Function and Representation of Slang Words in Movie *Mid90s* (2018): A Synchoronic Approach

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the use of slang words in Jonah Hill's Mid90s (2018) through a synchronic approach. By adopting Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory of slang categories, Partridge's (2006) classification of slang functions, and Watt's (1984) paradigm of slang representation, this study identifies different types of slang used in the Movie's dialog. It explores their functions in marking teenage identity. Qualitative analysis of the dialog data revealed four main categories of slang: fresh and creative, imitative, flippant, and clipping. The findings also identified three main functions of slang in the movie: society slang, solidarity slang, and trade slang. Further analysis shows how the characters' use of slang reflects and reinforces social dynamics and group identity in skateboarding culture. This research contributes to sociolinguistics by providing a new perspective on the representation of language variation as a marker of youth identity in the era.

INTRODUCTION

Language variation is an essential element in interpersonal communication and discourse. Akmanjian *et al.* (1998), as a cited in Nuraeni dan Pahamzah (2021), describe several forms of language variation that have attracted significant attention from linguists, which include lingua francas, pidgin, creole, jargon, slang, and taboo language. One form of language variation that has attracted the attention of linguists is slang, which is an informal lexical item used in interactions between members of homogeneous social groups and cannot be used in formal discourse due to its crude, humorous, or provocative nature (Muhartoyo & Wijaya, 2014).

The 1980s and 1990s marked an important period in the development of youth language, characterized by the emergence of the phenomenon of '*youth slang*' from various subcultures, especially the skateboarding, hip-hop, and grunge communities, as stated Ye (2019). This phenomenon then developed

into a broader cultural movement among the younger generation. Slang is considered the identity of young people within these groups, with each subculture developing its unique vocabulary as a form of lifestyle expression influenced by economic conditions (Habibiloyevna, 2021)

The emergence of slang raises two main issues in the context of sociolinguistics. First, its use tends to shift the existing formal language, thus creating an intergenerational communication gap (Alekseevna *et al.,* 2017). Second, slang is often considered impolite and inappropriate by specific segments of society because its language tends to be rude. Saussure (1916) in Pearsall (2015) described, the synchronic approach in sociolinguistics, provides a theoretical framework for examining language variation that prevails at a particular time.

The previous research by Prasetyo *et al.,* (2023) focused on identifying the types and functions of slang based on the theory of Allan and Burridge (2006). From the results of the study, five slang categories were found, namely: Fresh & creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. Furthermore, Abidin (2021) examined the use of slang words in animated film scripts using a qualitative descriptive method. The study used Eric Partridge's theory to identify the types of slang and the reasons for its use. The analysis process includes data identification, classification, description, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed three types of slang used in the movie: house slang, medical slang, and social slang, with social slang being the most dominant type used by the characters in the movie.

In addition, Asmalasari (2023) conducted research using a literary sociology approach based on Watt's theory. This research applies Watt's concept of literary sociology which divides the focus of study into three paradigm classifications: the author's social context, literature as a mirror of society, and the social function of literature. The results of the analysis show three main sociological aspects: social and cultural backgrounds that describe the life of marginalized communities, characters and social interactions reflected in the relationship between Mirta and Tarsa, and social structures that show the gap between social classes in society.

Based on the understanding of previous studies, the researchers are interested in analyzing the category, function, and representation of the use of slang in society. The movie *Mid90s* (2018) directed by Jonah Hill was chosen as the object of research because it displays an authentic representation of the use of slang in the skateboarding subculture in Los Angeles in the 1990s through the characters in the movie. The linguistic elements in this movie are interesting to analyze because they illustrate the communication patterns of the skateboarding subculture and the function of slang as a marker of social identity and group solidarity in a certain historical context.

To support this study, the researchers used three basic theories in analyzing slang. First, Allan and Burridge (2006) categorized slang variations

into five domains: Fresh and Creative, Imitative, Casual, Acronym, and Clipping. Second, Partridge (2015) analyzes the function and classification of slang words. In his book *"Slang, To Day and Yesterday,"* Partridge identifies categories of slang, including society slang, trade slang, and solidarity slang. Third, Watt (1984) uses a literary sociology approach that focuses on literature as a mirror of society. The three theories are used to analyze the variety, function, categorization, and representation of slang words in the film *Mid90s* (2018) because they represent the social reality of society.

Based on the analysis of the three previous studies, there are some significant research gaps. Prasetyo *et al.* (2023) only focused on identifying the types and functions of slang in contemporary films without considering temporal representation. Abidin (2021) limited his analysis to the classification of slang types using Partridge's theory without examining socio-cultural aspects. Meanwhile, Asmalasari (2023) uses Watt literary sociology approach, which focuses on literature as a mirror of society but does not examine linguistic aspects.

This research fills the gap by integrating three theoretical frameworks for a more comprehensive analysis, providing a specific temporal focus on the 1990s and analyzing the representation of slang in a sociocultural context, specifically the skateboarding subculture. Through a synchronic approach, this research not only classifies slang, but also examines how slang functions as a marker of identity, group affiliation and generational difference in a specific historical context, while providing a new methodological framework for analyzing language representation in the media. This research aims to identify slang words that appear in *Mid90s* (2018) movie and analyze their functions and representations in the social context of society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slang is not just a language variety but a dynamic communication system that reflects identity, social structure, and cultural change. To explore this multifaceted dimension, the research integrates three complementary theoretical approaches.

Allan dan Burridge (2006) theory provides an early foundation with a linguistic classification that explains the structural formation of slang. Regarding slang terms in Allan and Burridge (2006) theory, the researchers divided them into five categories as described below:

1. Fresh and Creative: The use of new and imaginative vocabulary that is trending. For example, "playerish" comes from the word "playboy."
2. Flippant: The combining of literal unrelated words to form a new meaning. For example, the phrase "dumb as hell" conveys the meaning of "very stupid," which shows a deviation from the literal interpretation.

3. Imitative: Slang that comes from the modification of standard English words. For example, the term "gonna" comes from the phrase "going to".
4. Acronym: an abbreviation formed from the initial letter of each word in a phrase. Common examples include "FYI," which stands for "for your information," and "LOL," which stands for "laughing out loud."
5. Clipping: The cutting of words into shorter forms with the same meaning. For example "y'all," which comes from "you all."

Partridge (2015) contribution complements structural analysis with an in-depth sociological perspective. Partridge's functional classification shifts the focus from linguistic structure to the social context of slang use. In the context of the *Mid90s* movie, slang functions as a specific marker within the skateboarding subculture, distinguishing members from non-members and creating group solidarity. With his eleven categories of slang, Partridge shows how language is not only a means of communication but also a complex marker for group, profession, and social identity. The eleven categories are taken from the book *"Slang, To Day and Yesterday,"* as follows:

1. Cockney Slang: Refers to the slang used by working-class people in London, often associated with the distinct Cockney accent.
2. Solidarity slang: used to show a sense of solidarity, familiarity, or membership in a particular social group.
3. Workmen's Slang: Closely related to Public House Slang and Tradesmen's Slang, used by both town and farm laborers.
4. Trade Slang: Some words are related to slang originating from and used by workers in the industrialized world.
5. Society Slang: A special vocabulary that arises in society and constantly changes with fashion trends. Much of this slang appears in everyday conversation but often disappears quickly.
6. Slang of Commerce: Used in trade and closely related to the world of commerce. Often used by businessmen, primarily in the stock exchange.
7. Slang in Public School and University: Used by students in public schools, boarding schools, private schools, and universities. University slang differs considerably from public school slang.
8. Slang in Theatre: In the 19th century, theatrical slang began to strongly influence every day and informal spoken English, gradually gaining status.
9. Medicine Slang: Considered more interesting to laymen compared to law slang. Examples discussed are limited to slang used in the present century.
10. Slang in Art: Emerged in the 17th century and was quickly adopted by society. More difficult to understand compared to other types of slang.
11. Soldiers' Slang: Slang terms originating from the army community and commonly used by soldiers.

Watt's (1984) as cited in Asmalasari (2023) sociological paradigm integrates the two previous perspectives by viewing slang as a dynamic reflection of social reality. Watt's theory positions language as a mirror of society, allowing researchers to understand how slang reflects social conditions and actively shapes perceptions and social relations. In the *Mid90s* (2018), slang becomes a window to understand the complexities of 1990s youth culture, revealing generational dynamics, social tensions and identity formation processes.

By integrating these three theoretical approaches, the research was able to design a comprehensive analytical framework. These three approaches allow researchers to describe slang and explore how language operates as a living, dynamic, and socially meaningful communication system. Each theory provides a different layer of analysis: Allan & Burridge with its structure, Partridge with its social function, and Watt with its cultural context creating a holistic understanding of slang in the movie *Mid90s* (2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method with a synchronic approach to examined slang words in the movie *Mid90s* (2018). According to Saussure (1916) in Turner *et al.*, (2018), the synchronic approach studies language as an interconnected system at a particular time. Creswell (2018), as cited in Adi & Suparyana (2022), explains that qualitative research methods allow researchers to understand how individuals or groups interpret social events, including language use and its impact on social and cultural aspects in certain situations.

The primary data source in the research is dialog from the movie *Mid90s* (2018) by Jonah Hill. Direct observation of the movie through the *Netflix* platform was conducted alongside analysis of the transcribed script using *transcript.id*, allowing for a thorough examination of the use of slang.

This research integrates Simbolon & Naibaho (2023) analytical framework with Monaro *et al.*, (2022) in three main stages. In the data reduction stage, slang was identified and classified using Allan and Burridge (2006) theory for slang categorization, Partridge (2015) theory for word function, and Ian Watt (1984) theory for literary representation analysis as a reflection of society. The second stage focuses on data presentation through systematic tables and descriptive analysis. The final stage involves concluding and synthesizing findings and validation using theoretical triangulation and peer review to ensure the validity of the analysis. This integrated methodological approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the use of slang in the socio-cultural context of the movie *Mid90s* (2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After thoroughly examining the movie and its script, the researchers proceeded to identify and categorize the slang vocabulary used by the

characters in the movie *Mid90s* (2018). This categorization was conducted based on Allan and Burridge theory (2006). The analyzed data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Types of Slang Word on movie *Mid90s* (2018)

No	Movie Dialog	Intent	Type of Slang
1	DABNEY: "He seems a bit **playerish** to me"	Playboy	Fresh & Creative
2	STORE OWNER: I'm not fucking scared of you guys. I'm fighting a fucking desert storm, you fucking **pussies**. Go back inside	Coward	Fresh & Creative
3	FOURTH GRADE: wow y 'all **niggas** scaring off customers this	a term for dark people	Fresh & Creative
4	FUCKSHIT: **y 'all** are about for business man is	You all	clipping
5	IAN: **i'll** trade you for your discman	I will	clipping
6	RAY: **Damn** you don't really drink all of it? Fill that up man	Oh my gosh	Imitative
7	RUBEN: Yo Stevie, you **gonna** fill this up yo? Yeah	Going to	Imitative
8	RUBEN: I'm a fucking **badass**. You're a little -ass kid.	tough	Fresh & Creative
9	RUBEN: You look **retarded**. You gotta get a new fucking board, man.	Stupid	Fresh & Creative
10	RAY: You **dumb as hell**	Very stupid	Flippant
11	RAY: That's **dope**. I like that.	Cool/great	Fresh & Creative
12	RAY: Yeah. They **ride for** Chocolate.	Work for	Flippant
13	PRO SKATER: Oh, okay. I can **dig it**. Yeah.	understand	Fresh & Creative
14	STEVIE: **Yeah**. What are black people?	agree	Imitative
15	FUCKSHIT: You're a good **dude**, man.	Friend	Fresh & Creative
16	RAY: what abou you Fourth Grade? What you **wanna** do?	Want to	Imitative
17	RUBEN: Shut the fuck up, **faggot**.	Gay	Fresh & Creative
18	PRO SKATER: where is the **craziest** place	most extreme	Fresh & Creative
19	RAY: Everybody in here is **bummed**	disappointed	Fresh & Creative
20	STEVIE: That's cool. Ruben and I used to be **homies**, but he hates me now, I think.	close friend	Fresh & Creative

Following Allan and Burridge (2015), data classification framework, this section presents findings on functional classification by Eric Partridge. The researchers aims to identify the categories of slang words and the reasons for

their use by the characters in the movie *Mid90s* (2018). The data has been analyzed according to the theoretical framework and classified in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Clasification function of Slang Words

No	Slang Word	Clasification function
1	Playerish	Society Slang
2	Pussies	
3	Niggas	
4	Wanna	
5	i'll	
6	Retarded	
7	Dumb as hell	
8	Faggot	
9	Craziest	
10	Homie	
11	Gonna	Solidarity Slang
12	y'all	
13	Damn	
14	Yeah	
15	Dope	
16	Dude	
17	Ride for	Trade Slang
18	Dig it	
19	Badass	
20	Bummed	

Based on the data, the researchers analyzed and classified the slang words found in the movie *Mid90s* (2018). After finding the meaning through the dictionary and understanding the context in the movie, the researchers identified four types of slang according to Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, which are: fresh and creative, imitative, flippant, and clipping. Then the researchers classified the slang words based on their functions. The researchers identified three function classifications based on Partridge (2015) theory such as: society slang, solidarity slang, and trade slang. To provide clarity, the researchers provided explanations for each of Allan and Burridge (2006) categories and Partridge (2015) classification functions listed below:

Data 1

Based on its definition, the researchers analyzed the fresh and creative type of slang from the movie. This can be observed in the word "playerish" which appears at [00:05:00] in a conversation between Dabney and Stevie:

> *Dabney: He's fine I'm attracted to him*
> *Stevie : Oh…*
> *Dabney : He seems a bit <u>playerish</u> to me though.*
>   *I always have to remember to hit pause when I start feeling something."*

The word "playerish" is categorized as fresh and creative slang because it does not share the same characteristics as other types of slang such as flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. This word is formed by adding the suffix "-ish" to the root word "player". in the context of the movie *Mid90s* (2018), the word "playerish" is spoken when Dabney is talking to his son Stevie and Ian, and tells them that he is close to a man who has a "playerish" or "playboy" manner.

The scene shows that the slang word "playerish" is included in the Society slang classification because it can be used in everyday conversation and serves to show one's identity. as cited from the dictionary *fastslang.com*, the term "Playerish" has been used in various contexts throughout history, the slang word is usually used by society to describe someone who is involved in casual sexual relationships with many partners.

Data 2

A slang word "gonna" can be found at [00:12:27] in the movie when Ruben asks Stevie to get him some water:

> *Ray: Damn you don't really drink all of it? Fill that up man*
> *Ruben: Yo Stevie, you <u>gonna</u> fill this up yo?*
> *Stevie: Yeah*

Based on the definition of imitative slang, one way of constructing this type of slang is by combining two different words to create a new word. The word "gonna" is a combination of the word "going to" which is very commonly used in informal everyday English words. In this context, the word "gonna" appears in the skateboarding community gathering activities and is used in communication between peers.

The use of "gonna" in the dialog shows the familiarity and informality of the relationship between the characters in the skateboarding community. This word not only functions as a marker of informal language, but also reflects the social dynamics and group identity of young people in the 1990s. In *Mid90s*

(2018), the use of slang such as "gonna" consistently appears in the interactions between characters to illustrate the authenticity of the skateboarding subculture dialog, as well as to show how slang plays a role in building solidarity within a particular social group.

Data 3

The slang expression "dumb as hell" can be found at [00:19:49] in a conversation between teenagers discussing dark-skinned people:

> *Fourgrade: Seriously, I genuinely want to know.*
> *Like, every time it's hot out, I'm like, does he need sunscreen? Is there, like, black suntan lotion or..."*
> *Ray: You a real dumbass. Just when I thought you had a brain, bro. You <u>dumb as hell"</u>*

The phrase "dumb as hell" can be classified as flippant because it has no denotative meaning. The phrase consists of the words "dumb" which is synonymous with "stupid" and "as hell" which means "like hell". However, in slang usage and according to theory, "dumb as hell" means "very stupid".

The expression is used in an informal conversation between Ray and Fourgrade, two teenage members of the skateboarding community in Los Angeles. The expression comes as Ray's response to Fourgrade's question, which is perceived as making fun of and stereotypical of dark-skinned people. This dialogue takes place in a skateboarding community hangout, showing how slang is used in the context of casual friendships.

The use of the phrase "dumb as hell" in this dialogue represents that this expression does not only serve as an expression of annoyance, but shows a way of responding to sensitive issues such as racial differences, where a more experienced member (Ray) uses informal language to correct the behavior of another member (Fourgrade). This reflects the development of social awareness and modes of communication within the skateboarding subculture during this period.

Data 4

In the movie *Mid90s*, the slang is found in the dialogue at minute [00:08:57] when the character Fuckshit says the word "y'all".

> *Fuckshit: y'all are about for businessman*
> *Fourgrade: there any way you could just like forget I haven't asked I feel really weird now.*

The term "y'all" comes from a snippet of the formal English phrase "you all". According to Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, "y'all" is categorized as a

clipping slang because it is formed by simplifying the word without changing its original meaning. However, this simplification gives an informal and familiar impression in the conversation.

This dialog occurs in a skateboarding community hangout between Fuckshit and Fourgrade. The word "y'all" is used by Fuckshit when expressing his opinion about the attitude of his friends who are considered too business-oriented. The use of this word shows the informality and familiarity in the interaction between community members, while reflecting the tendency of teenagers to use more efficient and expressive forms of language in everyday communication.

Data 5

The slang word "ride for" can be found in the movie minute [00:26:47] in a conversation between Stevie and Ruben who notice Ray talking to someone unfamiliar in the skateboarding community.

> *Stevie: Saw those guys in Big Brother.*
> *Ruben: Yeah. They ride for Chocolate*

"Ride for" in this context can be classified as flippant slang because the phrase has a different meaning from its literal meaning. Literally, "ride" means "to ride" and "for" means "to", but in the skateboarding community, the phrase "ride for" has a special meaning of "being part of the team/sponsored by" a skateboarding brand. In this dialog, "Chocolate" refers to a famous skateboard brand.

This phrase falls under the Trade slang classification because it is a specialized term used in the skateboarding industry and serves as a term that signifies a professional relationship between a skateboarder and a brand sponsor. The term has a specific meaning understood by people involved in the skateboarding community and is used to identify professional affiliations within the skateboarding world.

The analysis in this study revealed some significant differences with previous research. In the application of Allan and Burridge's theory, Prasetyo *et al.*, (2023) found five categories of slang, namely Fresh & creative, flippant, imitative, Acronym, and clipping, while in this study of the *Mid90s* (2018) movie, only four categories were found without acronym. The absence of the acronym category in the *Mid90s* (2018) movie shows that the use of slang in the 1990s skateboarding community focused more on forms of slang that reflected language creativity and word simplification, compared to the use of abbreviations or acronyms. This is understandable given the historical context of the movie set in the 1990s, where the use of acronyms was not yet popular in that era.

Differences are also seen in the application of Partridge's (2015) theory, where Abidin (2021) identified household slang, medical slang, and social

slang, while this study found society slang, solidarity slang, and trade slang. this is due to the different backgrounds between the two films analyzed.

Research conducted by Asmalasari (2023)using Watt's theory focuses on sociological aspects in general, while this research elaborates on the specific function of slang as a marker of identity and solidarity in the skateboarding subculture, providing a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping the social ties of a particular community.

Through a synchronic approach that focuses on analyzing films that depict a particular period, this study identifies four slang categories (fresh and creative, imitative, flippant, and clipping) and three functional classifications (society slang, solidarity slang, and trade slang) in the film *Mid90s* (2018). This time period-centered analysis allows for an in-depth understanding of how slang functions as a communication system that reflects social identity and solidarity within the skateboarding community, without considering the evolution of language over time. The findings suggest that an in-depth understanding of slang use can be achieved through an analysis that focuses on one specific time period.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of analyzing the use of slang in the *Mid90s* (2018) movie using a synchronic approach, this research produces several important findings. First, four categories of slang were found based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory, namely fresh and creative, imitative, flippant, and clipping, with the fresh and creative category as the most dominant type used in the movie dialog.

Second, the analysis of the function of slang using Partridge's (2015) theory reveals three main classifications: society slang which reflects the use of language in daily social interactions, solidarity slang which functions to build familiarity between community members, and trade slang which reflects specialized terms in the skateboarding industry. This shows how slang not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a marker of social identity and group solidarity.

Through a synchronic approach, this research shows that slang in movie *Mid90s* (2018) represents an authentic communication system in the 1990s skateboarding subculture, reflecting linguistic creativity, social dynamics, and language as a marker of youth identity in that era. Although this research is limited to analyzing the *Mid90s* (2018) movie, it is hoped that future research can expand the study by analyzing the development of slang in the 1990s to the digital era.

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