

# Slangs, Toponymic Slang Words and their Features

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## **Abstract:**

This article focuses on explaining the lexical features of slangs as well as toponymic slang words. As we go further into our article, we can see that like other words, slangs can have different forms, express diverse meanings and can be used in different contexts. This article also talks about a specific way of forming slangs which is by introducing neologisms. This article also discusses the unique features of slang words which contain toponyms. They are usually referred to as “toponymic slangs”. Toponymic slangs have a number of distinct features such as evaluativeness, emotionality, expressivity but the most important characteristics of toponymic slangs is that it expresses regional identity.

**Keywords:** toponyms, toponymic slangs, evaluativeness, expressiveness, lexical features, neologism, slangs, cultural identity, community identity.

Lexical features refer to the specific characteristics of individual words within a language, such as form, meaning, and usage. In modern English, neologisms are newly coined words or expressions that emerge within specific subcultures or communities. These terms are created to describe new phenomena, express unique ideas, or establish a sense of identity among a group of people. Some neologisms are ephemeral, while others become more widely adopted and integrated into mainstream language over time. Examples of neologisms in slang include lit, flex, simp, slay, savage, clout, clout chaser, and troll. Lit, originally used to describe something physically illuminated, has evolved to mean excitement, excellent, or highly enjoyable. Flex, originally a derogatory term, is now used in a humorous or playful way to describe someone who is overly attentive or generous to someone they are attracted to. Slay, a term for excelling or performing exceptionally well, is often used in the context of fashion or personal style.

Slangs are a form of communication that can be formed through various means, such as abbreviations and acronyms. These can be used to convey ideas quickly and efficiently within specific groups or communities, such as FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), YOLO (You Only Live Once), Bae (Before Anyone Else), G.O.A.T. (Greatest Of All Time), LOL (Laugh Out Loud), OMG (Oh My God), BRB (Be Right Back), SMH (Shaking My Head), IDK (I Don't Know), BFF (Best Friends Forever), ICYMI (In Case You Missed It), FTW (For The Win), TBH (To Be Honest), IRL (In Real Life), DM (Direct Message), and OTP (One True Pairing).

Slang can also be formed through semantic shifts, such as changing the meaning of words to convey pronunciation or create a unique identity. Examples of slang include Jedi (inspired by the Star Wars franchise), Muggle (from the Harry Potter series), Rickroll (a prank involving the music video for Rick Astley's song "Never Gonna Give You Up"), and Zombie (a mindless scroller on social media).

Slangs are characterized by categories of evaluativeness, emotionality, profanity, intensity, and expressiveness. Evaluativeness is an essential characteristic of linguistic units, expressing the author's positive or negative attitude towards the content of speech. Emotionality involves a direct reaction to the object, while intensity measures the degree of expression of these emotions. Expressiveness gives speech expressiveness due to the interaction in the content side of the language unit, utterance, or text of the subject's evaluative and emotional attitude.

The categories of evaluativeness, emotionality, intensity, and expressiveness are associated with non-normativity, where profanity expresses an objective and subjective-emotional assessment of the designated. This results in a vivid expressiveness, which is most fully realized in the literary text.

Toponymic slang words, also referred to as slang toponyms, are linguistic entities characterized by their distinct regional identity, cultural references, linguistic diversity, historical influences, and in-group bonding mechanisms. They not only serve as a reflection of the local culture and community from which they originate, but also contribute to their evolution and identity formation.

One of the most defining features of toponymic slang words is their strong attachment to a specific geographical location. They act as linguistic markers that identify the regional identity of the speakers. For instance, terms like "wicked" in Boston, USA, or "chuffed" in the UK, are not just popular slang words in these regions, but also linguistic insignias of these places.

Furthermore, toponymic slang often encapsulates and reflects cultural elements, local customs, or societal aspects of a region. This is evident in how the British slang term "brolly" for an umbrella not only denotes a common item but also subtly refers to the UK's frequently rainy weather.

Moreover, the use of local slang creates a sense of camaraderie and belonging among residents of a particular area. This unique feature transforms these words into a "linguistic code" that distinguishes insiders from outsiders, fostering a sense of unity within the community.

Toponymic slangs often involve the creation of new words, word forms, or meanings. They can incorporate elements from the standard language but modify them in a unique way. Those types of slangs may also involve the shortening of words or phrases. This can make communication more efficient and often lends a casual, informal tone to the toponyms. They can include changes in pronunciation or spelling. These alterations can be influenced by regional accents or simply serve to distinguish the slang from standard language. Slangs often employ metaphors or analogies to convey meanings in a memorable way. These comparisons can create vivid imagery and are central to the understanding of the slang. Slangs frequently function as markers of group identity. They are used by specific communities or subcultures, creating a sense of belonging and exclusion based on who understands and uses the slang. The use of slang is often shaped by sociolinguistic factors like age, social status, and group membership. Different groups may have their own unique slangs. Slangs tend to be more expressive and informal in tone. They often convey emotions, attitudes, or

social bonds more directly than standard language. Slangs can evolve and change quickly. What is popular slang today may be outdated in a short period. This adaptability keeps the language fresh and relevant to its users. The intended purpose and context of the slang can vary widely. Slangs can be humorous, derogatory, affectionate, secretive, or even serve as a form of coded language for certain communities. Slangs often involve wordplay, puns, and humor. Users of slang may enjoy the creativity and playfulness in crafting and interpreting these non-standard terms. Slangs are often used alongside standard language. They coexist and interact, with speakers switching between slang and standard language as needed.

**Community identity:** Toponymic slangs can foster a sense of community and shared identity among the people who live in or identify with a particular place. *Sooner State* is a nickname for the state of Oklahoma in the United States. It reflects a strong sense of community identity and pride among Oklahomans. The term "Sooner" originates from the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889 when settlers rushed to claim land. Those who arrived sooner than the official start time were called "Sooners." The nickname "Sooner State" reflects the pioneer spirit and resilience of the early settlers, and it has become a symbol of pride for the people of Oklahoma, fostering a sense of shared history and identity among its residents.

**Tourism and promotion:** Some places adopt toponymic slangs for promotional purposes, to attract tourists or create a distinct brand image. *The Big Pineapple* is a toponymic slang used to promote the town of Nambour on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. Nambour is known for its subtropical climate and pineapple farming. To boost tourism and create a distinct brand image, Nambour erected a giant, iconic pineapple sculpture. The "Big Pineapple" has become a popular tourist attraction and symbol for the region. This playful and memorable nickname, along with the giant pineapple landmark, attracts visitors to the area, promotes local culture, and boosts the local economy through tourism-related activities.

Toponymic slangs don't always stay the same, they evolve and change over time, often influenced by shifts in culture, the economy, or local sentiment. In some cases, toponymic slangs become so widely used that they become almost as common as the official place name, especially in everyday conversation. Using these slangs can create a sense of belonging and shared experience among people from a particular place.

Toponymic slang, often referred to as regionally specific slang, are slang terms that have originated from, or are commonly used within, a specific geographical area. These words can often serve as cultural identifiers and can provide insight into the linguistic, historical, and societal nuances of a place. Here are some unique features of toponymic slang words in English:

**Regional Identity.** The most distinct feature of toponymic slang is its attachment to a specific geographical location. For instance, terms like "wicked" in Boston, USA, or "chuffed" in the UK, are popular slang words in their respective regions.

**Cultural Reference.** Toponymic slang often reflects cultural elements, local customs, or societal aspects of a region. For example, "brolly" is a British slang term for an umbrella, reflecting the UK's rainy weather.

**Language Evolution.** These slang words often evolve over time, mirroring changes in social attitudes, technology, or popular culture within the region. For instance, in Australian English, "selfie" originated as a slang term before becoming globally recognized due to technological advancements in smartphones.

**Linguistic Diversity.** Toponymic slang highlights the diversity within the English language. For instance, the word "boot" refers to the trunk of a car in UK English, but means a type of footwear in US English.

*In-group Bonding.* Use of local slang can create a sense of camaraderie and belonging among residents of a particular area. It can also serve as a "linguistic code" that distinguishes insiders from outsiders.

*Historical Influences.* Sometimes, toponymic slang words have historical connotations. For example, Cockney Rhyming Slang, a form of slang used in East London, has been around since the 19th century and includes phrases like "Adam and Eve" for "believe" or "apples and pears" for "stairs".

*Sociolinguistic Factors.* The use of toponymic slang can often be influenced by sociolinguistic factors such as age, class, or ethnicity. For instance, certain slang words may be more prevalent among younger generations, working classes, or specific ethnic communities.

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