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A Lexico -Semantic Analysis of 2024 Gen Z Slang: Exploring *No Gree for Anybody* and its Social Implications

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Abstract

This research examines how words are utilised to communicate meaning in selected X posts on the 2024 Gen Z slang *No Gree for Anybody*. "X" is a social media platform formerly known as Twitter. It is an internet platform that encourages interaction on topical socio-political, religious, economic and other sundry issues. Previous research in this field has focused on the study of words and their usage in different contexts. In continuation with the existing scholarship, this research explores the Gen Z usage of the slang, *No Gree for Anybody*, and the various meanings generated from its usage on the X space. Thus, this work identifies different contexts where the slang is employed, its function in such contexts, and its impact on the X space. The paper adopts M. A. K Halliday's systemic functional grammar, particularly for its concern on the usage and functions of language in context. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilising selected media posts relevant to the slang *No Gree for Anybody* on the X space. The data for the analysis were collected from tweets, retweets, posts, comments and replies made by social actors on the selected social media platform. This paper discovers that the Gen Z deploy

a distinct style in their lexical choices to express different views through the use of the slang. More so, the study finds that the slang *No Gree for Anybody* as used by social actors can connote a sense of motivation for self-improvement or a resistance against an oppressive system. The study concludes that the media space, specifically the X platform serves as a powerful platform for self-expression and the creation of meaningful change.
Keywords: Gen Z, Slang, M. A. K. Halliday, Systemic Functional Grammar, *No Gree for Anybody*

Introduction

Language is a powerful tool that significantly influences discourse within a given society. Language is responsible for the formation of ideas and beliefs. The words we select and how we articulate them hold the ability to impact our perceptions of the world. As a matter of fact, "The mere thought of a world without language elicits depressive boredom and retrogression" (Urujzian & Etuk, 2023, p.271). Etuk and Akpan (2023, p.69) consent to this when they jointly aver that "It is through language that emotions, desires, thought, religious and socio-political views and beliefs of individuals, groups of individuals and that of an entire community of people are expressed." In addition, Etuk and Urujzian (2018) assert that "Humans use language, in a distinct way, to communicate their feelings, desires and beliefs" (p.87). As previously communicated, "Language serves as the impeccable register of a society's collective memory, recording and preserving historical facts concerning the people, their worldview and perceptions" (Etuk, 2021, p.3). It is what provides the impetus for the communication of the collective worldview of a people.

Accordingly, Crystal (1997, p.4) posits that "English is now the most widely taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil- and in most of these countries, it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another

language in the process." This view by Crystal further strengthens the global dominance of the English language. English in Nigeria plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, replacing the indigenous languages in social, cultural, political and commercial interactions. Babarinde and Ahamefula (2020, p.143) assert that "English language (sic) performs a fundamental role in Nigeria and it is an official language used to conduct legislative, executive and judicial functions at the three tiers, local, state and federal government levels."

However, the English language over the years in Nigeria has undergone some significant changes and lost some of its original characteristics. Through regular contact with the local languages, English has been made to adapt to Nigerian context, reflecting local influences and diverging from British English norms. Since "Language is a reflection of one's emotions, beliefs and ideological positions" (Etuk & Okon 2024, p.88), this divergence could be seen in the different lexical items used by the non-native speakers to represent their context of discourse, desires, and beliefs such that the English language has been nativised, therefore, reflecting the perception and worldview of the people in Nigeria. This is evident in the use of slang expressions by contemporary Nigerian youths. Slang expressions are restricted to a specific context, and a certain group of persons. They are generally informal language used in context. This implies that slang is group and context specific. Such expressions embody colloquial language, or informal expressions with distinctive meanings (Ugot, 2014).

The slang "No gree" is derived from Nigerian Pidgin English, where "gree" means "agree". The phrase *No Gree for Anybody* can be roughly translated to "Do not agree with anyone" or "Do not yield to anyone." This captures a sense of resistance, independence, or assertiveness, which reflects the sociolinguistic context of Nigerian Gen Zs discourse on social media. The phrase

is idiomatic, carrying a broader socio-cultural meaning than its literal translation. It embodies a sense of defiance and a rejection of conformity or traditional expectations of politeness or deference. The expression can be seen as promoting assertiveness, self-priority, and possibly even a challenge to authoritative or dominant narratives. Generally, the Gen Zs are classified as a class of people born between late 1990s and 2010. Ugoala (2024) posits that Gen Z is used to refer to those born between mid-1990s and 2010, and are exposed to the internet. Therefore, it is not surprising that these persons are mainly characterised by assertiveness, revolutionary thoughts, and dismantling of order, and traditional beliefs and practices. In language use, they tend to question the formal or standard use of language. It suffices to say that this set of persons conform to the post-structuralists and post-modernists conventions of thought and language use.

Lexical Semantics

Lexical semantics is a specialized area within the field of linguistics that is focused on exploring the meaning of words and phrases, along with their connections and compositions. According to Urujzian and Etuk (2024, p.315-316), "The units of analysis in lexical semantics are words but also sub-words or subunits such as affixes and even compound words and phrases." This field of study delves into the various semantic aspects of words, including their denotations, connotations, affiliations, and how these factors shape the overall meaning of more extensive linguistic structures like phrases, sentences and texts. Lexical semantics explores two key words: "lexis" and "semantics", the former "words" and the latter "meaning". From the foregoing, it could be deduced that there is a relationship between a lexical item and the meaning it carries. This much is explained by Etuk and Urujzian (2024, p.189) when they posit that "…lexical items like "there" and "those" which refer to things outside of the text, could have their meaning fully recoverable when placed in the social context in which the text is established." However, lexico-semantics is not just limited to the

study of words and the meaning of words, it deals with the decomposition of word meaning (Adebileje & Araba, 2012). This informs the attempt to undertake a lexico-semantic analysis of the slang *No Gree for Anybody*.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include to;

- **i.** identify the various instances of the use of the slang *No Gree for Anybody* in selected X posts;
- **ii.** examine the lexical meaning and semantic functions of the slang *No Gree for Anybody* in the context of Gen Z communication;
- **iii.** explore the pragmatic and sociolinguistic implications of the slang *No Gree for Anybody* in online interactions among Gen Z users;
- **iv.** interrogate the cultural and social significance of the slang *No Gree for Anybody* as a marker of identity, group membership, and social attitudes among Gen Z users.

Theoretical Framework: Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic functional grammar (SFG) holds a functional approach to the study of language. It sees language as a social activity, hence, the theory asserts the acceptability of a language rather than its grammaticality. Unlike Chomsky's Transformational generative grammar (TGG) that is syntax-oriented, systemic functional grammar is based on the function a language plays in the society and how that function is accepted by its users (Sadighi & Bavali, 2008). According to Etuk and Umoh (2024, p.369), "The central theme of this theory is to underline how meaning is interpreted in texts (both spoken and written) and how language functions in accordance with the parameter set by the particular society." Thus, Halliday's SFG projects function as the primary goal of language in a social system.

SFG has been embraced and adopted by many linguists in their scholarly works. For instance, Dik (1989) adopted this grammar

model in his work entitled "Functional Grammar" where he asserts that:

> In the functional paradigm a language is in the first place conceptualised as an instrument of social interaction among human beings, used with the intention of establishing communicative relationships. Within this paradigm one attempts to reveal the instrumentality of language with respect to what people do and achieve with it in social interaction. A natural language, in other words, is seen as an integrated part of the communicative competence of the natural language user (p.20).

From Dik's assertion, it can be observed that functional grammar is an approach to the study of language that takes into account language functions in the social setting and how such functions are accepted in a given language community. It can be said that systemic functional grammar takes into account the context where linguistic elements are used and studies the way in which they are instrumentally useful or functional in a language given environment.

Similarly, Bloor and Bloor, (2013) adopted the model. Their illustrations which were carried out using a variety of texts, brought them to the conclusion that language is meaning filled. This aligns with the opinions of Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.1) who assert that "language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning, so a text is a process of making meaning in context." This in a whole justifies the functionality and acceptability of a language in a society. It is for this reason that this theory is adopted for a lexico-semantic study of selected X posts on the 2024 Gen z slang *No Gree for Anybody.*

Methodology of the Study

This research is qualitative. The approach is adopted to enable the researcher to draw inferences and make deductions from the data

collected for analysis. Ekanola et al (2019) explain that this method allows the researcher to explore attitude or behaviour of the data set. The context of the study centres on Gen Z's use of slang on the digital space to create and evolve language that fits their distinct communication styles. The media space, X, serves as the selected platform owing to how it fosters linguistic innovation among the Gen Z. Therefore, this study is limited to posts on X purposively selected based on the use of the slang, *No Gree for Anybody*. The posts include texts, hashtags, emojis, and other language features.

Data were organised into various categories to reveal emerging themes, such as usage context, user demographics, and related phrases. Also, by studying the language and tone of the posts, the study provides insights on how social and cultural factors impact the slang's meaning. This ultimately helps in identifying the underlying themes and patterns, including motivations, cultural references, and social dynamics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Sociocultural and Pragmatic Implications

Social Practice: The usage of *No gree for anybody* as a New Year resolution humorously comments on changing social dynamics, where the younger generation is seen to prioritise self-respect, self-assertion, and equality over social harmony or "being the bigger person". The phrase captures a zeitgeist of resistance and personal empowerment.

Pragmatic Force: The phrase's deployment in X has a performative function, as it both describes a stance and simultaneously encourages others to adopt it. It carries a pragmatic force of challenging social norms, pushing against passive or conciliatory behaviour in favour of more confrontational or direct communication styles.

Some of the selected posts on X which are related to the slang *No Gree for Anybody* are presented and discussed below.

Excerpt 1.



Excerpt 2.



Excerpt 3.



No Gree for Anybody as a Linguistic Tool for Resistance

Contextually, the above posts depict a sense of resistance as seen in the graphic representation of the situation. From excerpt one, the police and a citizen of the country are seen dragging a gun. This connotes a sense of resistance against injustice and police brutality where a pedestrian is most times, stopped, searched and harassed for no just cause; and this is typical of the Nigeria Police Force. Hence, the complaint on the post is used to incite a sense of awareness for people to be on the alert against any form of harassment by the police force and to also inform the police unit that they are aware of the unjust treatment meted on the commoners in the country under the pretense of securing life and property. Therefore, the motif behind the post in this context is to motivate people who find themselves in such

situations to take their chances against anyone that seems to stampede against their rights. Thus, this utterance is enveloped in a hashtag to amplify the intended message. A similar post that reflects this notion is presented in excerpt 2. From the username of the poster, it can be seen that the slang has been foregrounded to the extent that it is even used as the account name. Just like the post analysed earlier, this post is more direct in the sense that it shows assertiveness and resistance against anything and anyone who possesses a form of threat or negativity. With lexical items such as 'If dem push you, push dem back', 'If dem slap you, slap them back', the motive for resistance is achieved by creating the awareness that everyone should be ready against any form of threat. More so, excerpt 3 above reflects a political context, where the content is used to communicate social, political, and interpersonal messages. The excerpt reflects a deep engagement with local politics, emphasising grassroots activism and direct action. It suggests that electoral outcomes are not merely determined by official processes but by the active, collective intervention of the populace. The use of the lexical item "rigging" refers to electoral manipulation, implying an act that can be countered by the people's seriousness.

The sentence "if ANAMBRA people are serious it will not work" uses a conditional adverb in the subordinate clause, to suggest that the desired outcome (preventing rigging) is dependent on collective attitude and action; while "Everybody must match the collation centre with the ballot boxes" employs a sense of obligation (must), indicating a strong imperative for coordinated, assertive action. It is pertinent to acknowledge the role of the tense in ‘will’ utilised in the main clause of the first sentence. The tense which should express futurity is employed to reflect immediacy if action is taken. In the words of Udoka, Umoh and Etuk (2020: 58), “Tense is a category that locates the action of a verb on a timeline in relation to the time of speech relating to the action in question”.

Furthermore, the tenor of the text positions the speaker as an advocate of activism and resistance, while the addressees (Anambra people, Mr. Valentine Ozigbo) are positioned as either collaborators or agents of change who must act decisively to protect their electoral integrity. Similarly, the use of the hashtag *#NoGreeForAnybody* ties the excerpt to a broader movement or campaign of resistance, functioning as a cohesive device that links the text to a larger discourse on assertiveness and non-compliance in socio-political contexts. The attitude of the text exhibits a high level of modality especially with words like "must," which convey urgency, seriousness, and a no-nonsense approach to political engagement. This aligns with the hashtag *#NoGreeForAnybody*, suggesting a confrontational stance. The use of "very personal to us" indicates a strong emotional attachment, establishing a high level of involvement and urgency.

Excerpt 4.



Excerpt 5



***No Gree for Anybody* as a Tool for Humour Reflection**

The context of the above posts is used to create humour. The use of lexical terms like "keeper" (a slang term for a soccer

goalkeeper), "Brahhhh" (a sound effect used to mimic surprise or impact), and "Werey" (a Nigerian slang term for a crazy or foolish person) indicate a playful, colloquial register that is typical of informal social media communication. Also, the phrase "mo télé Werey straight" is codeswitching that combines elements of Pidgin English and urban Yoruba slang. It uses "mo" to mean "I" télé "follow" and "Werey" to describe the TV humorously, personifying it as a crazy entity. The primary illocutionary act here is to entertain and share a relatable, funny experience. The humour is amplified by the exaggerated response to the situation (diving to save the TV as if one were a goalkeeper) and the use of sound effects and slang. The perlocutionary effect is to elicit laughter, amusement, or sympathy from the audience, who may find the situation both humorous and relatable.

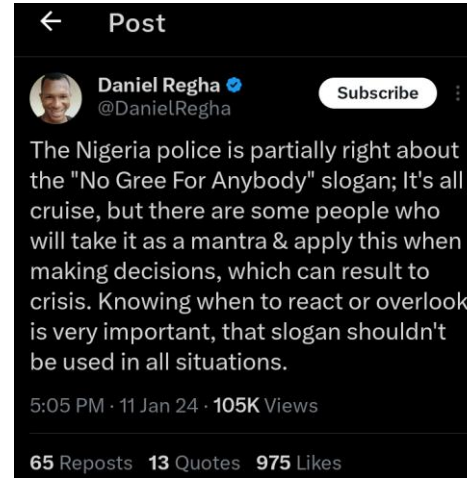
Semantically, the phrase "I just knew I was a keeper in my past life" is hyperbolic and metaphorical, using humour to suggest that the speaker's quick reaction to the falling TV resembles that of a soccer goalkeeper's reflexes. The exaggeration contributes to the humorous effect. Also, the tone of the post is light-hearted, informal, and self-deprecating, indicated by the use of phrases like "Brahhhh," which mimic sound effects, and "Werey," a slang term used playfully. The use of emojis emphasises the humorous tone and helps convey the speaker's attitude of amusement towards their own actions. The tenor of the post is seen in how the speaker positions themselves as a storyteller sharing a humorous, self-reflective anecdote with an audience, possibly friends or followers on social media. The informal and playful language choice establishes a friendly and approachable relationship with the audience. Moreover, the repetition of personal pronouns ("I," "my") and cohesive devices like "and" help link the clauses together, ensuring that the narrative flows smoothly. The emojis further tie together the humorous elements, creating a cohesive tone.

The same thing applies to the second excerpt tagged *No Gree for Anybody* "church edition". The excerpt is humorously used to elicit a sense of fun by asking church members to demand accountability from their church pastor. Though humorous at the surface, however, the main aim behind the posts is to castigate those pastors who are fond of extorting money from their members to enrich themselves, hence, the demand for them to make a financial report about their finances.

Excerpt 6.



Excerpt 7.

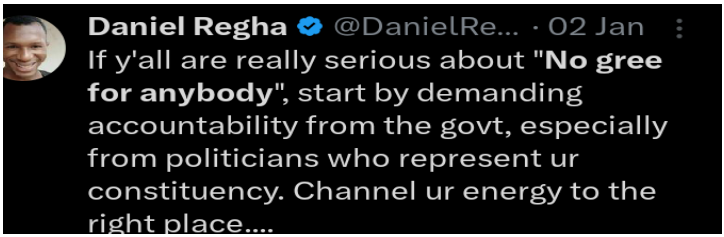


Caution against the Wrong Usage of *No Gree for Anybody*

The use of the slogan "*#NoGreeForAnybody*" in the post above reflects a socio-political climate where citizens, especially the youth, are increasingly vocal about their dissatisfaction with authority, social injustice, or political manipulation. The slogan suggests a refusal to be compliant or passive. However, the Nigeria Police's warning reflects a state or institutional response to what is perceived as a growing movement of resistance that could potentially escalate into civil unrest or conflict. Words like "plunge" and "crisis" are lexically loaded with negative connotations, suggesting severe, chaotic, or dangerous outcomes. This choice of words indicates the gravity of the police's concern

over the slogan's influence. Also, the word "warns" is a strong lexical choice used to convey urgency, authority, and seriousness. Semantically, the phrase "can plunge Nigeria into crisis" uses a metaphor ("plunge") that paints a vivid picture of chaos and disorder. It implies a sudden descent into instability, which can be caused by widespread resistance or confrontation fueled by the slogan. The slogan "#NoGreeForAnybody" therefore has become a symbolic representation of civil disobedience or resistance, and the police frame it as a threat to public order. The excerpt shows how language is strategically used to frame a slogan like "#NoGreeForAnybody" within the discourse of potential civil unrest and crisis. The Nigeria Police employs authoritative and cautionary language to shape public perception, presenting the slogan as a possible catalyst for instability. This aligns with the state's role in maintaining order, but also reflects tension between state authority and the public's right to express dissent, especially within the context of growing socio-political activism in Nigeria.

Excerpt 8

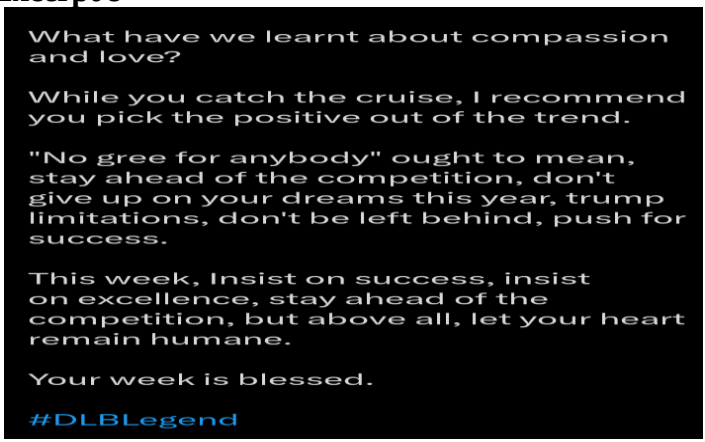


The above excerpt reflects a call to action within a sociopolitical context where there is a growing demand for transparency, accountability, and political activism, especially among Nigerian youths. The slang "#NoGreeForAnybody" in this context symbolises a broader movement against complacency and passive citizenship. The speaker's appeal to "demand accountability from the govt" specifically targets a politically aware audience that may already be frustrated with governance but requires direction on how to effectively channel their dissent. Lexical items such as "demanding accountability" suggest a strong, active approach to

civic engagement rather than passive observation or compliance. Similarly, the phrase "Channel ur energy to the right place" uses the metaphor of "channeling energy," implying the redirection of focus from possibly misguided or diffuse actions to more targeted and effective forms of activism. Also, the conditional clause "If y'all are really serious" implies skepticism and challenges the audience's commitment to the principles underlying the slang. It creates a semantic contrast between mere verbal commitment and tangible action. The imperative verbs "start by demanding" and "channel" have strong connotations of action and direction, reinforcing the speaker's intention to motivate proactive behaviour.

Thus, the function of the excerpt is seen in how it strategically uses language to challenge, motivate, and redirect the audience's political energy toward more effective forms of activism. The conditional framing questions the depth of commitment to the popular slang "#NoGreeForAnybody," while the imperative mood directs the audience towards concrete actions—demanding government accountability and focusing on local representatives. This approach aligns with a broader call for informed and strategic civic engagement in Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

Excerpt 9



The text reflects a context where there is need for motivational content that encourages both personal development and ethical considerations. It aligns with contemporary discourse that promotes success and competitiveness but emphasises the maintenance of humanity and compassion. The recontextualisation of *No Gree for Anybody* shows an adaptation of local slang to encourage self-betterment. This reflects a nuanced understanding of the audience's linguistic and cultural landscape. The illocutionary act of the text is both motivational and advisory. The speaker seeks in this context to inspire the audience to adopt a proactive approach to their goals while maintaining a humane attitude. The perlocutionary effect is to instill a sense of purpose, focus, and balanced ambition within the audience. It aims to redirect the potentially defiant energy associated with the slang into constructive and positive outcomes.

The lexical choices in this context, could be reframed to mean persistence, determination, and resilience. This redefinition allows the phrase to be co-opted for personal development and self-improvement. Words like "compassion," "love," "humane," "success," and "excellence" are semantically loaded with positive connotations and values. They frame the discussion around personal growth that is balanced with ethical and humane considerations. Also, the phrase "catch the cruise" is a slang term that means to have fun or be playful. Here, it is contrasted with "pick the positive out of the trend," which encourages the audience to look beyond superficial enjoyment and find meaningful lessons about the slang *No Gree for Anybody.*

The function of the text is seen in its thematic structure. The lexical items “What have we learnt about compassion and love?", is a thematic question that sets up a reflective framework, inviting the audience to consider their values. This is evident in the redefinition of the popular slang. Thus, the theme “No gree for anybody ought to mean…” introduces a reinterpreted, positive

meaning for the slang, and the subsequent lines expand on this by listing specific, constructive actions or attitudes. The final lines, "This week, insist on success… but above all, let your heart remain humane," emphasise the theme of striving for excellence while retaining compassion, culminating in the closing blessing: "Your week is blessed". Additionally, the text maintains cohesion through the repeated use of imperatives ("insist," "stay ahead," "let") that guide the audience towards desired attitudes and behaviours. Also, the repetition of the theme of "success" and "competition" aligns with the motivational tone of the message.

Moreover, the excerpt reveals how language is employed to reframe the popular slang, "*#NoGreeForAnybody"* from a stance of resistance to one of persistence and personal excellence. Thus, the speaker blends motivational language with ethical reminders, encouraging the audience to strive for success while remaining compassionate and humane. This analysis demonstrates a skillful use of language to promote positive values and actions, adapting local slang to resonate within a broader, constructive narrative of self-development.

Excerpt 10



***No Gree for Anybody* as a Linguistic Tool for Self-motivation**

The post above reflects a contemporary trend in motivational discourse, using local slang to engage the audience in self-

improvement. The adaptation of "no gree for" to emphasise internal struggles over external resistance demonstrates an understanding of the audience's cultural and social context. The playful yet directive style of the excerpt aligns with informal, peer-to-peer motivational content commonly found on social media platforms. It resonates particularly well with younger audiences who appreciate both seriousness and humour in messaging. The illocutionary act is both motivational and engaging. The speaker aims to encourage the audience to resist their own negative tendencies while also inviting them to engage socially with the message., The perlocutionary effect is used to inspire the audience to reflect on their habits, take steps toward personal discipline, and perhaps engage with the speaker or community in a light-hearted manner (by saying "GM back").

Furthermore, the lexical choice in this context is reinterpreted to mean not giving in to one's own weaknesses or self-sabotaging behaviours. This interpretation encourages a mindset of self-control and determination. Words like "fight," "procrastination," "laziness," and "comfort zone" are semantically loaded with negative connotations that the speaker implores the audience to resist or overcome. "Fight" is a powerful verbal choice that evokes a sense of struggle and active effort. The use of "say GM back" introduces a casual, conversational element, with "GM" likely standing for "Good Morning." This phrasing adds a playful twist to the message, balancing the serious undertones with light-hearted engagement. Similarly, the semantic feature of "no gree for" shifts from a general stance of defiance or resistance (often towards others) to a more introspective and self-focused application. This semantic shift allows the phrase to be used as a tool for personal growth and self-improvement. The conditional clause "If you no gree for me" implies a challenge-response dynamic, where not agreeing with the speaker's message should prompt a friendly engagement ("say GM back"). This use of language creates a participatory and interactive environment.

Given the above analyses, it is obvious that the Gen z slang *No Gree for Anybody* can be used in diverse ways either to create a comic relief, warn, castigate, encourage, inspire or motivate someone. However, the predominant usage of the slang is mainly anchored on motivation as discussed in the data above. The slang is used to motivate the younger generation - the Gen Zs- towards taking chances where necessary. It is also used for self-motivation and as an advocacy for the less privileged or people who are facing overwhelming life challenge. For people who are battling with life's challenges, who are struggling to make ends meet, or sail through the hurdles of life, the slang could mean "Do not give up", "be inspired" and encouraged.

Moreover, the slang *No Gree for Anybody* stands as an anthem against any form of vices such as corruption, oppression, threats, both at the government sector, religion and social life. It serves as what gives voice to the voiceless commoners in the country. Equally, the use of the media space, specifically X platform which accommodates wider audience worldwide to project this slang, helps create a national movement and awareness on any form of injustice, corruption, violation of rights, police brutality, misuse of public funds and so forth.

Conclusion

This research highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Gen Z's use of the slang *No Gree for Anybody* on the X platform. Through a lexico-semantic analysis, the study uncovers the various ways in which this slang functions as a tool for both personal empowerment and social resistance. The distinct linguistic style employed by Gen Z, characterised by hashtags, emojis, and coinages, reflects their innovative approach to communication. By situating this analysis within Halliday's systemic functional grammar, the research illustrates how language operates contextually to shape meaning and social interaction. Ultimately, the X platform stands as a vital space for self-expression and the

promotion of meaningful societal change, driven by the creative language practices of its users.

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