

Analysis of American Slang in The Movie of “The Blind Side”

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ABSTRACT

Slang is an important feature in American culture. It is more effective than standard or conventional English, so I interested to discuss and classify of slang words in the movie of “The Blind Side”. The purpose of this research is to classify slang words in The Blind Side movie based on the characteristic on Andersson and Trudgill theory. This research used the descriptive qualitative method. The data source of this research is taken from the movie script of the movie of “The Blind Side” cited from IMDB. Based on the research result, there are 8 slang words or phrases in the movie of “The Blind Side”, the slang is divided into four categories: (1) 2 slang words or phrases as the neutral syntactic level; (2) 4 slang words or phrases as typical informal situations and (3) 2 slang words or phrases as creative.



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INTRODUCTION

Language is dynamic, it's developing and changing along the time. In line with the development, slang also develops. The slang exact origin is not known, possibly it is as old as language. Slang is considered as a unique language. It is unique because its existence is an interesting aspect in every language system, especially in English language system. There is no exact definition of slang available in the literature. The definition of slang is a wide concept.

According to Veronica Burdová (2009: 8), slang is considered as an independent non-literary language formation existing in a language and closely connected with its terminology. The etymological origin of the word, as well as its precise definition, seems to be ambiguous. Several theories about the origin exist. The word slang is supposed to be derived from the word *s'* language in England (18th Century) and was originally used to describe the vulgar language spoken by certain subcultures, e.g. soldiers or musicians' slang. Furthermore, slang words and expressions are identified by a high degree of informality, familiarity, and vocabulary richness. They are realized by a specific group of people whose members are connected by some particular link such as territory

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(Californian), age (teenagers), subculture (students), and mainly occur in the spoken form of the language.

In American Culture, Slang is an important feature. It is more effective than conventional or standard English for describing sports, sex, and intoxication in daily conversation. Slang's primary reason for being is to establish a sense of commonality among its speakers. What differentiate slang from other categories of speech are the reasons for using it. The reasons for using slang language include the desire to be different, to enrich the language, to engage in playfulness, to identify one's self with a certain school, trade or social class and to be secret. Slang is always used self-consciously, with the desire to create a particular identity (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990: 87).

Slang changes its identity along with who is speaking. What is slang to one person, to another is not, depending on the person's educational, economic or social position, and even in relation to the location and generation. Slang also changes over time and can disappear rapidly. At this time, slang is often used in Western movies such as Hollywood movies.

Many of the American movies are imported to Indonesia. In some movies, the actor and actress use slang expressions. One of the movies is titled "The Blind Side", this movie is about a child of Afro American who run from his family, and he is taken by a good family. I thought the movie is very interesting and it had a good moral lesson for everyone.

From all the statement above, I am interested in analyzing the use of American slang by some characters in the movie of "The Blind Side".

Language Variety

Coulmas (2005: 53) stated that Language variety based on expressions, constructions, and pronunciations are chosen by speakers of different generations at different frequencies. Actually, they are maybe used with a purpose in mind to make fun of the "olde worlde", to make a claim for dignity, to show that we are up to date or loathe the trends.

Obviously, language is used for communication and it should be implicit. Furthermore, as the modern way of living becomes faster, new trends are also reflected in the development of language in the form of various new words and expressions as well as the improvement of grammatical structure. Comparison of those two linguistic areas shows that vocabulary grows so rapidly that the communicative function of language develops more novel and concise expressions in order to keep pace with modern trends in human life.

Theory of Slang

Definition of Slang

Leech and Svartvik (2006) assess slang in the following way, they stated that Slang is language which is very familiar in style, and is usually restricted to the members of particular social group, for example 'teenage slang', 'army slang', 'theater slang'. Slang is not usually understood by people outside a particular social group, and so it has value in showing the intimacy of its members.

Apparently, besides slang, several different genres can be distinguished within the style of non-standard English such as argot, jargon, cant, flash, idiom etc. Hence, many slang dictionaries offer a variety of slang definitions discovering slight nuances among them.

And also, slang as well as general vocabulary, is characterized by a wide range of linguistic properties, e.g. grammar, semantics, phonology, as mentioned above. Not all of those properties are common linguistic features for both slang and general vocabulary, but some of them particularly suit to slang. Various studies on slang add another specific type of properties associated with slang called sociological properties. Sociological properties are derived from slang's multiple nature and its function.

Coleman (2012) devotes attention to differences among these various types of non-standard language. She considered that slang is usually short-lived, and often belongs to a specific age or social clique. It is used, like fashion, to define in-groups and out-groups. Jargon is the specialized language of an occupational or interest group, and functions as often to exclude as include. Cant is the secret language of thieves and beggars, and is used for deception and concealment. Flash is used with specific reference to fashionable slang of London's eighteenth and nineteenth century demi-monde. The boundaries between these types of language cannot be clearly defined, and individual terms move easily between categories as they are adopted by new sets of speakers. Cant and slang both sometimes mean jargon, and flash sometimes means slang, sometimes cant. The link between all of these language types is that they do not belong to what is now known as standard English. In other words, Hotten (2008: 7) sees differences between slang and cant in the age of a given word. "cant is old, slang is always modern and changing". To illustrate the difference, he gives an example of how a thief in cant language would term a horse a *prancer* or a *prad*, while in slang, a man of fashion would speak of it as a *bit of blood*, or *spanker*, or a *neat tin*.

By and large, several definitions about slang were offered. A major part of these definitions stresses all common features characteristic of *slang* whereas their contradictions arise from different authors' emphases and their diverse points of view.

Characteristics of Slang

In their book, entitled "*Bad Language*", Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 70) give a theory about the characteristics of *slang* in the following:

Slang is Language Use below the Neutral Syntactic Level

Based on Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 70), "slang is a relative concept. Since slang is relative, changes in neutral or formal usage will lead to changes in what is seen as slang".

There are English slang words which moved from slang into neutral or even formal language. To explain more about the characteristics of slang above, here are the examples; *Phone, bike, bus* and *pub* once were slang versions of more the more proper terms *telephone, bicycle, omnibus* and *public house*. These words and phrases that used to be slang are now considered to be part of neutral or 'proper' language. It means that slang changes through time. What is slang for one person, generation or situation may not be slang for another.

Slang as Typical of Informal Situations

The formality of language is tied to the situation. In formal situations people expect formal language and in informal situation informal language. Slang is far more out of place or shocking at the Queen's dinner table than in the locker room.

It means that the formality of a situation is not fixed once and for all, but it changes through time from one place to another. The relationship between student and teacher is an example of one such situation. In Western society, the relationship between student and teacher in Britain is more formal than in the United States. However, there is no simple or automatic relationship between the formality of a situation and language. Usually both change together, and so often this goes unnoticed. During the first minutes, the situation is usually felt to be formal. After a while it loosens up and becomes less formal and participants mix slang words into their conversation.

Slang as Typical of Spoken Language

On the whole and for most of people, the situations in which they write are more formal than the situations in which they talk. For example, if people go and watch a football game they will hear a lot of slang from the crowd around them. The next morning, when they read about the match in the newspaper, there will be far less slang in the paper's coverage of the game. It means that

the language of mass media—newspaper, radio and TV broadcasting—contains very little slang, while in spoken language people usually use more slang.

Slang is Creative

The creative aspect of slang is important because point of slang words is often to be startling, amusing or shocking. Slang word such as *groovy*, *heavy* and so on, attract attention. However, if these words are heard over and over again they soon lose their impact, thus slang terms are always developing to make them stand out against more ordinary lexical items.

Function of Slang

According to Patridge in *Slang Today and Yesterday* in (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990: 87) the reasons for using slang are, “As an exercise either in wit and in genuity or in humour, to be different, to be un mistakeably arresting even startling, to be novel, to enrich the language, and to show that one belongs to a certain school, trade, profession or social class”. This explanation shows that people are individuals who desire uniqueness. Furthermore, the *Historical Dictionary of American Slang* points out that many groups use slang largely because they lack political power. It is a safe and effective way that people rebel against the establishment.

American Slang

Since the film “The Blind Side” is released by Alcon Entertainment and released by Warner Bros, the slang used in this film is American Slang. American Slang, according to Flexner in *The New Dictionary of American Slang*, is the body of words and expressions frequently used by or intelligible to a large portion of the general American public, but not accepted as good, formal usage by the majority. American slang has been shaped and reshaped by the different cultures that make up the United States and by the emergence of technology, which has left American society with varieties of slang.

METHOD

In this research, I use a qualitative descriptive method. The research data source is taken from the movie script of *The Blind Side*, cited from IMDB site. This movie is written and directed by John Lee Hancock.

The main data that is analyzed is American slang. The procedures to collect data are: finding the slang expression in the movie of “The Blind Side” and the original script then the data were classified based on their characteristic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In the movie of “The Blind Side”, There were many slang words or phrases found in the dialogues between all the characters in the movie. I took only 8 samples randomly to be explained and analyzed in this session. The analyses were distinguished based on the characteristics of slang that is used.

Extract One: Interaction between BIG TONY and COTTON

BIG TONY : I was hoping you might just interview ‘em now.

COTTON : They are here?

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Big Tony and Cotton, Big Tony was using a slang word of ‘em, actually the word ‘em is the short of them. We cannot find the word ‘em in dictionary because it is not the correct form. This word is only used in informal situation. The word is used to reflect a dialectical or informal pronunciation. This slang is as typical informal situations.

Extract Two: Interaction between BOB and APRIL

BOB : Well, the big guy's been here a month and he *ain't* cutting it in my class.

APRIL : Why would Admissions do this? It's not fair to us or the boy.

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Bob and April, Bob was using the word *ain't*. Actually this word is a slang contraction of is not, are not, am not, do not or does not. This word is only used in informal situation, So what Bob really wanted to say is "... he is not cutting it in my class". The word is used to reflect a dialectical or informal pronunciation. This slang is typical informal situations.

Extract Three: Interaction between COTTON and SEAN

COTTON : If he makes his grades he'll be eligible in the spring.

SEAN : If he makes his grades.

COTTON : But **boy howdy**, just look at him.

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Cotton and Sean, Cotton was using a phrase of *boy howdy*. This phrase is used as an exclamation of enthusiastic agreement which can be used in both a genuine or sarcastic tone. In this case by identifying who was Cotton refer to, I can conclude that Cotton said "*Boy howdy*" in sarcastic tone because he actually did not sure with what Sean has said. The characteristic of the slang is that slang is creative.

Extract Four: Interaction between SI, LEIGH ANNE, and SEAN

SI : Dad, I'm gonna need a few more of those free Quesadilla tickets.

LEIGH ANNE : And where does the *acorn* fall?

SEAN : Don't laugh too hard. The Quesadilla saved our ass.

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Si, Leigh Anne, and Sean, Leigh Anne asked "And where does the acorn fall" and laughing. In the dictionary, the word *acorn* had the meaning of the fruit of an oak tree, but actually what Leigh Anne wanted to say is the word 'crazy'. So it was a creative way or a slang in saying crazy.

Extract Five: Interaction between LEIGH ANNE and MICHAEL

LEIGH ANNE : Where are you going?

MICHAEL : *Iono*.

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Leigh Anne and Michael, Michael used a slang word of *Iono*, this word was the shortened version of "I don't know", the word of *iono* is only used in informal situation, and it was not found in dictionary. The word is used to reflect a dialectical or informal pronunciation. The slang is as typical of informal situation.

Extract Six: Interaction between SEAN and SI

SEAN : SJ, Ole Miss is about to score!

SI : Which means they're about to *fumble*.

On this dialogue, in the interaction between SEAN and SI, SI used the word *fumble*, in the dictionary the meaning of *fumble* is 'to touch clumsily', but in this context, SI used the word *fumble* as a slang that has the meaning that the Ole Miss will make a very big mistake. This slang is moved from formal situations to informal, so it categorize as slang below neutral syntactical level.

Extract 7: Interaction between LEIGH ANNE, SI and SEAN

LEIGH ANNE : Who's winning?

SI : Tennessee.

LEIGH ANNE : Too bad. Who are they playing?

SEAN : So you **root** against Tennessee no matter who they're playing?

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Leigh Anne, Si, and SEAN, in responding the statement of Leigh Anne, Sean used the word *root* in his question. But actually the more correct word is support. This slang is moved from formal situations to informal, so it categorizes as slang below neutral syntactical level.

Extract 8: Interaction between COTTON and MICHAEL

COTTON : Where were you taking him, Mike?

MICHAEL : To the bus. It was time for him to go home.

COTTON : **Attaboy**, Michael Oher. **Attaboy!**

On this dialogue, in the interaction between Cotton and Michael, Cotton praised Michael by saying "Attaboy, Michael Oher", *Attaboy* is a slang word, *Attaboy* is a word condensed from "that a boy", that is said when one has done a good job on something. The word is used to reflect a dialectical or informal pronunciation. The slang is as typical of informal situations.

Discussion

There are 4 characteristics of Slang, Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 70) give a theory about the characteristics of slang as following: *slang as language use below neutral syntactical level, slang as typical of informal situations, slang as typical of spoken language, and slang is creative.*

Based on the findings, whereas I took 8 dialogues randomly among the characters in the movie of "The Blind Side", most of them are using slang as a typical informal situation, 4 out of 8 use this slang. This slang consists of words and expressions which will not be found in the dictionary, and can be distortions of existing words or entirely invented terms.

For slang is creative, from the findings, I can conclude that 2 out of 8 were using slang as a creative way to say something. In this case, *slang* is always developing year by year.

For slang below the neutral syntactic level, from the findings, I found 2 out of 8 was using slang below the neutral syntactic level. The characteristic of this slang is *it is* moved from slang into a formal language, and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

Slang is a unique language, Slang changes its identity along with who is speaking, Slang is considered more effective than standard or conventional English for describing sports, sex, and intoxication in daily conversation. Slang's primary reason for being is to establish a sense of commonality among its speakers. When we watch a movie, often we find slangs in its conversations.

In the movie of "The Blind Side", I found many slangs in the conversations between the characters in the movie. These slangs were used in neutral syntactical level, as a typical informal situation, as a typical of spoken language, and as a creative way in saying something.

I hope that this mini research could be useful reading for a better understanding of slang, and I hope that there are more books or references about slang, because slang is a part of language, and we need to understand it to understand language as a whole.

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