

# *From "Bee's Knees" to "Lit": The Evolution of Positive Slang*

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the advancement of positive slang, following its journey from notorious expressions like "Bee's Knees" to modern terms such as "lit." Examining etymological instruments and semantic shifts, it looks at how words like "cool," "wiped out," and "rad" changed from their unique settings to speak to endorsement and inspiration. Also, it analyzes the quick spread of slang within the advanced age, highlighting the impact of social media applications like Twitter and TikTok in reshaping etymological patterns. The paper grandstands the flexibility of dialect, viewed through semantic changes in expressions from famous motion pictures, emphasizing the energetic advancement of positive slang affected by social shifts and advanced headways.

**Keywords:** Positive slang, semantic advancement, advanced media, phonetic change

## 1. Introduction

Language, as a carrier of culture, reflects the development and evolution of human civilization and social dynamics. In the category of language, slang, as a cultural phenomenon that has survived time and history and continues to multiply and renew itself, is fascinating, not only as a tool for the dissemination of information, but also as an exclusive code word between specific groups, guaranteeing social values, the internal identity of the community groups and the most vivid symbols of the history of the culture. It is a unique cultural phenomenon of renewal.

There has been a great deal of research on various aspects of slang from a variety of disciplines. At the literary level, there are general collections of the meanings of various slang terms, mostly in the form of dictionaries or encyclopedias, and at the educational level, there are studies on the impact of slang communication in the classroom on academic performance, or on adolescents' acquisition and use of slang [1, 2]. There are also studies on the distinctive meaning of slang in intercultural communication, e.g. the acquisition of English slang in a foreign language environment, while in cultural studies the role of slang in shaping identity in different social groups and subcultures has also been scrutinised, but there is a lack of research on slang with positive meanings and the process of its evolution, as well as the impact of factors such as new-age digital media on the development and use of slang [3]. Moreover, detailed analyses of the historical trajectory, semantic shifts and transformative impact of factors such as new-age digital media on the evolution of slang are also still insufficient.

From "the bee's knees" to "lit" and "GOAT" (Greatest Of All Time), the shape and arrangement of positive slang has advanced over time, from the chronicled precipitation at the start of the twentieth

century to the rise of advanced media and the multiplication of social organizing stages in later decades, an assortment of components have quickened the pace of dialect advancement. The interconnecting of online communities and the fast spread of dialect through advanced channels have also significantly changed the evolution of positive slang, reshaping its direction and versatility.

This paper points to bridging the scholastic hole by investigating the verifiable advancement of positive slang. By analyzing authentic settings, following semantic shifts, and analyzing the impact of computerized media, this inquiry will reveal the energetic change of slang expressions signifying brilliance or inspiration and the effect of cutting-edge social media on this advancement. The exploration of interactions between historical heritage and contemporary language trends seeks to unravel the intricate threads that weave the evolution of positive slang.

## **2. Factors on the Formation and Evolution of Slangs**

There is a consensus among language authorities that slang, in definition, is “a highly colloquial language, below the level of standard educated speech and used by a particular group of people” [4]. As a crucial part of non-standard English, slangs are formed similarly as how basic words are formed, in processes of affixation, compounding, conversion, shortening, semantic change, borrowing, word combination, backformation, blending, onomatopoeia, corruption, taboo-motivated processes, and graphic imitation as concluded by Liberton in his “Word-Formation Processes in Contemporary English Slang” [5].

The mechanisms of the word formation process in linguistics governing slang evolution are multifaceted. Affixation, compounding, conversion, shortening, borrowing, and a myriad of other linguistic processes contribute to the formation and transformation of slang. These mechanisms allow slang to adapt, blend, and morph, catering to the ever-evolving needs and expressions of various social groups.

### **2.1. Semantic Shifts**

At the heart of the evolution of slang and its semantic changes, slang usually undergoes a process of generalization or, on the contrary, concretization at the time of its birth. Words initially confined to a specific linguistic context are driven by different media to expand their original domains to encompass a wider range of meanings and scenarios of use, and at the same time, the meanings of slang are moving from abstraction to concreteness, and are becoming more homogeneous in terms of their use in specific contexts or communities.

The development is also accompanied by changes in connotation. Over time, some terms have improved in terms of artistic conception and their inner meanings have been sublimated, acquiring positivity and respect among users. In contrast, others face pejorative connotations and their importance decreases to more colloquial simplifications, leading to negative or derogatory interpretations and shifts from a slang word to the borderline of vulgar tongue.

### **2.2. Morphological Change**

Morphological change refers to alterations or modifications in the structure and formation of words, specifically involving changes in their internal structure, such as the addition, deletion, or rearrangement of morphemes (the smallest units of meaning). Within the setting of slang, morphological alter plays a significant part in the advancement of dialect.

In slang, morphological alter frequently includes the creation of modern words or the change of existing ones through forms like affixation (including prefixes or postfixes), compounding (combining two words), shortening, and other etymological components. This comes about within

the arrangement of novel expressions that cater to the energetic and advancing needs of different social groups [7].

The impact of morphological alteration on the advancement of slang is critical. It permits slang terms to adjust to modern etymological patterns, reflect social shifts, and express one-of-a-kind implications or subtleties.

### **2.3. Cultural and Social Influences:**

Dialect is impacted more by its social nature instead of etymological instruments due to its quintessence as a social carrier, and social and social components are significant to the advancement of slang. Events like historical developments, economic changes, technological advances, or social revolutions can alter certain linguistic phenomena. Nowadays the development of digital information technology extremely accelerated the pace of the evolution of slang. Social media, online communities, and digital peer-to-peer platforms have become catalysts for the rapid dissemination and the adoption of new words. Bringing slang into the international arena allows more people to savour them and change them.

In general, the evolution of slang language is mainly regulated by linguistic mechanisms through the transformation of lexical meanings and stimulated by social change. While its evolution shows that the language is innovative, flexible and adaptive in the constantly changing linguistic environment of humans, the fact that there is a certain periodicity in the development of slang and that obsolete slang may repopulate with new lexical meanings in the embryo of a completely new context is an aspect of the tenacity of oral language It demonstrates.

## **3. Vocabulary Selection**

### **3.1. Semantic Evolution of Positive Slangs**

As stated in the semantic shifts in Part Two, the author has selected words that were originally entrenched in a particular context and through a semantic shift into meaning expressed admiration or positivity in the contemporary vernacular. As an illustration, the more commonly utilized slang word "cool " started within the 1950s to represent temperature or consistent calm and self-control. Over time, it experienced an exceptional semantic move from portraying a physical state to symbolizing a calm and a la mode aura.

Moreover, the word "wiped out", to start with recommending torment or down and out success, experienced a semantic move, advancing from its uncommon setting to get a handle on a colloquial expression signifying adoration or inspiration. The stunning move from a term delineating a negative helpful condition to a colloquial expression of a positive condition epitomizes the complex semantic move that rules slang nowadays. Other than, "rad," a truncated outline of "radical," seen a fundamental semantic alteration. At first, utilized in political or social talk, it advanced to communicate bolster or fervour. This semantic move from its perky honest-to-goodness reason to a more casual expression of regard reflects the flexibility of the tongue in reflecting the changing social state of judgment skills and values, depicting the capacity of words to create representations of thought processes and bolsters inside a cutting-edge etymological situation.

The advance of the tongue appears to be an interesting event, where words initially settled in specific settings experience semantic shifts, changing their suggestions to talk of love or motivation inside the cutting-edge vernacular.

The paper will likely start with a brief introduction of the cases of slang that exemplify expressions that pervade motivation and commendation. The author chooses slang from different periods and records the semantic definitions in a chronological arrangement to have a better assessment of its advancement.

### 3.2. English Slang in the 1920s

The 1920s, moreover known as the “Roaring Twenties,” was a time of incredible alteration in North America. Individuals were getting a charge out of recently discovered flexibility after the conclusion of World War I, and this was reflected within the slang they utilized. "Bee's Knees" developed as a state signifying brilliance or grandness. Its semantic meaning reflected a snide tone, as bees' knees are little and unimportant, differentiating with the phrase's planning meaning of something exceptional or noteworthy.

By 1949, "dog's bollocks" passed on a comparative assumption to "bee's knees" but with a more express implication of something amazing or predominant. Its semantic move emphasized an indeed more grounded underwriting of something vital or uncommon.

### 3.3. English Slang in the 1950s

The 1950s were a time of post-World War II thriving, with unused advances and social advancements forming society. In spite of the fact that this decade was much more traditionalist than the 1920s from a social viewpoint, it also saw the rise of prevalent culture, which had a significant impact on dialect. For occurrence, well-known terms such as ‘cool’ and ‘daddy-o’ have been broadly utilized all throughout the decade.

"Cool cat" or basically "cool" epitomized somebody who epitomized a sense of mould unwinding or gorgeousness. Its semantic meaning signified an individual who was respected for their mien, fashion, or capacity to preserve composure.

### 3.4. English Slang in the 1980s

The 1980s were a time of incredible social and social alter. It was a period when innovation was quickly progressing, strong mould patterns were being built up, and individuals from all walks of life had more openings than ever before.

Rad is brief for "radical," this term within the 1980s passed on a sense of something amazing, energizing, or cool. Its semantic advancement changed "radical" from its unique political or social intentions to a more positive and casual expression of endorsement or deference.

### 3.5. English Slang in the 1990s

From colourful designs like stonewashed pants, neon windbreakers, and bright-coloured scrunchies to famous movies such as *Titanic* and *Jerry Maguire* – it is no shock that pop culture had an immense influence on life within the 90s.

Originating within the 1990s, "phat" at first portrayed somebody or something as well-proportioned or breathtaking in African American Vernacular English. Its semantic move advanced it into a term of approval or deference, meaning something cool, amazing, or great.

"Show me the money!" - This expression from *Jerry Maguire* came to speak to excitement or enthusiasm, with its semantic meaning advancing from a request for proof to an expression of energy or enthusiasm.

From *Titanic*, the line "I'm the king of the world!" passes on a sense of pride or invigoration, advancing into a state utilized to specific delight or triumph.

From colourful designs like stonewashed pants, neon windbreakers, and bright-coloured scrunchies to famous movies such as *Titanic* and *Jerry Maguire* – it is no shock that pop culture had an immense influence on life within the 90s.

### 3.6. Contemporary Slang

The 2000s saw the rise of social media, smartphones, and a focus on self-expression. One of the main characteristics of North American society is its multiculturalism, with people from various backgrounds and ethnicities living together. At the same time, there is also a growing awareness of social justice and inclusivity, with movements and discussions around race, gender, and sexual orientation becoming more prominent.

In contemporary usage, "lit" signifies something exciting, impressive, or cool. Its semantic evolution emphasizes high energy, enjoyment, or approval, often used to describe an electrifying or fantastic experience.

To demonstrate the evolution of positive slang, the author further employs the above terms of the formation and evolution of slang in Part Two and applies them to observe the following few pieces of information: to check out where these words came from, how they changed, and what they meant to people in those times. By studying these words, the following section reveals how feelings of happiness and approval have changed in language across history.

## 4. Evolution of Positive Slang

### 4.1. Shifting Linguistic Landscapes

The linguistic landscape underwent remarkable shifts from the early to mid-20th century, fostering the emergence and evolution of new positive slang while witnessing the continuation of expressions like "Bee's Knees" and "Dog's Bollocks". As a consequence of World War I, the early 20th century radiated an atmosphere of societal flexibility and social dynamism. This period created unmistakable expressions like "Bee's Knees" and "Dog's Bollocks," reflecting adoration and greatness in the midst of societal changes. The expressions, shaped by compound and semantic changes, embody the winning eagerness of the Jazz Age. By partition, the mid-20th century, post-World War II, spun toward steady quality, budgetary triumphs and a burgeoning client culture. This move saw the rise of show-day positive slang like "cool" and "astonishing", illustrating endorsing, stunning quality, or imperativeness. Concurrently, existing expressions such as "Bee's Knees" and "Dog's Bollocks" advanced inside this changing etymological scene, changing their proposals to resonate with the advancing social setting.

The movement of the term "phat" from its beginnings interior the 1990s inside African-American Vernacular English to its progressed utilization talks to a captivating semantic move in lingo. To start with, "phat" was utilized to depict people or objects as well-proportioned or awe-inspiring, reflecting physical characteristics related to totality or degree. Evidently it was a coincidental elective spelling for "fat".

Be that because it may, the term has over time experienced an earth-shattering semantic move, rising over its specific desire of proposing yielding, endorsing or caprice. Its move in meaning changed "phat" into a colloquial expression utilized to illustrate something cool, astounding, or mind-blowing inside the display day vernacular. This semantic development diagrams the flexibility of lingos, where words rise over their one-of-a-kind correct definitions to encompass broader characters that reflect social states of intellect and values.

### 4.2. Digital Era and Rapid Slang Evolution

Changes within the medium through which slang is transmitted in present-day times have had a coordinated effect on the rate of arrangement and spread of slang. Already, beneath certain circumstances, slang seems nearly as if it were to be proliferated orally. The creation and spread of slang were credited to a gathering or a club of individuals with comparative hobbies or intrigues. An



uncommon way of characterizing something and a streamlined treatment of a complex and theoretical concept. Presently, the presentation of online media has made communication between circle members smoother, making slang an extraordinary "code" between individuals of the same gather more well-known. The rise of more sectioned and diverse circles on social media has moreover brought about more individuals having a place in particular circles in this manner expanding the target groups of onlookers of slang. Slang that cannot be widely utilized, to begin with, can moreover be broken through social media such as TikTok and Facebook.

Within the modern vocabulary, the advanced age and the sweeping circle of social media have a significant impact on the advancement of positive slang. Looking at notorious expressions such as "Show me the money!" from Jerry Maguire and "I'm the king of the world!" from Titanic outlines the semantic advancement inborn in these expressions. At first, established in particular settings, these expressions have transitioned from their unique implications to communicate assumptions of excitement or triumph. This phonetic advancement mirrors the transformative effect of advanced time and social media on the spread and adjustment of dialect, especially proven within the quick worldwide selection of terms like "lit" and "cool".

"Show me the money!" initially verbalized as a request for proof within the film Jerry Maguire, has advanced past its strict translation to represent fervour or enthusiasm. So also, "I'm the king of the world!" at first communicating pride or invigoration in Titanic, has changed into a state indicating bliss or triumph. These semantic shifts suggest the flexibility of tongues in exemplifying nuanced sentiments and the adaptability of expression through social settings.

The quick spread and around-the-world affirmation of present-day slang terms such as "lit" and "GOAT" are typical of the effects utilized by online stages like Twitter and TikTok.

Vogels et al. found that Millennials commit generally 2 hours and 38 minutes each day to social media stages like YouTube (66%), Instagram (72%), and Facebook (87%) [8]. This dynamic engagement plays a part in the quick spread and selection of recently coined terms inside social media, cultivating a conducive environment for the improvement and integration of modern slang. Millennials' submersion in these stages permits them to get a handle on the implications and utilizations of these advancing expressions, contributing altogether to the advancement and extension of cutting-edge slang. These computerized spaces encourage momentary communication and broad sharing, empowering slang terms to navigate geological and social boundaries quickly. The grasp of these terms on a worldwide scale underscores the inescapable effect of social media in forming etymological patterns.

The seamless integration of expressions like "lit" and "dope" into everyday discourse highlights the significance of digital platforms in fostering linguistic convergence, amplifying the influence of contemporary cultural phenomena on language evolution. In the contemporary lexicon, popular music, films, news, celebrities' catchphrases, and popular events in society have given birth to a new generation of slang. However, these slang words do not last as long as the old slang words you that have passed through history, but only appear briefly in the annual list of hot words, and then are replaced by newer and hotter words and then gradually forgotten. As receivers Gen Zers are highly comprehensible when it comes to understanding and applying online slang or contemporary neologisms in everyday speech, particularly when it comes to word construction, lexical variation, and borrowing, and actively absorb new phrases that are popular in social media and are aware of their usage and meaning.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper provides a comprehensive exploration of the historical evolution of positive slang, shedding light on its dynamic transformation over the decades by examining linguistic mechanisms and cultural influences. The study unravels the factors of positive slang's evolution, and

the analysis of specific terms across different eras illustrates the adaptability of language in capturing changing societal attitudes and values. Furthermore, the paper underscores the significant impact of the digital era and social media on the rapid dissemination and adoption of contemporary slang, highlighting the influential role of online platforms in shaping linguistic trends and fostering linguistic convergence. In essence, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of positive slang, offering insights into its historical trajectory and responsiveness to cultural shifts. The adaptability and resilience of slang in reflecting the evolving needs and expressions of diverse social groups emerge as key themes. As language continues to evolve in response to technological advancements and cultural dynamics, positive slang stands as a vibrant and ever-changing aspect of linguistic expression, capturing the spirit of different eras while adapting to the contemporary digital landscape.

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