An Analysis of Slang Words in *Mean Girls* (2024) Movie

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the types of slang words used by the characters in *Mean Girls* (2024) and analyse their functions through social dimensions. This research applied a qualitative approach, with data collected from the dialogues of the four main characters: Regina, Cady, Gretchen, and Karen, focusing on slang expression found in their conversations. The slang words were classified based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, which includes Fresh and Creative, Flippant, Imitative, Acronym, and Clipping. Additionally, Holmes' (2013) social dimension theory was used to explore how slang functioned in different social contexts, particularly in terms of solidarity, status, formality, and functional meaning. From the analysis, the findings showed that all five slang types appeared in the film, each serving different purposes depending on the situation. Some slang words were used to establish group identity and reinforce friendships, while others helped characters reinforce dominance or add humor. Moreover, the use of slang was not only a reflection of informal speech but also a means of strengthening friendships, gaining control, and maintaining social identity.
Keywords: Slang word, social dimension, *Mean Girls* (2024)

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis slang yang digunakan oleh karakter-karakter dalam Mean Girls (2024) dan menganalisis fungsinya dalam interaksi sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan data yang dikumpulkan dari dialog keempat karakter utama: Regina, Cady, Gretchen, dan Karen, dengan fokus pada ekspresi slang dalam percakapan mereka. Slang yang ditemukan diklasifikasikan berdasarkan teori Allan and Burridge (2006), yang mencakup Fresh and Creative (baru dan kreatif), Flippant, Imitative (imitatif), Acronym (akronim), dan Clipping (pangkasan). Selain itu, teori dimensi sosial Janet Holmes (2013) digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana slang berfungsi dalam berbagai konteks sosial, khususnya dalam hal solidaritas, status, formalitas, dan makna fungsional. Dari hasil analisis, ditemukan bahwa kelima jenis slang muncul dalam film tersebut, masing-masing memiliki tujuan yang berbeda tergantung pada situasinya. Beberapa kata slang digunakan untuk membentuk identitas kelompok dan mempererat persahabatan, sementara yang lain membantu karakter menunjukkan dominasi atau menambahkan unsur humor. Selain itu, penggunaan slang tidak hanya mencerminkan gaya bicara informal, tetapi juga menjadi sarana untuk memperkuat persahabatan, mendapatkan kendali, dan mempertahankan identitas sosial.
Kata kunci: *Kata slang, dimensi sosial, Mean Girls (2024)*

A. INTRODUCTION

As social creatures, people need language as a way to communicate with each other. Sociolinguistics examines how people use language in different social contexts to convey messages (Holmes, 2013). Language can be expressed both orally and in writing (Chaika, 1982). Oral communication is usually more natural and expressive, while written language is more structured and formal.

Slang is one of the most popular language variations. It is used in conversations to achieve social purposes depending on the context. Slang is considered informal language and is typically used within specific groups and situations. Regional dialects, occupational jargon, or subcultures are common sources of slang, which is a way to convey humor, sarcasm, or irony. This phenomenon is temporal and may vary depending on the group using it. Younger speakers and other groups with specific interests are more likely to use slang (Yule, 2014). According to Holmes (2013), variations in language among teenagers are reflected in the use of slang. Slang often aims to shorten sentences for simplicity and efficiency, and it is more likely to appear in informal situations.

Slang also frequently appears in various media, including movies, to reflect youth culture and social interaction. In the film *Mean Girls* (2024), a modern remake of the 2004 classic, slang is used by teenage characters to show their group identity, social status, and relationships. The movie focuses on *The Plastics*, a popular girl group led by Regina George, who uses language as a way to build and control social boundaries. This makes the film a suitable object of study to analyze how slang operates within teenage conversations. For this reason, the writer chose slang as the topic of this research, as it is widely used and reflects real-life communication among young people.

In this research, the writers aim to analyze slang words found in the movie Mean Girls (2024). The first objective is to identify the types of slang used based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory. The second is to analyze the meanings of these slang expressions using Holmes' (2013) social dimensions. This research is expected to give insight into how slang not only functions as a linguistic variation but also reflects social relationships, closeness, and group identity among teenagers.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Slang

The term 'slang' refers to newly created words within a social group that are not part of the speaker's dialect or native language. According to Fishman (1972), slang refers to informal language that is not recognized by formal dictionaries but has its own unique meaning. The meaning of a slang expression is determined by the context of the conversation. Holmes (2001) states that people may use different languages to respond to different social contexts. Therefore, it is important to be aware of whether the situation is formal or informal when communicating. Slang expressions are used in specific communities for particular purposes and are often viewed as less formal language and a form of absurd humor. Slang has grown and evolved over the years, expanding and enriching its meaning. It has become popular and has the potential to affect the way someone speaks in their everyday life.

Eble (1996) defines slang as "an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend in society at large." Slang undergoes significant changes from one decade to the next and can be used by people who are looking for innovation in words or speech. Claire (1998) stated that people use slang when they are comfortable with their partners in social situations, and it can make the conversation more intimate. Teenagers are the most likely to use slang. Finegan (2004) stated that teenagers and college students use slang more frequently in daily conversation, typically among close friends or certain groups. In any case, slang is more suitable for young people and

certain communities. The writers conclude that slang is an informal language used by a certain group of people for informal communication. It is used based on the situation and is considered a trend that changes over time. Therefore, the writer employs the theories of Allan and Burridge, as well as Holmes, as the primary framework for this research, because they align well with the supporting theories and provide a comprehensive basis for analyzing the types of slang and their meanings within social dimensions.

2. Types of Slang

There are five different types of slang, as determined by Allan and Burridge (2006):

a. Fresh and Creative

Fresh and Creative is slang language that has new vocabulary, informal variety, cleverness, imagination, and can be an up-to-date word. A few words that are already familiar will possibly be slang, as we do not realize it. For example, "*buddy*" (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 167) refers to a close friend, and completely original word that does not derive from a combination of multiple words, imitation, abbreviations, or clipping (Murthi et al., 2023).

b. Flippant

Flippant slang is made up of two words or more whose meanings are not correlated with denotative meaning. A good example of flippant slang is the phrase "kick the bucket", which means "to die". This word conveys a meaning different from its literal words, illustrating how flippant creates a layer of meaning specific to social context and intention.

c. Imitative

Imitative slang is a type of slang formed by modifying Standard English words or blending two words into a more informal expression. Common examples include contractions such as "*gonna*" (going to), "*wanna*" (want to), and "*lemme*" (let me), which reflect relaxed speech patterns commonly found in spoken English. Imitative slang also consists of Standard English words that maintain their original spelling but adopt new or extended meanings in informal contexts. For instance, the word "shit" originally refers to excrement but is frequently used to express frustration or describe an unpleasant situation.

d. Acronym

An acronym, or what is commonly called an abbreviation, is a type of slang formed from the initial letters of each word in an expression with the initials of a group of words or syllables. Common examples of acronym slang include "JK" stands for just kidding, "LOL" stands for laughing out loud, and "f2f" stands for face to face (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 66).

e. Clipping

Clipping, or reducing the form of a word, is often used in informal speech where shortened forms are widely accepted. The process involves removing parts of a word to create a simpler, shorter version that retains the original meaning. For example, the term "bro" is a clipped form of "brother" and is commonly used as a term of familiarity or affection between friends, often among males.

3. Social Dimensions

Holmes (2013) explains that the language we choose in any situation is influenced by key social factors. These include the participants and their relationship, the setting or context, the

topic, and the function of the interaction. These social dimensions reflect both the context of language use and the social status differences between speakers, forming the basis for understanding language variation in sociolinguistics. Holmes (2013) identifies four dimensions linked to social factors, which include:

a. The Solidarity-Social Distance Scale

Holmes (2013) introduces the Solidarity-Social Distance Scale, which measures the level of closeness or distance between speakers and how it affects language use. High solidarity is found in close relationships, where informal and personal language, including slang, is commonly used. In contrast, low solidarity occurs in socially distant relationships, leading to more formal speech.
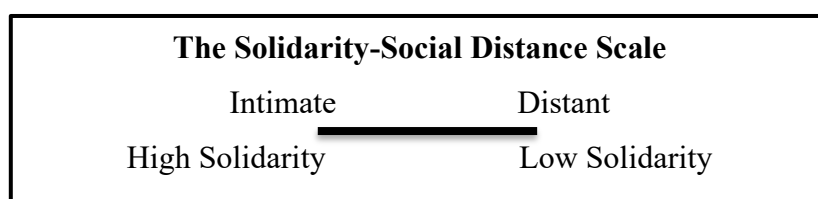

The Solidarity-Social Distance Scale

Intimate   Distant

High Solidarity   Low Solidarity

Figure 1. Diagram of Solidarity-Social Distance Scale, from Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (London: Routledge, 2013, p. 9)

b. The Status Scale

According to Holmes (2013), the Status Scale illustrates how language reflects power and social ranking. It helps analyze how people adjust their speech based on their relative status, where speakers may use formal language to show respect to someone of higher status, and informal or slang expressions among peers to signal equality or group identity.
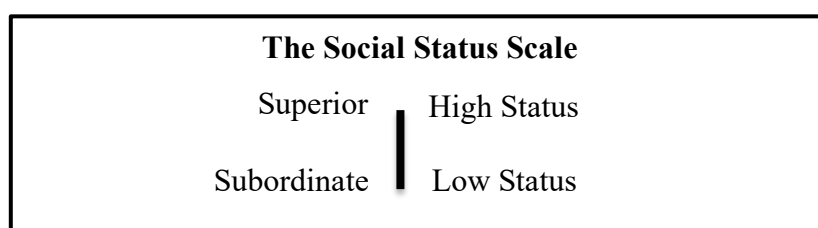

The Social Status Scale

Superior   High Status

Subordinate   Low Status

Figure 2. Diagram of Social Status Scale, from Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (London: Routledge, 2013, p. 10)

c. The Formality Scale

Holmes (2013) states that the Formality Scale explains how language varies depending on the situation. It shows that people use more structured and polite language in formal settings, while informal language is used in casual contexts. This scale helps understand how speakers adjust their speech to match social expectations in different environments.
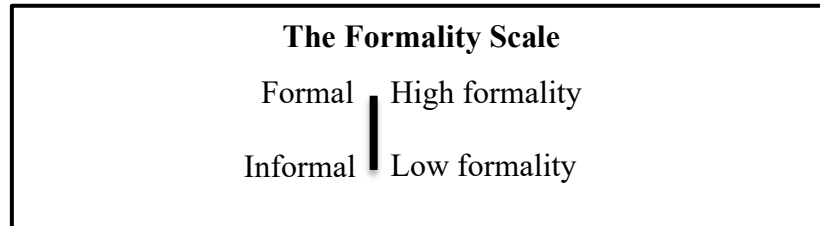
The Formality Scale

Formal | High formality

Informal | Low formality

Figure 3. Diagram of Formality Scale, from Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* **(London: Routledge, 2013, p. 10)**

d. The Referential and Affective Function Scales

According to Holmes (2013), the Functional Scale distinguishes between language used to convey information (referential) and language used to express emotions (affective). Referential language focuses on facts and content, while affective language emphasizes feelings and social connection. This scale helps explain how people adjust language depending on whether the goal is to inform or to express emotion.
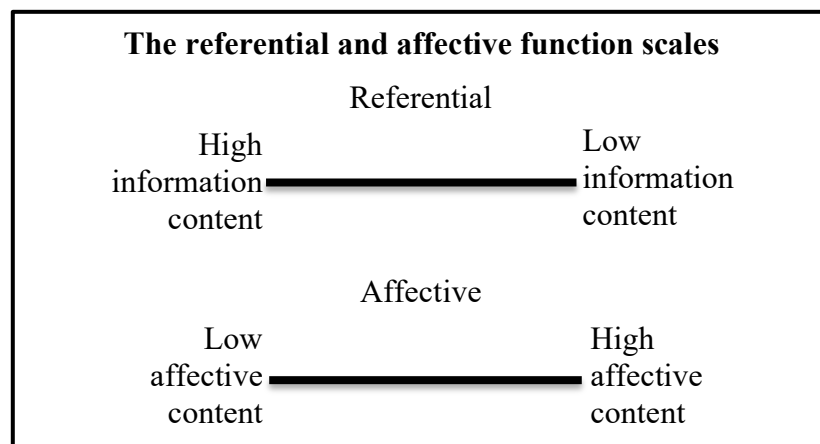
The referential and affective function scales

Referential

| High information content ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ Low information content

Affective

| Low affective content ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ High affective content

Figure 4. Diagram of Referential and Affective Function Scales, from Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* **(London: Routledge, 2013, p. 10)**

C. METHOD

1. Research Design

This research was classified as descriptive-qualitative since the data were presented in the form of words rather than statistics. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem, using non-numerical data such as words and texts. As a result, the data in this study were presented in descriptive or written form, which is typical of qualitative research. The analysis was conducted using Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory of slang types and Holmes' (2013) theory to examine their meanings within social dimensions.

2. Data and Data Source

All utterances, sentences, conversation dialogues, and screenshots from the movie *Mean Girls* by the main character that contained slang were used as data for this research. The data sources for this research included the movie *Mean Girls* and its script. In this movie, the writer analyzed the types of slang and their social dimensions.

3. Research Instrument

The research instrument in this study was the writers themselves. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the key instrument for data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As the main instrument, the writers selected the film *Mean Girls* (2024), identified and categorized the slang words used by the main characters, and analyzed their types and functions based on relevant theories. The writers also referred to journals and articles to support and strengthen the analysis.

4. Data Collection Techniques

There were several steps to obtain the data required for this research. First, the writers watched the movie several times in order to understand it. Second, the writers read the movie script comprehensively. Third, the writers marked the words or sentences that were included in slang and made a note of the data. Fourth, the writers classified the data that are related to the kind and the function of slang.

5. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the writers analyzed the data using three qualitative data procedures by Miles and Huberman (1994). First, data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions. Second, data display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. Third, conclusion drawing provides the conclusion after analyzing the data.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the slang analysis of the *Mean Girls* (2024) movie. They explored and displayed the types of slang found in the *Mean Girls* (2024) movie, including fresh and creative slang, flippant slang, imitative slang, acronym slang, and clipping slang.

1. Findings

a. Fresh and Creative
Data 03 (00:13:06 – 00:13:11)

Jason : "Hey, new girl! You want to see a trick? I can guess any girl's bra size. All you got to do is jump one time."

Regina : "Ew, Jason!"

Karen : "Do me."

Regina : "Oh, my God, Jason. You do not come to a party at my house with Gretchen and then *skeeze* on the new girl right in front of me."

Regina : "Do you want to have sex with him?"

Cady : "Oh, uh... no, thank you."
Regina : "Okay, then it's settled. Jason, no one thinks you're funny."

In this scene, Regina confronts Jason in the cafeteria, clearly showing her dominance in the social group. Although Jason is Gretchen's boyfriend, he has less influence than Regina. She speaks to him with confidence, and Jason does not argue back, indicating that he feels intimidated. Even Gretchen, Regina's close friend, is shown to be afraid of her, further emphasizing Regina's powerful position. Her higher social status is also supported by her background. She comes from a wealthy family, lives in a luxurious house, and is described as conventionally beautiful with a slim figure, blonde hair, and blue eyes. Regina has long held the title of "Queen Bee," and she uses her popularity and influence to control others, often through manipulation and dominance.

The slang word "skeeze" is classified as Fresh and Creative Slang, which includes newly created words or modified expressions that develop within a specific cultural group. It likely comes from a blend of "skank" and "sleaze" and is used to describe someone who behaves in a sleazy or socially unacceptable way. Regina uses the word when she scolds Jason for flirting with Cady, reminding him that he came to her party with Gretchen. Her words are not just a warning but a display of authority. By calling Jason out in front of others and saying no one thinks he is funny, she embarrasses him and reinforces her control. Regina's language in this scene reflects Holmes' Status Scale, which shows how language can express social rank and power. Her confidence and choice of strong words help maintain her role as the leader of *The Plastics*.

b. Flippant

Data 08 (00:18:48 – 00:18:51)

Gretchen: "Oh! And we only wear sweats or track pants on Fridays. If you break any of these rules, you can't sit with us. I mean, not just you, like, any of us. Like if I wore sweatpants today, I'd have to go sit over there...with the *Art Freaks."*

During lunch in the school cafeteria, Gretchen Wieners explains to Cady that *The Plastics* follow a strict dress code, and breaking any of these rules means a member cannot sit with them. She says, "Oh! And we only wear sweats or track pants on Fridays. If you break any of these rules, you can't sit with us. I mean, not just you, like, any of us." She adds, "If I wore sweatpants today, I'd have to go sit over there...with the Art Freaks." This statement shows how seriously the group enforces its rules, and how violating them could result in exclusion, even for someone already in the group.

The phrase "Art Freaks" is an example of Flippant Slang, based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification. It combines the word "art," which refers to creativity, and "freaks," a slang term for people who are viewed as odd or different. Together, "art freaks" becomes a label for students deeply involved in art but separated from the popular crowd. According to Holmes' (2013) Solidarity-Social Distance Scale, Gretchen's use of this term reflects how language creates group boundaries. Her words highlight high solidarity within *The Plastics* and low solidarity toward outsiders. The way she distances her group from others using slang reinforces their social status and the exclusivity of their circle.

c. Imitative
Data 04 (00:13:36-00:13:38)

Regina : "You're really *gonna* get noticed around here. We should help you."

During a conversation at school, Regina George notices Jason flirting with Cady and realizes that Cady is starting to get attention. Skeptical of Cady's growing presence, Regina tells her, "You're really gonna get noticed around here," which shows that she is aware of Cady's rising social status. Although she follows the statement with "We should help you," this offer seems more like a way to maintain control rather than genuine support. Regina's words suggest that popularity is something she and *The Plastics* regulate, reinforcing her dominant role in the school's social group.

The slang word "gonna" in Regina's line is an example of imitative slang, as classified by Allan and Burridge. It is a casual combination of "going" and "to," often used in spoken English to sound more relaxed and conversational. According to Merriam-Webster, the word "gonna" has existed since the 1800s and is widely used today in informal speech. Regina's use of "gonna" matches the casual high school environment while still maintaining her authority. According to Holmes' (2013) Status Scale, this shows how informal language can still reflect power dynamics. Regina sounds friendly, but her language subtly reinforces her control and higher status in the group.

d. Acronym
Data 23 (00:38:09-00:38:10)

Figure 5. "WTF"

Regina : "*WTF*"

During a party scene, Regina George sends a "WTF" text to Gretchen after seeing Cady arrive unexpectedly. She is surprised and confused because Cady was invited by Aaron, Regina's ex-boyfriend. By using the acronym "WTF," Regina expresses her disbelief in a short and direct way. The acronym stands for "What the fuck" and is commonly used to react to something shocking or unexpected. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang, "WTF" is a strong expression used to convey emotions like surprise or annoyance.

Regina's choice to use "WTF" instead of confronting the situation in person shows that she wants to express her feelings quickly but indirectly. This use of slang reflects Holmes's (2013) affective function, where language is used to show personal feelings. The slang term "WTF" helps make Regina's reaction sound casual, spontaneous, and emotionally charged. It also shows how slang is often used in digital communication to convey strong emotions in a simple and relatable way.

e. **Clipping**
Data 05 (00:13:42-00:13:44)

Regina : "We should help you. Can you give us some privacy for a *sec*?"
Cady : "Oh. Yeah, sure."
Janis : "I have your lunch!"
Regina : "All right. So, we never really do this, but...you're invited to eat lunch with us for the rest of the week."

In this scene, Regina George uses the phrase, "Can you give us some privacy for a sec?" when speaking to Cady Heron, a new student at their school. As the leader of the popular group *The Plastics*, Regina wants to discuss Cady with her friends, Gretchen and Karen, before deciding whether to invite her to sit with them at lunch. Although the phrase seems polite, it reflects Regina's authority in deciding who is allowed to be part of the group. Her tone shows that she is in control of the situation and that any decision must go through her approval. Regina's status in the group is once again emphasized, as she sets the rules and makes choices for others to follow.

The slang term "sec" in Regina's statement is classified as clipping slang based on Allan and Burridge's classification. Clipping slang is formed by shortening a longer word without changing its meaning. In this case, "sec" is a casual form of "second," often used in informal speech to refer to a short moment. According to Green's Dictionary of Slang, "sec" has been used informally since the early 20th century. By saying "for a sec," Regina makes her request sound more relaxed while still maintaining control. This moment also reflects Holmes' Status Scale, as Regina shows her higher social position by managing the conversation and making decisions on behalf of the group.

2. **Discussion**
This study explored how slang expressions are used in the movie Mean Girls (2024) by identifying both the types of slang and the social functions they serve in character interactions. Using Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification and Holmes' (2013) theory of social dimensions, the research shows how slang helps express identity, build relationships, and define roles within teenage social groups. Five types of slang were found: Fresh and Creative, Imitative, Flippant, Clipping, and Acronym. Fresh and Creative appeared most frequently with 22 occurrences, followed by Imitative with 21. These two types show the film's alignment with modern teenage speech that values creativity and relatability. Less frequent types like Flippant (3), Clipping (2), and Acronym (1) suggest that slang in conversations still follows the principle of clarity, in line with Grice's Maxim of Manner.

Regina George, as the leader of *The Plastics*, is the character who uses slang the most. Her frequent use of different slang types supports her dominant and trendy image. In teenage culture,

especially in American high school settings, slang is often used to appear socially active and popular. Regina uses slang not only to express emotions and control conversations but also to manage her image and maintain authority. For example, in her line "You don't come to my house with Gretchen and skeeze on a new girl right in front of me," the slang word "skeeze" helps her assert dominance in an emotional yet casual way. Slang also functions as a social strategy, reinforcing group bonds and setting boundaries with those outside the group.

Based on Holmes' (2013) social dimensions, slang in this movie mostly appears in informal settings. The Solidarity and Social Distance Scale appeared 29 times, showing that slang was mainly used among close friends. The Functional Scales appeared 16 times, indicating that slang was used to express emotion or add nuance to conversations. The Status Scale appeared 4 times, often in scenes where dominant characters reinforced their position. The Formality Scale did not appear, confirming that the slang expressions in the film occurred in casual contexts. Overall, slang in Mean Girls (2024) serves not only as a linguistic variation but also as a tool to shape identity, express closeness, and reflect teenage social dynamics.

E. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of slang words in *Mean Girls* (2024), the writer finds that slang plays an important role in teenage communication. Teenagers use slang not only to express their feelings, but also to feel connected with friends and show group belonging. Slang helps them sound more relaxed, funny, and up to date with trends. The characters often use slang that reflects how teenagers speak in real life, especially in casual conversations. Based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification, five types of slang appear in the movie: Fresh and Creative, Flippant, Imitative, Acronym, and Clipping. Fresh and Creative slang is the most commonly used, showing how teenagers enjoy inventing and spreading new words, while the presence of Imitative, Acronym, and Clipping indicates the variety found in daily teenage conversations.

Using Holmes's (2013) theory, this research also examines slang from a social perspective. Slang in *Mean Girls* (2024) mostly serves to build solidarity, express status, and convey emotions. The Solidarity-Social Distance Scale appears frequently, as slang strengthens friendships and creates a sense of belonging. The Status Scale is also seen, especially in Regina George's speech, where slang shows power and influence. The Affective Function reveals that slang helps express emotions like frustration, excitement, or sarcasm naturally. Although the Formality Scale is part of the theory, it was not a major focus since most slang occurs in informal settings. Overall, these findings suggest that slang is more than just informal language. It helps shape identity, strengthen social ties, and express emotion in teenage interactions, even when shown through fictional media like films.

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