. They gave an example that it is typical of particularly black youth from English-medium schools (‘Model-C’, refer to 2.2.3) to use words such as *was'sup?* and for those who attend township schools to use *hola!*. Some argued that black youth who attend English-medium schools tend to have “a split personality” (their exact words). They elaborated by saying that these youth often speak English at school and to a certain extent in the townships where some live, but tend to shift their language use to conform to language varieties (such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho) spoken by their counterparts in the township. Because of this, the researcher embarked on observing three black male youths in the township of Kwa-Thema.

In terms of sociolinguistic research, it has been argued that peer-groups (including friends) tend to be highly influential figures in the linguistic patterns of children and that youth may generally be perceived to be at a stage in their lives where there is a need to belong, and be part of the broader youth culture within a given society. Hudson (1980:27) cites Le Page who believes that ‘...each individual creates the systems for his verbal behaviour so that they shall resemble those of the group or groups with which from time he may wish to be identified’. The speakers tend to adopt and assume multi-dimensional identities depending on who the addressees are. Because of these shifts in their identity to resemble those of the group with which they wish to be identified (whether at school or in the township), the youth make use of certain lexical items when using slang. McKay and Hornberger (1996: 292) say that:

Who we display ourselves to be, as relevant from moment to moment in the conduct of the interaction at hand, can change from moment to moment in the interaction itself. We are not just typecast by a single category of social identity throughout an entire encounter. Our social identity of the moment is situated in the interaction at hand; we perform it as we go along and we do so conjointly with the other interactional partners.

The following examples, taken from this study (from personal observation of 3 black male youth from Kwa-Thema, a township on the East Rand of GP) serve to illustrate this point:

Setting 1: English-medium school on the East Rand, immediately after school (on school grounds)

Participants: 3 black male youth, aged between 16 and 17 (1 is 16, 2 are 17 years old)

Conversation 1 (Day 1): [**Not their real names*]

- * Thabo: Wassup, Blacks?*
- * Sipho: Yo, cool my man! I'm cool!*
- * Mongezi: Yo bra, cool man! What you been up to lately?*
- * Thabo: Ag, just this and that...
Hey, have you guys heard *Bonga is having a 411 this weekend? Has he invited you guys?*
- * Mongezi: Neh, not me... UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH AFRICA*
- * Sipho: Me neither, bra. Wassup wid de brother, has he forgotten who his homies are?*
- * Mongezi: Clearly!*
- * Thabo: For sure! Eish, how soon we forget! Anyway, it's cool like that...it's cool. We'll gate-crush anyway. I'm taking my chick with me.*
- * Mongezi: Yeah, right Bro, which one? *Maki? Or maybe *Carey?*
- * Sipho: C'mon man, why you go and diss the brother like that?
What do you mean which one? You know nigger here smaaks Carey. Aigh't bro?*
- * Thabo: For sheezy, bro!...*
-

*Setting 2: The township (Kwa-Thema), at *Thabo's house*

*Participants: *Thabo, *Mongezi, (*Sipho was unavailable), *Mzwandile, *Themba, *Kagiso, *Thabo and *Mongezi (attend English-medium school), *Mzwandile, *Themba, and *Kagiso (attend a local township school)*

Conversation 2 (Day 1):

**Thabo: [to Mongezi] So, bro where's your bra, Sipho, today?*

**Mongezi: Ag, com'on nigga he's your blood too. Anyway, don't know. Last saw him walking his regte home yesterday afternoon. Maybe the brother c....*

**Kagiso: [arrives and joins the two] Heita ma-outie. Hoezet!*

**Mongezi: Neh, grand outie.*

**Thabo: Sharp, bra. Fede?*

**Kagiso: Neh, grand!*

**Mzwandile and Themba [arrive]: Holla, holla ma-gents!*

**Thabo: Heit!*

**Mongezi: Holla!*

**Kagiso: Holla*

**Mzwandile: So, u-waa uSipho vandag?...*

**Thabo: Eish, loyo! Uyankhinya, serious!*

**Mzwandile: Entlek, why nina ungathi ni ne beef so? Zikhiphani, vele? Or maybe ni banga i-maidie?*

**Thabo: Haa, uyabona ke...*

It is clear from the conversations above that *Thabo's and *Mongezi's shift from using English slang to their friends' Tsotsitaal and S'camtho is a way of assuming a black township identity. When asked about their adaptations in identity, they both argued that they did not wish to be perceived by their peers (particularly in the township) as arrogant *coconuts* (i.e. a black person acting white), but that they wanted to be seen "as part of the black youth culture" (their words). It became apparent to the researcher as to these youth's need for acceptance and a sense of belonging, an aspect also reiterated by De Klerk (1995) who attributes this need to the youth's sense of insecurity.

As mentioned earlier, Section C of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) also included a section that requested the participants to write down any other reasons they use slang. The researcher looked at each questionnaire individually and collected the following responses written by some of the respondents (unedited): [words in brackets are the researcher's explanation]

- *Trying to make it [slang] a way of communicating especially Ekasi [township]*
- *It is a much easier way of understanding*
- *That's how I communicate with my peers*
- *It's part of our identity as black and young*
- *So that we may be unique*
- *To express oneself easier*
- *Nice to use and easy*
- *'Cause it's easier to relate to*
- *That's a cool language. I dig it for sheezy!*
- *To make myself more understood by my friends*
- *Because many teenagers use it*
- *To keep [maintain] peace*
- *Standard English is too snobbish and boring with friends*
- *It has become our English*
- *It's lotta fun*
- *To be able to communicate with the people who use slang*
- *To feel comfortable when I'm talkin'*
- *To gossip around my parents with my cousin*
- *To be able to communicate better with people who don't speak English very well*
- *For those who don't understand English I speak slang*
- *To make people who don't understand English to perhaps understand better*
- *It's a quicker way of communicating, as teenagers it makes us different from any other groups (e.g. children, adults)*
- *Because many teenagers and young persons use it*

- *Because it tells you that if a person speaks to you with slang you must also*

These responses, in addition to the reasons in the earlier part of Section C above, demonstrate that there are numerous reasons for using slang. However, the most recurrent and popular ones involve youth's need to identify themselves as different from the rest of society. They also alerted to the importance of conforming to youth culture in general, and black youth culture in particular. They indicated that they find it easier to communicate and often express themselves better using slang. Although included in the list of options to select from in the earlier part of Section C, lexical innovativeness and fun also featured in the list the youth provided. This shows the importance they attach to the element of fun and creativity in their use of slang. What was interesting from the above are three reasons (in bold) which refer to three youth who associate their use of slang with people who are not highly proficient in English. In a sense, these youth may be said to attempt at converging and accommodating their addressees. However, it could also be argued that these youth's reasons for using slang with people who are not proficient in English, is influenced largely by their attitudes as speakers and the perceptions they hold about their addressees.

4.2.4 SECTION D: WHERE, WHEN and WITH WHOM DO YOU USE SLANG? /
(Slang as a variety of language in a contextualised situation):

Frequency	Context	Percentage out of 100 (%)
Always	None (-)	0%
Often	*school/ work with peers or friends	41.4%
	*social gatherings such as parties, etc. (in informal situations)	41.4%
	*with boys and girls alike	33.5%
Seldom	*home with siblings	32.1%
	*school/work, with both peers and adults	35.3%
	*with strangers	38.6%
Never	*home with adults	51.2%
	*in formal situations	76.7%

Table 3: Slang and domains of use

From the statistics and responses above, the respondents often use slang at school or work with peers or friends, at social gatherings such as parties (in informal situations); with boys and girls alike. It is also evident that they are most reluctant to use it at home with their siblings, nor at school or work with both their peers and adults, and when speaking to people they do not know very well or when with strangers. They never use it in formal situations. The following is some of the data gathered from the group interview (discussion) with the youth at Sibikwa, as well as from informal discussions with English language teachers at Boksburg High:

***Field of discourse:**

Some of the topics they say they often engage in include the following:

Reference to body parts (refer to examples in 4.2.1 above):

reverse: buttocks (usually female) [e.g. *Hayi Jo, Mmabatho has a reverse yo m'hlab!*]:
My friend, Mmabatho has a cute/ drop-dead-gorgeous butt!

booty: buttocks (usually female)

Fashion:

(A)mabujwa: reference to people (usually males) who wear tight jeans, flat and fashionable slip-ons, and tight tops / trendy dressers/ the young black elite.

Cars:

G-5: the new VW golf 5 (series)

Yengeni: A Mercedes Benz (ML series) named after Tony Yengeni, former chief whip (South Africa)

Money:

Tito Mboweni: (Governor of South Africa's Reserve Bank)

Half- tiger: a R5 coin

1-clipper: R100 (initially, there was no R100 bank note in SA and bankers stacked money in 5x R20 notes and kept together using paper **clips**. This is where the word 'clipper' originates).

Drugs and alcohol intoxication:

E: ecstasy (a drug)

M-J: marijuana (a drug)

The youth at Sibikwa pointed to the fact that there are certain topics that they would not discuss with adults or strangers. The topics, which are often taboo, would require taboo lexicon. Two female youths argued that the formality of a given situation is important in determining the language you use.

*Mode of discourse:



In a group discussion with the youth at Sibikwa Youth Community Centre three of the interviewees (2 males and 1 female) argued that although the spoken slang discourse is used more than the written one, the latter is gaining some popularity among the youth in general. They confirmed that they often write one another sms, e-mails, and send "shout-outs" (music dedication) to music programmes such as *Channel O* whereby the messages (dedications) they e-mail are printed on the television screens. The following is an example of a written dedication to friends (taken from a show on *Channel O*) taken from the researcher's personal observations of the music channel:

Example:

wassup my peeps, tumi, lehlohonolo and linky! jus' thot i shud holla @ ya. Hope u is Fine. when can we'all hook up 4 sum nice muvi?peace-out, later!

[How are you my friends (peeps), Tumi, Lehlohonolo, and Linky! [I] just thought I should check / send greetings/ call (holla) at (@) you. When can we get together (hook up) for (4) a nice movie (muvi)?]

In an informal conversation with some of the teachers of English at Boksburg High, two of them (female) alleged that they sometimes find slang lexical items in learners' formal writing such as compositions. Another female teacher said that the learners also tend to use slang words in oral lessons. She was not sure, though, whether the learners did this deliberately.

***Tenor of discourse:**

In an interview (group discussion) conducted at Sibikwa, some of the participants commented that the context one finds oneself in is most likely to determine which words one decides to use. One participant (a female) argued that this depends largely on the relationship one shares with certain people. She mentioned that she shares a very close relationship with her mother and indicated that her father was "less approachable: (her exact words). She said that in spite of the close relationship she shares with her mother, she often hesitates and tries to be cautious of the slang words she chooses. She referred to the "element of respect" (her exact words) as important when addressing adults in general.

From this data and the comments made by the Sibikwa youth, the respondents are aware of the appropriateness of when, where (*field*), and with whom (*tenor*) to use slang. They are aware of how to differentiate between appropriate contexts in which to employ the variety, and attest to their ability to switch accordingly.

Section D of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) also included a section that requested the participants to write down any other contexts wherein they use slang. The researcher looked at each questionnaire individually and collected the following responses written by some of the respondents (unedited), [words in brackets are the researcher's explanation]:

- *When gambling in street dice*
- ***In my journal***
- *At work and sports field*
- *When playing sports*
- ***In an sms and e-mail to my friends when you shorten a word or make an English sentence shorter***
- *When I sing or rap with my peeps [friends]*

From the responses above, particularly those in bold, one could conclude that contrary to popular perception slang is not only spoken, but also appears in written mode of discourse. The respondents in the present study have provided numerous examples of written versions of the slang they employ particularly with their friends and peers. What is interesting about the lexical items that are found in written mode is that they are often pronounced as Standard English words. However, it is in their written form that one is most likely to witness a change in spelling. Some of the examples include words, letters and numbers such as *R* ('are'), *U* (you), *4* ('for'), and *2-nite* ('tonight'), *2* ('to'/'too'); and *y?* ('why?') (refer to Appendix B). This use of Standard English words contributes to the innovative and fun aspect of using slang, which features in written discourse in the form of sms, journals, and e-mails that the youth engage in as part of communication among themselves. Such words serve to expedite communication in a humorous, fun, and innovative manner for the users of the written mode of slang by this group. However, the written slang words the youth use may be completely unintelligible to an outsider who is not familiar with the meanings attached to the lexicon.

4.2.5 SECTION E: SLANG WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

(Slang lexical items and phrases)

Section E of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) required the respondents to write down a list of the lexical items and phrases (and their explanations) that they use when they

communicate amongst themselves. The purpose of this endeavour was to investigate the words the group uses in relation to who they are. A further reason was to describe the words according to word-formation processes in order to demonstrate their creative nature and features. An alphabetical list of the words and their definitions is to be found in Appendix B of this study. The list of words and their meanings was compiled using the words supplied by the respondents. The researcher scrutinised each of the returned questionnaires and entered the words and phrases supplied. She later arranged the words alphabetically (see Appendix B). Some of the words are used in this study as examples of how they are used by the youth under investigation.

In order to understand the respondents' use of slang for fun, innovativeness, and word-substitution, it will be necessary to consider how some of the lexical items are organized and formulated. This will include examples taken from the researcher's personal observations, the examples given by the youth in the form of questionnaires (refer to Section E of questionnaire in Appendix A; and to Appendix B for examples of the lexical items and phrases collected for this study), as well as from the interview (group discussion) conducted. The present study has adopted Eble's (1996: 48) approach of studying slang terms and expressions.

- **Coinage**

Based on Eble's argument, slang exploits existing forms and their current meanings in various ways (1996:26), the present study of slang among the respondents revealed that some of the slang lexical items were created from already existing Standard and non-standard words. Its 'inventors' (Yule, 1985: 52) then use the 'new' word according to a particular context. The following are some of the few examples of lexical items used by this group:

Examples:

- Whack : unpleasant/ weird
- Dada-man: a stupid male
- Bambaklat: a big fool

- **Compounding**

According to Eble (1996: 31) slang permits, as in general vocabulary in English, the compounding of words of various grammatical classes. Generally, the youth employ this type of word-formation process to exhibit their creativity. The following are a few of the examples that the youth provided as part of this investigation:

Examples:

- big + up(s) = big-ups : congratulations
- to + do = to-do : great/ well/ handsome/ wealthy
- empty + tin = empty-tin : a stupid person
- fudge + packer = fudge-packer : gay
- fuzz + out = fuzz(ed)-out : drugged
- fine + ass + brother = fine-ass-brother: a handsome male
- fine + brother + man = fine-brother-man: a handsome male
- suck + up = suck-up: go out of one's way to please or impress someone
- fork + out = fork-out : pay(money)

Although the terms *suck* and *up* form part of the Standard English vocabulary, they have a somewhat slightly different meaning for the respondents once combined. To the

respondents, the newly-formed word *suck-up*, as a result of the combination of these two words, results in something completely different from the initial meaning. As for the use of *to-do*, its origin is not clear. However, some of the male and female participants at Sibikwa that the researcher interviewed alleged that it is a word more commonly used by girls than boys.

- **Blending**

It is specifically within the process of blending whereby parts of the combined words are deleted. Only parts of the words are combined (Yule, 1985: 53). The same principle applies to some of the lexical items that were collected for purposes of this research. Some of the words were clearly blended to form new words, and the following are some of the examples from the questionnaires:

Examples:



Chill (coolness/ coldness) + relax (rest/ ease up): chill + relax =chillax (calm down/ relax/ take it easy)

Thula (from isiZulu: be quiet) + relax (rest/ ease up): thul'+ relax = thul'ax (keep quiet and listen and pay attention)

The two words above namely, *chill* and *relax*, were blended to form a new and more creative term *chillax*. Generally, the term *chill* means 'coldness/ coolness'. However, according to the respondents, the word means to 'calm down' or to 'relax'. The youth's innovation in blending the words *chill* and *relax* by taking the former word as is and joining it to the end of the latter word, is evident. The end and more creative result is a new word *chillax*, which means to 'calm down and relax' or 'to take things easy'. The word *thul'ax* in the example is a combination of the isiZulu word *thula* (*to be quiet*) and a clipped form of the word English word, *relax* (*to take it easy*). The end-result is the word *thul'ax* meaning

to be quiet and pay attention. One of the lexical items collected in this study revealed a rather interesting form of blending by the youth under investigation. The following is an example:

Tshasa + -ment = tshasment

The example above comprises of two words, namely a word taken from Setswana ***tshasa*** which means *to apply (usually) an ointment* and a suffix from English, ***-ment*** (presumably from the word ***ointment***). In combining the two, the youth came up with a new and rather humorous word ***tshasment***, which means either body lotion or lip ointment. This is because of the ability of the respondents to use various languages creatively, and even humorously, as part of their youth speech patterns.

- **Clipping**



Calteaux (1996:115) points to the fact that, generally, in slang some words are shortened by eliding the final syllable, while other words are lengthened. In this study, therefore, the same process was found with some of the lexical items taken from common English vocabulary and clipped to form shorter versions of the original words. The following are some of the examples that were found to have undergone this process of clipping, particularly clipping the last part of a word:

Examples:

brother	=	bro (clipping the end part of the word, -ther)
fabulous	=	fab (clipping -ulous)
definitely	=	def (clipping -initely)

legitimate = **legit** (clipping -itimate)

disrespect = **dis** (clipping -respect)

This process is generally used to shorten words. However, the respondents use such forms for emphasis and 'to sound cool' and 'trendy'. In some cases, though, one finds that the word *brother* has not only been clipped but has a different vowel sound as in *bra*. It has been found in this study that the two clipped forms of *brother* into the more abbreviated forms of *bro* and *bra* share similar meaning.

- **Acronyms**

Eble (1996: 35) refers to this process as shortening, whereby “sounds are eliminated from words without an immediate change in meaning”. The following are some of the examples of the process of acronymy found in slang among the respondents in the study of black youth slang in English in Gauteng:

Examples:

PHAT (Pretty Hot And Tempting)	:	great/ attractive/ the best
PHD (Player Hater Degree)	:	someone who hates womanizers
M.J	:	marijuana
Q.L (quiet level)	:	don't tell/ a secret

This is just another way of the respondents' attempt to use language in an innovative manner, with a tinge of humour attached to it.

- **Shifting**

This is a process whereby Standard English words have shifted denotations (De Klerk in Mesthrie, 1995: 274). This is also known as conversion or functional shift. As has been mentioned earlier, youth try to break the monotony of life by creating for themselves a fun and humorous way to deal with everyday, often serious situations.

A word such as *blind* means “the inability to see” in general Standard English terms. However, it has another denotation as far as the respondents are concerned. The term takes on a meaning of *awful* or *great*, depending on the context in which it is used. Males in this group use the term as a means to emphasize something.

Another typical example of shifting is a word such as to *fade*, which means to disappear or to wither. However, the respondents use it to tell someone to leave or go away. Most adults who hear teenagers speak of *tight* shoes, might be tempted to suggest that they wear ones that are more comfortable instead. However, one can hardly blame them for missing the real meaning of the term as equivalent to ‘beautiful’ or ‘fashionable’ shoes. Here are a few more examples:

Examples:

kicking	:	good/ the best
knock	:	betray/ steal from someone
mashed	:	drunk/ high from drugs
maintaining	:	fine/ alright
peace	:	farewell/ goodbye/ keep well
player	:	a Casanova
pigeon	:	a girl/ female who is fond of boys
personalities	:	breasts

rock	:	cocaine/ fun/ the best
radical	:	amazing
step	:	go away/ leave
square	:	boring
scrub	:	a Casanova
split	:	leave/ marijuana
talent	:	a good-looking female
tree	:	marijuana
thick	:	stupid
vertical	:	awake
wicked	:	the best

- **Lexical Borrowing , code-switching, and code-mixing**

The following are typical examples of words borrowed from other languages as used by the respondents:

Examples:

gooi (Afrikaans, to 'throw')) :	to play good music/ drink excessively
nogal (Afrikaans, 'also'/ 'as well'):	rather/ as well
pap (Afrikaans, 'flat'):	boring/ exhausted
tsala (Setswana, 'friend'):	friend
baba (isiZulu, 'father'):	friend
blom (Afrikaans, 'flower'):	stay/ wait around with
dwaal (Afrikaans, 'lost'/ 'in a daze'/ 'day-dream'):	stupid/ high from drugs

In Afrikaans, the word *gooi* means to throw or pour. However, the respondents use it to mean 'drinking too much', or 'to play good music'. The latter is in particular reference to a disc jockey (DJ) playing good, trendy music. Another new meaning, which the word takes on, is that of 'playing a prank on someone'.

Nogal is another Afrikaans word that means 'rather'/ 'as well'. The respondents use it to emphasize a point as in the following example, taken from the researcher's data (personal observation: two young black females at East Rand Mall):

Example:

*Not only did he take you out for dinner, he went and bought you flowers **nogal!***

To be in a *dwaal* (Afrikaans) means to daydream or be in a daze. This term is used as part of the respondents' slang in English to refer to someone who is indeed in a daze/ daydreaming or to refer to someone who is crazy or delusional. When something is *pap* in Afrikaans, it means that it is flat. However, it soon changes its meaning once used as part of a borrowed lexical item in the slang of the respondents. The youth in this study use it to refer to something that is 'worthless', or 'boring', or even 'plain stupid'.

Tsala is a Setswana term for 'friend'. From personal observation and the group discussion interview, the female respondents indicated that they use this word as a means of address, and that it serves as an identity marker of sisterhood for them. Another example they gave was the word *mongane* (*friend*) which is an isiZulu word that has been "Tswanalised" (the Sibikwa respondents' exact words). This means that the isiZulu word *mngane* has acquired a Setswana flavour by adding the "o" between the "m" and the "n". In my personal observation, however, it was interesting to hear a black female youth addressing one of her

classmates (white female) as *tsala*. It soon became apparent that the use of this term is not only confined to black female youth, but has found its way across racial barriers as an element of sisterhood beyond one's skin colour. The isiZulu word, *baba*, means 'father'. It, however, serves as a term of address particularly among boys who use it as a marker of solidarity and identity as black. As in the case of the girls mentioned above, the male respondents pointed out that they use this term as a symbol of their solidarity and brotherhood as in the example below taken from the data collected for this study:

Example:

What's up, baba? (How are you, my friend?)

It is evident from the discussion and examples provided above that some of the lexical items borrowed from other languages within the Province, tend to shift in meaning to suit their users. Examples of such shifting are in the words *gooi*, *pap*, and *blom* to name but a few. This kind of shifting is evidence of the fun, humorous and innovative nature of the slang used by the respondents.

At the same time, code-mixing signals a speaker as identifying with a particular group. The slang lexical items the respondents use function as markers of their identity not only as black and young, but also as identifying with other language and cultural groups through their use of lexical items borrowed from other languages. This serves the function of imprinting a multilingual and multicultural identity in addition to their black identity. The following is an example taken from data collected in this study:

Example:

A: *So why do you seem to have beef (American) with the guy?*

- B: *Well.. I don't. Mzansi is not ready for **beef** (American). I only want to set the record straight. **Aigh't?** (American) And to say...*ag* (South African)...*it's cool* (Amer.)...*
- A: ***Sure...Gaz'lam** (SA, isiZulu)*
- B: *...**You dig, my man?**(Amer.) Now you understand?*
- A: ***Ja, mara** (SA, Afrikaans) *even you, **bra** (SA), are to some extent to blame for the whole **ckuf – up** - wouldn't you say?**
- B: ***Eish**,(SA, Is'camtho), **neh!** (SA, Is'camtho) **eintlik** (SA, Tsotsitaal) *you see now you're taking sides, **Black!** (Amer.) I'm telling you, **bra** (SA), the **nigger** (Amer.) started the whole thing, and he's **trippin'** (Amer.) **big time!** (Amer.)**
- A: ***Sure...sure...** (SA)*

The above conversation is loaded with a combination of Americanisms and words taken from South African languages other than English. Although the base language is English, it is full of slang words taken from English and other languages and non-standard varieties found in Gauteng (such as S'camtho and Tsostitaal).



4.3 Conclusion

This chapter was an analysis of the data gathered from questionnaires, personal observations, and group discussions or interviews. The first part of the chapter provided the demographics of the respondents (age, gender, level of education, predominant language, and area of residence). The second part focused on the correlation between the respondents' frequency of slang use, age, gender and listening to a particular radio station. Another focus of this chapter was to determine how the respondents learnt slang; the reasons for using it and the functions it serves for its users; as well as the contexts wherein they are most inclined to use slang.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 serves as a platform whereby conclusions are drawn based on the aims and results of the research. The chapter also provides suggestions for further research.

5.2 Conclusions drawn on the aims of this study

The aims of this study were to investigate slang (in English) used among black youth in Gauteng. The objective was to provide a sociolinguistic description of the users of this variety; to provide a sociolinguistic explanation for the use of slang, to find out the reasons they use slang and the functions it serves in their lives; to approach slang as a register according to use and to investigate the contexts wherein the youth under investigation use slang; and how it reflects the multilingual composition of Gauteng Province by drawing some lexicon from languages other than English.

Slang is a non-standard variety of language, a register according to use and a social variety according to user. In as much as the youth in this study use slang as a register according to use, such aspects of their social characteristics as age and gender are of equal significance in understanding who the speakers of the variety are. Based on the results from the empirical research (data analysis), this study concludes that males are more inclined to use slang than females, and that the variety is mainly used by youth groups between the 14-17 age categories. Those who listen to YFM are more inclined to use slang, since the DJs often use slang themselves. The youth often pick slang up from friends and peers, the radio (YFM), and television. The youth pick up American Hip Hop and Rap lyrics and tend to incorporate a large portion of these into their slang in English. Words such as *was'sup*, *nigga?* which are of black American origin have found their way into the slang lexicon of the youth in this study. However, what was interesting to note was that the slang that the group uses is not entirely influenced by Americanisms, but contains elements of African

(*harambe*, from Swahili: ‘unity’) and South African words adopted from other languages such as isiZulu, Setswana, Sesotho, and Afrikaans (*baba*, *tsala*, *nogaal*). One could then conclude from this that although the use of slang in English among the youth under investigation is laden with Americanisms, through their identification with American music and film, the same youth find themselves in a situation whereby they portray a uniquely South African identity. They find themselves in multifaceted identities of part-American, part-South African, and can move from affiliation with one identity to another with great ease. This is nowhere more evident than in their ability to shift from American English slang words such as *y’all*; *homey*; *was’sup*, and *nigga*, to distinctly and exclusively South African ones such as *dwaal*, *eish!*, *heita!*; *baba* (from Is’camtho), *grand* (from Tsotsitaal and Is’camtho) and *gaz’lam* (from Is’camtho).

What is of equal interest and needs to be realized is the adroit manner with which these youth are able to assume multiple identities through their use of slang, without losing their South African identity. These youth do not necessarily lose their identity in their assumption of American slang words, but only add on to their already diverse and rich black youth culture and linguistic repertoire.

Although various researchers on slang have argued that one of the central purposes of using slang is to be secretive and deviate from Standard English (Partridge, 1970; Eble, 1996), the findings of the current study reveal the opposite where concealment and deviation from set norms are rated low. Instead, the respondents indicated fun, substitution of a word, and creativity as the most important reasons they employ slang. This conclusion attests to the fact that contrary to popular belief, black youth in the present study use slang not so much to deviate from and oppose authority but to identify themselves as members of an innovative, vibrant youth culture. This finding does not make BYSE in GP a definite ‘anti-language’ (Halliday, 1978), although it may contain some elements thereof. The slang of the youth in the current study is not of a group of criminals who are anti-society, and who need to conceal their speech for purposes of criminality or any such excessively deviant purposes. For the youth in this study, slang serves purposes such as to define their identity

and solidarity as black urban youth, marking them off as such but not necessarily alienating them from the rest of society. It is evident from rating 'deviation from Standard English' that these youth are not so much concerned with outright rebellion as they are with expressing themselves as a youth culture and doing so in an innovative and fun way. Furthermore, the slang of this group is used in such instances as in greetings (*hola!*; *was'up?*) and to spark off conversation. They also use slang words in farewells such as *sharp!* or *later!*. The youth use slang as a marker of solidarity and urban, black identity- often a township youth identity- in their use of words such as *nigga* or *baba*. This is evident in their incorporation of Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho lexicon. In addition to these functions is the youth's ability to shift between black American identity (by using words such as *was'sup*, *nigga?*) and black South African urban youth culture (by using words such as *hola*, *baba* or *howzit*, *bra?*). The youth's code-mixing and code-switching tendencies between English and other South African languages serves to mark and validate their position in society, as black, young, and most importantly, South African.

The fact that the youth in this study indicated that they use slang in informal settings (such as parties) with peers or friends; seldom use it with adults or people they are unfamiliar with; and never use it in formal situations; shows that they are aware of the appropriate contexts wherein to use it. It is a conscious choice that they make. Some of the topics include those about body parts, fashion trends, money, members of the opposite sex, dating, and drugs. The slang of black youth in this study can be either spoken or written with sms and e-mail as examples of the written versions of the variety.

As was mentioned above, Americanisms as well as South Africa's official languages influence the slang of black youth in this study, who use English as a base language. Examples can be seen in this group's use of lexical items derived from these languages and used as part of their slang. Although Americanisms, including an adoption of an American accent, influence their slang, some of the slang lexical items the youth in this study employ have a distinct *Mzansi* (South African) uniqueness and flair.

5.3 Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study has attempted to provide a description and investigation of the slang that black youth in Gauteng use when they use English as a base language. The following are recommendations and suggestions for further research:

Although there have been studies conducted on the non-standard black urban language varieties such as Tsotsitaal and Is'camtho, there is a need for further study on the language of black urban youth subcultures. This is in reference to the influence of American Hip Hop and Rap cultures, and that of Kwaito.

Another important study could be on language use and education, particularly the educational implications thereof. This study could be on the educational implications of youth slang in the language classroom, on how and to what extent the slang the youth use impacts on their performance in the language classroom. This would be on focus on the language practices of youth and their ability or inability to style-shift between contexts. The aspect of the youth's identity could also be included in their perceptions of themselves and the slang they use in certain contexts and between various cultural and language groups.

The objective of the study on language and education would be to establish how language teachers contend with the use of slang by learners in the classroom, particularly in formal writing such as compositions, etc. It would focus on issues such as how teachers deal with what Mesthrie et al., (2000: 354) refer to as the differences between language use in the classroom and language use commonly found in the students' homes and communities. It would further seek to explain whether the slang the youth use influences standard language, and if so in what ways(s). The extended aim of this exercise would be to try to find ways of managing the situation without prejudicing against and alienating the users of slang.

5.4 Conclusion

The chapter focused on providing the conclusions drawn from the research aims of this study, and suggestions for further research.

The conclusions drawn are that BYSE is a social variety according to user as well as a register according to use. The youth use slang to fulfil particular functions such as the need to be humorous and innovative when they use the register with their friends or peers in informal situations, engaged in topics relevant and appealing to them as members of a youth culture in a diverse and multilingual environment such as Gauteng. Although their use of certain slang lexical items delineates them somewhat from other racial groups, their slang transcends linguistic, ethnic, and cultural barriers. For this group, slang acts as a means of complementing their vibrant, urban youthfulness and identity in a humorous, fun, and innovative manner whilst being part of a broader multilingual South African culture.



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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE ON SLANG (IN ENGLISH) AMONG BLACK YOUTH IN GAUTENG

Wass'up? My name is Princess Bembe, and I'm currently in the process of completing my MA at Rand Afrikaans University. I'm doing a study on the use of slang in English by black youth in the Gauteng Province. My aim is to try to find answers to questions such as how you learnt slang; which slang words you use; what the slang words look like; where, when and with whom you use such slang; and the reasons why you use slang.

In brief, by *slang* I mean the words/ phrases you use which are not regarded as Standard English. I would appreciate it if you could assist me by taking a few minutes of your time to complete the following questionnaire.

NB: For purposes of relevance to this particular study, this questionnaire is to be completed only by black youth who use English as a second or additional language.

Please return your completed questionnaire, together with the slang words and phrases, to the person who gave it to you within 5 days from the day on which you receive it. Thanks for your assistance.

SECTION A: YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Gender (Tick to indicate whether you are male or female):

M	F
---	---

2. Age in years.....

3. Which one of the following is your predominant language? (Please tick):

Setswana	
Sesotho	
Sepedi	
IsiXhosa	
IsiZulu	
Siswati	
IsiNdebele	

English	
Afrikaans	
Xitsonga	
Tshivenda	
Other? (please specify):	

4. In which one of the following areas in Gauteng do you live?

Sunninghill	
Fourways	
Randburg	
Krugersdorp	
Roodepoort	
Soweto	
Alberton	
Nigel	
Springs	
Brakpan	
Germiston	
Benoni	
Boksburg	
Edenvale	
Dowerglen	

Kempton Park	
Midrand	
Florida	
Centurion	
Constantia Park	
Mamelodi	
Attridgeville	
Other?:	

5. What level of education have you completed?

Grade 12	
Grade 11	
Grade 10	
Grade 9	
Other?	

6. Which of the following radio stations do you listen to?

Y-FM	
Metro FM	
5FM	
94.7 (Highveld Stereo)	
Other?	

7. How often do you use slang? (Please tick)

Never	Seldom	Often	Very Often	Always

SECTION B: How did you learn slang?

8. To what extent have you learnt slang from each of the following?

	No extent	To a <u>small</u> extent	To a <u>moderate</u> extent	To a <u>large</u> extent
Your friends/peers				
Your siblings?				
Your parents?				
Reading magazines?				
Television?				
Listening to the radio?				

SECTION C: Why do you use slang (in English)

Below are some of the various reasons why teenagers generally use slang. For which of the following reasons do you use slang in English? Please tick all applicable reasons:

WHY? (REASONS)	TICK ✓
1. For fun	
2. To be humorous	
3. To be creative/ innovative	
4. To be secretive so that those who don't know slang do not understand me	

5. To be <i>hip</i> / fashionable/ for trendiness	
6. Because my friends use slang	
7. To show that I “belong”/ for group identity or solidarity	
8. To substitute a word	
9. Because slang is easier to use than Standard English	
10. To protest against the use of Standard English/ deviate from Standard English	

From the list above, please write down the numbers of the **THREE** most important reasons why you use slang:

Most important:

Second important:

Third important:

Are there any other reasons why you use slang (besides the reasons given above)? If so, please write them down in this space

(a).....

(b).....

(c).....

SECTION D: WHERE, WHEN and WITH WHOM do you use slang in English?

10. How often do you use slang in each of the following situations:

WHERE?, WHEN?, WITH WHOM?	Never	Seldom	Often	Always
At home with siblings (i.e. brothers and sisters) and other teenagers				
At home with adults (including parents)				
At school or work only with my friends/ peers				
At school or work with my friends/ peers and adults				
At social gatherings such as parties, movies, etc.				
With people I do not know				

Only when interacting with girls (peers)				
Only when interacting with boys (peers)				
With boys and girls alike				
Formal situations (e.g. in a job interview, at church)				

Are there any other places (besides the ones mentioned above) where you use slang? If so, please include those here:

.....

SECTION E: SLANG WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS (IN ENGLISH) BY BLACK YOUTH IN GAUTENG

Please write down as many as possible slang words and expressions you use when you speak **English** with your friends/ peers, etc. in the spaces provided below, together with their meanings in the contexts you often use them.

e.g. *Cool*= *fine/ alright*.

Please note, however, that certain words you use may originate from other languages other than English. They may be taken from isiZulu, Setswana, Afrikaans, etc. You're welcome to include them as well.

e.g. *pap* (from Afrikaans) = *tired* as used in slang
gooi (Afr.)= *Play music/ play a prank on someone*

Feel free, therefore, to include all the slang words (and their meanings)you use when you speak English with your friends, peers, etc.

You're also welcome to include numbers, e.g.:

24-7 = *everyday or all the time*

411: = *a party*

Please write legibly and attach your list of slang words and expressions and their meanings to the rest of the questionnaire. Kindly return the questionnaire to the person who gave it to you. Thanks again for your help.

'ppreciate it. Later, and peace-out!!- Princess.

SLANG WORD / PHRASE	MEANING OF WORD / PHRASE	WHERE DO YOU USE IT? (i.e. CONTEXT) (e.g. at club, at school, with friends, etc.)
<i>E.g. Cool</i>	<i>Fine/okay</i>	<i>Use with friends</i>
<i>Was's up?</i>	<i>How are you? (A greeting)</i>	<i>With friends/informal context such as at a party</i>



APPENDIX B: SLANG LEXICAL ITEMS AND PHRASES

The following is a selection of the slang lexical items and phrases that the youth in this study provided in Section E of the questionnaire (see Appendix A for questionnaire):

A

a ride	a car
a ring	a telephone call
abo-darkie	reference to black people
ace	do the best (e.g. <i>I'm going to ace the test</i>)
achouster	a friend
acid	LSD (a drug)
aight	(From 'alright') alright/ fine
AK47 (a gun)	an attractive female
alci	An alcoholic (someone who drinks excessively)
ape	when something is good/ okay. Or when someone is angry/ acting insane
are you for real?	<i>Are you serious about what you are saying or doing?/ I don't believe you!</i>
awesome	good/ great/ the best/ incredible

B

ba-dum-ka-dum	buttocks (particularly big ones)
baba	(From isiZulu 'father') friend (usually male) [e.g. <i>Whas'sup, baba?</i> (see also <i>mfana; ntate</i>)
babe	a girl / <i>she is such a babe</i> (beautiful)
bambaklat	a foolish/ stupid person
bang	engage in sexual intercourse
Barbies	stupid girls
bark	gossip/ speak badly about someone
bat	sniff cocaine
beaver	reference to female genitalia
beef	have a problem/ dispute/ disagreement with someone to hold a grudge
BF	bitch-fight (when two girls are engaged in a fistfight)
big-up(s)	congratulations/ well-done
bird	a girl/ girlfriend
biza	worried/ concerned
biznitch	a whore/ prostitute/ a female who likes being in constant company of males
blind	awful/ great/ the best (depending on context)
bling	jewellery

bling-bling	wealth
blom	wait around with someone/ to stay
blood	friend
blunt	marijuana (a drug)
bob	a stupid male
Boeing 7-4-7	a fat person
bojwa (from Bourgeoisie)	(usually males)/ an elite
bollocks	lie/ talk nonsense
bolter	an extremely beautiful woman
bomb-blast	to fart
bong	Marijuana (a drug)
boo	boyfriend/ girlfriend
bootylicious	a sexy woman/ female
booze	alcohol
bounce	leave/ go away
bra	a friend (usually male)
bro	a friend (male)
bucks	money
bud	Marijuana (a drug)/ friend
bujwa/ bourgeois	well-dressed/ stylish dressers
	young, middle-class people who attend Model-C/ private schools
bull-‘ish” (bullshit)	nonsense/ lies
busted	get caught/ arrested
buyakasha!	no specific meaning, only an expression

C

canned fruit	a boring/ nerdy person
cat	a handsome male
Charlie	reference to a man
charma-boy	a handsome boy or male
charma-girl	a cute/ sexy girl or female
charmer	a handsome male
check you	goodbye/ see you later
check	look
cheddar (cheddar cheese)	money
cheeks	buttocks
cheese-boy	a rich boy (coming from a rich background)
cheese-girl	a rich girl (coming from a rich background)
cherrie	a girl/ girlfriend/ female
chick	a girl/ female
child	a female
chill	calm down/ relax
chillax	relax

chilling (chillin')	relaxing
chirp	tell someone how you feel about them
chocolate box	anal sex
chow	food/ eat
chuck	leave
ciggie	cigarette
coconut	a black person behaving white
coke	cocaine
coli	cool-drink (beverage)
convo	short for <i>conversation</i> (to talk)
cool/ cool beans	fine/ alright
corner-P-and-B	(i.e. corner p illow and b lanket):exhausted and preparing for bed/ to sleep
cow	a female acting like a prostitute/ behaving badly
crack	cocaine
crash	sleep
crib	home/ house
crown jewels	testicles

D

da bomb	the best/ very good/ very beautiful
da	the
dada-man	a stupid male
dark-dindi	a tall, dark, handsome male/ a beautiful female
darkie	a black person (see <i>abo-darkie</i>)
dawg	a male/ the best
dead	boring
def	definitely/ absolutely
ding-dong	confusing/ confused
dis	to disrespect/ be mean to/ belittle someone
ditch	isolate someone/ break up with your partner
DJ-blanket	fall asleep/ to be sleepy
dogmore	multi-coloured popcorn eaten as a snack
don't trip	remain calm/ calm down
done	drunk/ I agree!/ yes!
dope	marijuana (a drug)/ uncouth
dough	money
dove	Ecstasy (a drug)
down-low (DL)	keep a secret
drift	do you know what I mean?/ Do you understand what I am saying? [e.g. <i>Do you catch my drift?</i>]
dubie	marijuana
dude	friend (male)/ male
dudette	girl

duh!/ dah!	obviously!/ stupid
duh!-face	a stupid person
dumbass	a stupid person
Durban-poison	drugs in general/ marijuana
dutchies	an Afrikaans-speaking person
dwaal	when someone is in a state of being drugged (from taking drugs)/ a state of confusion/ being stupefied
dwala	looking for trouble

E

E	Ecstasy (a drug)
easy-now	hello
ecstasy	a happy person (not moody)
eish!	an exclamation of surprise/ disappointment / irritation (depending on context)
electric spinach	marijuana (a drug)
empty-tin	a stupid person
enter	Do you agree with what I am saying?/ Do you understand?
entlek (Afrikaans)	actually

F

fab	fabulous/ fine/ satisfied
fade	leave/ go away
fag	a homosexual
fag	cigarettes
faggot	a homosexual
Faggy (faggot)	a gay man
fake	a pretender
famba	(Xitsonga, 'Go away') go away!
fart	an idiot/ silly/ stupid person
fatty-girl (phat)	a beautiful girl
fede?	(From Afrikaans, 'Verder') How are you? (A greeting)
feel me?	Do you understand me?/ Do you agree with me?
fine	a beautiful, well-groomed, and well-dressed male or female
fine-ass-brotha	a good-looking/ handsome male(the word <i>brotha</i> from 'brother' usually refers to a Black male)
fine-brother-man	a handsome male (usually Black)
FK (Fong Kong)	when an item of clothing is of poor or unauthentic quality often imported from Hong Kong
flip	leave something alone
flip!	A sign of irritation/ is exclaimed when you are disappointed or irritated about something.
flop	a failure

flow	Go away!/ Leave me alone!
fly	good-looking/ beautiful/ attractive/ the best/ outstanding
fo sho	(From English, 'For sure') yes/ I agree/ yes, certainly
foot-sock	(From Afrikaans 'voetsek') go away!
for shizzy/ for shizzel	for sure/ for real/ I agree!
for shizzle my nizzle	alright/ yes/ fine
for reals?	really?
fork-out	pay (money)
fong kong	cheap clothes (often imported from Hong Kong)
freaky	strange and ugly
friggin'	really the best [e.g. This is <i>friggin'</i> cool]
fruit	a gay/ lesbian
fudge-packer	a gay person
fully	I agree with you
funk-tastic (from 'fantastic')	fantastic
funky	fabulous/ fashionable
fuzzed-out	drugged (from taking drugs)

G

G	my friend
G-spot	a place to relax with one's friends
g-string	a BMW 3-series or YFM (a local youth radio station), the shape of the 'Y' is likened to the back portion of a female underwear (a g-string) when referring to a male
gangster (gangsta)	Marijuana (a drug)
ganja	reference to a male
gansta	an Afrikaans-speaking person
Gawis	my best friend
gaz'lam	large breasts (female)
gazangas/ gazungas	males from the township (amagents)
gent(s)	dance well
get-down	a black urban township
ghetto	when a female has big buttocks
gifted with assets	a party
gig	reference to female friends (often used by and among females)
girl-friend	a beautiful female
gleb/ glepp	someone who always tries to abide by the rules
goody-goody	play good music/ get drunk/ play a prank on someone
gooi	fine/ alright
grand	actually/ exactly/ quite frankly...
grand-grand	Marijuana (a drug)
grass	someone with a pimped face
grater	

green	Marijuana (a drug)
gross	when something is disgusting
grot	an ugly female
gum-gum	male always in female partner's company
gushesh	a BMW series (car)
gwang	female genitalia

H

haffer	a bitch
half mark	R5 coin
half-tiger	R5 coin
hang-out/ hang out with	relaxing with/ be in the company of someone (often of friends)
happening (party)	a great, vibrant party
harambe	let's stick together/ let's unite/ unity (from Swahili)
hard-core	someone who does not get drunk very easily or quickly/ friendly/ the best
hectic	when something is very interesting/ sad/ confusing
herb/ holy herb	marijuana
hey!	Hallo/ hello!
high	drugged/ after-effect of smoking marijuana or any other drug
hip	trendy/ in fashion
hip2b square	staying updated on the latest trends (especially fashion, music)
ho/ hoe	(From the word 'whore') a female prostitute
hola!	(From Spanish, 'hello') hello
hola-7	Hallo
holler (at me)	please call me (on the phone)
home-boy	my friend
homey	my friend
honeys	girls
hood	neighbourhood
hooka	(From 'hooker') a female prostitute
hooters	female breasts
horizontal	(a)sleep
hot	beautiful/ attractive
house you?	How are you?
howzit?	Fro <i>How is it?</i> : How are you?
hydro	dagga

I

I don't give	I don't care
I had a jol	I had a good time

ice	diamonds
ill	to be very good/ the best/ something that looks or sounds good or appealing
imitation	a great pretender
innit?	Is it not?/ isn't it?
ish	(As euphemism from 'shit') nonsense [<i>You are talking ish.</i>]
izinyoka (isiZulu: snake)	thieves

J

J/ jay	a drug (usually marijuana)
jam	a song/ party
jive	a problem/ trouble
jo/ joe	friend
joint	a drug (usually marijuana)/ a place
jugs	female breasts
junkie	a drug addict

K

kasi	(From Afrikaans 'lokasie'): township
kcuf	('fuck' spelt and pronounced backwards as euphemism)
keeping it real	being true to oneself
kick-ass	good/ the best
kicking it	having a party/ enjoying oneself
kid	friend
kiss-ass	going out of one's way to impress someone else
knock	steal from someone/ betray someone

L

L-and-G (Ladies and gents)	the toilet
laid (get laid)	engage in sexual intercourse
lank-off	really great
later!	Good-bye!
legit	(From 'legitimate') real/ genuine
lekker	(From Afrikaans 'nice' / 'tasty' / 'delicious') fine/ alright
loser	an idiot
low-down	give details
low-down-ho-down	the latest news/ gossip
loxion	(From 'location') township
loxion-kulcha	(From 'location culture' / 'township culture') a rude, bully female
lucky (get lucky)	engage in sexual intercourse
lunch bar (chocolate)	someone with a pimpled face

M

M.J.	marijuana
maidie	a girlfriend / female
maintaining	when one is fine/ alright (a response to someone's greeting such as <i>was'sup/ waddup?</i>) Response would be <i>I'm maintaining</i> .
majimbos	gangsters (male)
mama	girlfriend
Mary	a girl/ female
mashed	drunk/ drugged
mellow	calm/ relaxed/ fine/ alright
mfana	(from isiZulu, 'boy') ; can be equated with <i>friend</i> used by males when addressing or referring to each other (see also <i>ntate; baba</i>)
milkshakes	female breasts
minga	an ugly female
mommy	a girlfriend
mongane	(From isiZulu, 'mngane') friend
motherless	drunk
my 10	my turn/ my girlfriend
my main man	my hero/ my best friend (male)
my girl(friend)	reference to a female friend
my man	my boyfriend

N

nasty	really bad/ an ugly male or female/ something unpleasant
neat	fine/ alright
nigga	(From American English, 'nigger') often used by black males among themselves as a means of reference to one another and as a sign of solidarity between them
nigga (nigger)	when two black males address each other (<i>What's up, nigga?</i>)
no shit!	really?
nogal	(From Afrikaans) as well/ rather/ also
not there	inadequate/ not good enough/ confusing/ confused/ insane
ntate	(from Sesotho, 'father'); can be equated with <i>friend</i> used by males when addressing/ referring to each other. (see also <i>baba; mfana</i>)

Q

off da hook	the best
-------------	----------

off-tha-chain
on-point
oreo

everything is fine
you're correct/ exquisite/ extraordinary
a black person behaving white

P

pap
park
pashash
peace/ peace-out
peeps
personalities
phat/ PHAT
PHD
phoney
pigeon
pimp
piss-off
pissed/ pissed out
playa (player)
porn-stars gone lame
possie
prob
punani

(From Afrikaans, 'pap': flat) boring/ exhausted
wait (*Let's park here*)
fine/ alright
farewell/ goodbye/ keep well/ see you later
(From 'people') friends
female breasts
Pretty Hot And Tempting: great/ attractive/ the best
Player Hater Degree: someone who hates or is intolerant of
not genuine/ unreal/ a pretender
a female who likes being in the company of wealthy males
a male gangster
to make someone angry/ irritate
drunk
a male who has many girlfriends or boyfriends/ a casanova
something good just went suddenly boring
place/ home/ house
(From 'problem') problem
female genitalia

Q

queer
quiet level (QL)

a homosexual
do not tell (a secret)

R

R
radical
reverse
rewind
ring
rock
rock
roll-on
ruff (rough)
rug-muncher

are
amazing
female buttocks
female buttocks
call me/ phone me/ talk to me
fun/ the best (e.g *The party rocks*)
cocaine
a substitute lover
strict
a lesbian

S

SABC 1:	wearing the same outfit repeatedly / when one is seen wearing the same attire on a number of occasions (particularly at a social gatherings such as parties).
sassy	the best
say what?	<i>What did you just say?/</i> I do not understand you
scheme (skeem)	friend
schwarka	good/ alright/ fine [e.g. <i>Everything is just schwarka</i>]
score me something	give me something
screwed	crazy
se-ri-ou-s (serious)	really/ for real
second-round	see you later
seven	a gun
sharp	fine/ alright/ good-bye
sheezy/ for sheezy	for real/ alright/ fine
shit	thing [e.g. <i>I don't understand shit</i>]: I don't' understanding any of this or anything
shout-out	a dedication [e.g. <i>I'd like to send a shout-out to my homies...</i>]: I'd like to dedicate (music) the following song to my friends...
shweet	goodbye/ fine/ alright
sick	very good/ the best
skhokho (isiZulu: crust)	a hero/ a role model
slashed	drunk
slenda neva get tied	a female who maintains her slender figure (weight)
slice/ slize	run away
slick	beautiful/ good-looking
slide (let it slide)	leave it alone/ let it go/ forget about it [e.g. <i>I know you're pissed, bra, but let it slide</i>]: I know you're angry, my friend, but let it go/ leave it alone.

slow-down	boring
sly	good-looking
smaaks	likes
smashed	very drunk
smokes	cigarettes
snob	an arrogant person
snow/ snowy	cocaine
son	male/ male-friend
spat	ran away
spaz	a gay person (male)
spinning	dating someone
splash (splasha)	to take a bath
splendiferous	when things are perfect/ splendid/ fine
spliff	a joint/ marijuana/ drug
split	to leave
square (L7)	when something or someone is boring
stash	money
step!	Go away/ leave!
stoned	drugged
suck(s)	when something is bad
suck-up	going out of your way to impress someone
sukki sukki now!	no specific meaning, just an expression of appreciation or agreement.
switch	to sleep

T

talent	a good-looking female
tard	reference to a stupid person/ idiot
tart	a prostitute
the dog's dead	when something is finished or complete

thicko	a stupid person
thul'ax	(from isiZulu, <i>thula</i> : be quiet; and English stem- ax) keep quiet and listen/ keep quiet and pay attention [in reference to someone stop interrupting a speaker]
tick	a girl or guy who is always seeking attention from her/ his partner, and puts financial pressure on him/ her by demanding material things from her/ his partner all the time.
tight	very good/ when something looks exceptionally beautiful
titivate	go out of your way to look attractive (especially females)
Tito Mboweni (Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa)	money
to piss	to urinate
to-do!	Great/ wealthy/ handsome/ the best (usu. used by females)
top-deck	reference to a coloured person
transi	transport/ car
trashed	to be drunk
tree	marijuana
tsala	(from Setswana) friend usually used by females
tune (chuna)	do it/ tell me
tune you	tell someone
tupperware	someone who is a great pretender

U

U (written) you

V

VCR a person without front teeth
Verimark a salesperson/ a person who does not honour his or her promises
vertical to be awake

W

wada-wada extra information, does not wish to elaborate
wara-wara talk too much/ talkative
was'sup? How are you?
wasted drunk
weed marijuana/ dagga (a drug)
wet when someone (usu. Female) is beautiful
whack when something is unpleasant/ crazy/ ridiculous/ wrong

what kind?	What's happening?/ What's wrong?
whatagwan?	What is happening?/ What is going on?
whatever (what-e-v-er!)	I don't care!/ So what?
whoe	(from <i>whore</i>): whore
wicked	the best
wigger	a white person acting black
wiped-out	exhausted/ feeling extremely tired
wired	drunk
word	really/ for real
word is	the latest gossip
word-up	I agree with you/ congratulations

X

X-effect	(from the Television advertisement "The power of Axe male deodorant"); a male who is accused of enticing women with his charm and good looks
x-ray	to interrogate someone/ to ask someone too many questions
xeno	(from 'xenophobia') reference to a foreigner

Y

Y?	why?
ya'll	all of you (American)
yeah	yes
Yeah, right!	I don't believe you!
Yengeni:	A Mercedes Benz (ML series) named after Tony Yengeni, former chief whip (South Africa)
YFM	a g-string (female underwear)
Yo, black!	Hallo my friend (used by and among black males)
Yo, skin!	Hallo my friend (used by and among black males)
yo!	Hallo
Yo-being!	Hallo!
yo-yo	a person who is easily influenced or manipulated
your digits	your number (telephone) [e.g. 011 444 2345] (taken from the number of digits (7) found in a telephone number)



Z

Z3	HIV/ AIDS
zit	a pimple
zol	marijuana

NUMBERS:

(1)-clipper	R100
1-05	police officers
1	a stupid person/ to be stupid
1-4-3	I love you (I= 1 letter; <i>love</i> = 4 letters: l-o-v-e; <i>you</i> = 3 letters: y-o-u)
1-Grand	R1000
1-tiger	R10 note
2-6	a person who cheats on his/ her partner
2-B	to be
2-nite	tonight
2-tiger	R20 note
24-7-365	everyday/ all the time (24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days per year)
24-7	everyday (24 hours, 7 days a week)/ everyday/ all the time
4-1-1	(<i>four one one</i>) a party/ gossip
3-tiger	R30
35 large	R3 500.00
4 (from 'foe')	an enemy
4 (four)	a policeman
4-1-1	a party
4-5	male genitalia
4-5	male organ/ penis
6-9	urinate/ toilet
6-no-9	(one and) the same thing/ there is no difference
7-40-fizza	BMW 745i
7-digits	phone number
8-blue	R80
9	a fiancé
9-9	actually/ directly