

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction to the research. This chapter consists of five sections. The first section contains an explanation of the background of the research, previous research, and differences from previous research. The second section is the problem formulation, which includes the questions that underlie this research. The third section is the purpose of the research, which includes the main objectives of this research. The fourth section is the significance of the research, containing the benefits or advantages of this research. The last section is the definition of key terms, which contains the main keys in this research.

#### 1.1. Background of The Research

Language is an essential tool that enables people to communicate and interact with one another. Through language, individuals can express their ideas, thoughts, emotions, and opinions while building and maintaining social relationships. As society continues to develop, language also evolves to meet the changing needs of its users, resulting in a wide range of language varieties and styles. Among the many languages used around the world, English has become the dominant language for international communication. Crystal (2003) explains that English functions as a global language because it is extensively used in fields such as education, business, science, technology, and international communication.

In general, English is divided into two main varieties: Standard English and Non-standard English. Standard English follows accepted grammatical conventions and is commonly used in formal settings, including education, government, academic writing, and professional communication (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). In contrast, Non-standard English includes

language varieties that differ from the standard form in terms of pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary and is typically associated with informal communication. One of the most common forms of Non-standard English is slang, which is widely used in everyday conversations, particularly among young people and members of specific social groups.

The diversity of language used by different communities gives rise to language variation, a major area of study in sociolinguistics. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) describe sociolinguistics as the study of the relationship between language and society, with particular attention to how social factors influence language use and variation. Likewise, Akmajian et al. (1998) identify several forms of language variation, including dialects, pidgins, creoles, jargon, taboo language, and slang. Among these varieties, slang has become one of the most distinctive forms of informal language because of its dynamic nature and its widespread use in contemporary communication.

Slang is a form of informal language that is commonly used by members of particular social groups as an alternative to standard vocabulary. It often reflects the identity, creativity, and social relationships of its speakers. Yule (2010) defines slang as a collection of informal words and expressions that are closely associated with younger generations and various social communities. Likewise, Allan and Burridge (2006) argue that slang represents a creative aspect of language through which speakers express solidarity, humor, identity, and informality. Because slang changes rapidly over time, many of its expressions are absent from standard dictionaries or carry meanings that vary according to the social and cultural context in which they are used. Consequently, people who are unfamiliar with a particular community may find it difficult to interpret the intended meaning of slang expressions accurately.

To understand the meanings conveyed by slang, semantic analysis is required. Semantics is the branch of linguistics that examines how meaning

is expressed and interpreted through language. Leech (1981) proposes seven categories of meaning: conceptual, connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meaning. These categories demonstrate that the meaning of a word extends beyond its literal definition and is often influenced by context, emotion, social relationships, and the speaker's intention. Therefore, semantic analysis provides an appropriate framework for interpreting slang expressions within their communicative contexts.

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly influenced the way slang is created, shared, and understood. Today, slang is widely used not only in spoken interaction but also in written communication across various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and Reddit. Among these platforms, Facebook continues to be one of the largest online social networking services, enabling users to exchange information, communicate, and participate in communities based on shared interests (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). One of these communities is the SpongeBob Memes Facebook group, which brings together millions of members from different countries who share humorous memes inspired by the animated series *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Although the original television series was designed primarily for children, its characters and scenes have been widely adapted into internet memes that adults frequently use to express humor, sarcasm, emotions, and everyday experiences.

The captions accompanying memes in the SpongeBob Memes Facebook group frequently contain slang expressions, abbreviations, and other forms of informal language. These linguistic features are creatively combined with visual images to enhance the humorous effect and communicate messages more effectively. Expressions such as *gonna*, *finna*, *bestie*, *low-key*, *POV*, *IYKYK*, *LMFAO*, and *IDGAF* regularly appear in meme captions. Since the meanings of these expressions often differ from their literal definitions and depend heavily on context, they provide valuable data for sociolinguistic and semantic analysis. Examining these expressions

helps explain how language users construct meaning, express emotions, and interact with others through informal language in online communities.

Several previous studies have examined the use of slang in different forms of media and communication. Ahmad (2019) investigated slang expressions in *Super Troopers 2* and identified their types and communicative functions. Saputri (2021) explored the use of slang in the captions of Kim Kardashian's Instagram posts, focusing on the classification and functions of the expressions. Similarly, Padilah (2022) analyzed slang used in TikTok content by examining its types and functions. From a semantic perspective, Alfariysi (2024) studied English abbreviations in Instagram captions to identify their meanings. These studies indicate that slang has become an important topic in sociolinguistic research because of its dynamic nature and its increasing use in digital communication.

Although previous research has contributed to the understanding of slang, several gaps remain. Most earlier studies concentrated on movies, Instagram, TikTok, or English abbreviations, while relatively little attention has been given to slang used in Facebook meme communities, particularly in the SpongeBob Memes Facebook group. In addition, many of these studies examined only one aspect of slang, such as its types, functions, or meanings. Only a limited number of studies have integrated sociolinguistic and semantic perspectives by analyzing the types, functions, and meanings of slang simultaneously. This gap provides an opportunity for further investigation using Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory of slang together with Leech's (1981) theory of meaning.

Based on the discussion above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "***SLANG WORDS FOUND IN THE MEMES POSTED BY FACEBOOK GROUP: SPONGEBOB MEMES.***" This study is expected to broaden the discussion of slang in sociolinguistic and semantic research by providing a comprehensive analysis of its types, functions, and

meanings. In addition, the findings are expected to enrich the existing literature on informal language used in online communities and contribute to a better understanding of how slang functions in digital communication.

## **1.2. Statement of Problem**

Language plays a fundamental role in human communication and exists in a wide range of varieties. One of these varieties is slang, which is commonly used in informal interactions, especially across social media platforms such as Facebook. In online communication, users often incorporate slang into captions, comments, and conversations to express their thoughts, emotions, and humor in a more relaxed, creative, and engaging manner. Despite its popularity, many slang expressions are difficult for the general public to understand because their meanings frequently differ from those of standard English and are not always recorded in conventional dictionaries.

The SpongeBob Memes Facebook group is one example of an online community where slang is extensively used in meme captions. These captions contain numerous slang expressions that vary in their types, functions, and meanings. As a result, readers who are unfamiliar with such expressions may find it challenging to interpret the intended messages accurately. For this reason, analyzing the slang used in this community is important, as it provides a deeper understanding of its linguistic characteristics, communicative functions, and contextual meanings.

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What types of slang words are used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes"?

2. What are the functions of slang words used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes"?
3. What types of meanings of slang words are used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes"?

### **1.3. Research Purpose**

Based on the research questions above, the purpose of this research are:

1. To identify the types of slang words are used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes".
2. To analyze the functions of slang words used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes"
3. To identify the types of meaning conveyed by the slang words used in the Facebook group "SpongeBob Memes".

### **1.4. Research Significance**

The researcher expects that the results of this study will make both theoretical and practical contributions. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that the significance of a study can be viewed from two perspectives: theoretical significance and practical significance.

#### **1.4.1. Theoretical Contribution**

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the field of sociolinguistics, particularly to research on slang as a form of language variation. By applying Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory of slang together

with Leech's (1981) semantic theory, this research is expected to expand the existing body of knowledge concerning the types, functions, and meanings of slang expressions. In addition, the findings may provide useful references for future researchers who wish to investigate slang usage in digital communication, online communities, or various social media platforms.

#### **1.4.2. Practically Contribution**

Practically, this study is expected to provide benefits for a variety of audiences. For students, it may enhance their understanding of slang expressions by introducing their types, functions, and meanings, particularly those frequently encountered on social media platforms. For English lecturers, the findings can be utilized as supplementary learning materials in courses related to sociolinguistics, semantics, and language variation. In addition, this research is expected to serve as a valuable reference for future researchers who intend to investigate slang in different forms of media or within other social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study may help general readers and social media users gain a better understanding of the slang expressions used in the SpongeBob Memes Facebook group, thereby reducing potential misunderstandings and improving communication in online interactions.

#### **1.5. Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding and to provide clear explanations of the key concepts used in this research, the following terms are defined.



### 1.5.1. Slang

Slang refers to a form of informal language that is commonly used in everyday conversations, especially among members of certain social groups. Allan and Burridge (2006) explain that slang consists of non-standard words or expressions that are used to express group identity, build solidarity, or create a more casual style of communication. In this research, slang refers to the informal English words and expressions appearing in the captions of memes shared in the *SpongeBob Memes* Facebook group.

### 1.5.2. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a field of linguistics that explores the connection between language and society. Downes (1998) states that sociolinguistics focuses on how language varies according to social factors and how it reflects the identity of its speakers. In this study, sociolinguistics is applied as the main theoretical perspective to examine the use of slang in social media interactions.

### 1.5.3. Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning in language. According to Leech (1981), semantics investigates how linguistic expressions, including words, phrases, and sentences, communicate meaning. In this research, semantic theory is used to interpret the meanings of slang expressions by applying Leech's (1981) classification of seven types of meaning: conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social (stylistic) meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning.



#### **1.5.4. Facebook**

Facebook is one of the most widely used social networking platforms, allowing people to communicate, share information, and interact with other users through various forms of content. Rouse (2009), as cited in Sipahutar (2019), explains that Facebook provides features for posting photos and videos, sending messages, and maintaining social connections. In this study, Facebook functions as the platform from which the research data are collected, particularly from the *SpongeBob Memes* Facebook group.

#### **1.5.5. Spongebob Memes**

The SpongeBob Memes Facebook group is an online community dedicated to sharing humorous memes inspired by the animated series *SpongeBob SquarePants*. The captions accompanying these memes frequently contain informal language and various slang expressions. For this reason, the group is considered an appropriate source of data for investigating the use and meaning of slang in online communication.