

55 - Slang

What is slang, how is it used and what does dabbling have to do with the evolution of language?

Now, one thing you should know Smartypants is words are not all invented at once. Language is constantly evolving. Some words fall out of favor and stop being used - like "groovy". And other new words or phrases become popular or come out of nowhere. Take "OK" for example. OK was being used so frequently in the 1830's (even president Van Buren said it) that it was officially accepted as part of the English language. It's also the English word that is most often adopted by other languages!

At some point, all languages start using words in new ways that aren't completely literal. But all those non-literal phrases have to start somewhere. But where? I'll give you a hint-- it's *not* in the dictionary. So where do new words & phrases come from?

The answer is... KIDS! Young people are responsible for inventing and spreading slang as a way to create their own cool lingo - or kid code.

There's another way to make new words go viral that's even more powerful than kids. Any ideas? I'll give you a hint - it's the reason you're able to read this email. Or, listen to WHO SMARTED?... Technology. Technology has majorly influenced the language people use, throughout history. Think of all the different terms that popped up because of computers -- like "surfin' the web," "going viral", "spam", and 100's more!

What You'll Learn

1. What exactly are slang words and phrases - and how can you figure out what they mean?
2. What's the difference between a slang word or an idiom?
3. What is the most popular slang word that has stood the test of time. Trust us, it's pretty cool...

Activities

1. Tell jokes. Jokes are a wonderful way to develop language skills in children. Plus, who doesn't love a good joke? [Here](#) are some funny ones.
2. Story telling or reading stories are wonderful ways to introduce new words or ideas to kids! Even listening to podcasts like [WhoSmarted?](#) can foster curiosity. Here are some [classic short stories](#).

3. Singing is another way to include children in language. Can't carry a tune? They won't care! Teach them your favorite camp song from when you were a child or a favorite cultural or religious song. Not only will you be introducing them to new language, but you will also be teaching them about their family and culture. [Here](#) are some fun songs to get you started.

Additional Resources

All languages have slang, including American Sign Language. American Sign Language is used by people who are deaf and has its own language structures and words. Check out [this](#) video to learn more!

Kid News

Do you have any pets? Have you ever considered raising a lizard? Scientists discovered the world's smallest reptile in Madagascar. Its average size is 2.2 centimeters from tip to tail. They believe the lizard to be endangered because scientists have only ever spotted two. However, when the animal you are looking for could sit on your finger tip, it is a little harder to find. Read about this tiny lizard [here](#).¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com