

ANALYSIS OF SLANG WORDS IN THE SONG LYRICS OF KANYE WEST ALBUM ENTITLED "GRADUATION"

Putu Ananda Vichitram¹, I Wayan Mulyawan², Putu Lirishati Soethama³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Udayana

anandaputu7@gmail.com¹, wayanmulyawan@unud.ac.id², lirishatisoethama@unud.ac.id³

ABSTRACT; *This thesis investigates the intricate landscape of slang language present within the song lyrics of Kanye West's seminal album, "Graduation." Employing a blend of qualitative content analysis and linguistic theory, the study delves into the contextual significance and semantic nuances of slang usage in the album's tracks. Drawing on Chapman's (2007) types of slang, and Leech's (1974) theory of meaning, this research aims to categorize and interpret the diverse array of slang expressions found in West's lyrics. As a sample, the slang term "bling" is analysed through Chapman's classification, identifying it as an example of "primary slang," while Leech's semantic framework elucidates its connotations of ostentation and materialism within the song's thematic context. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the thesis endeavours to unravel the socio-cultural implications, rhetorical functions, and linguistic innovations inherent in West's utilization of slang, contributing to a deeper understanding of language evolution within contemporary music culture.*

Keywords: *Slang, Types, Meaning.*

ABSTRAK; Tesis ini menyelidiki lanskap rumit bahasa slang yang ada dalam lirik lagu album penting Kanye West, "Graduation." Dengan menggunakan perpaduan analisis konten kualitatif dan teori linguistik, penelitian ini menyelidiki signifikansi kontekstual dan nuansa semantik penggunaan bahasa gaul dalam lagu-lagu album tersebut. Berdasarkan jenis-jenis bahasa gaul Chapman (2007), dan teori makna Leech (1974), penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkategorikan dan menafsirkan beragam ekspresi bahasa gaul yang ditemukan dalam lirik-lirik West. Sebagai contoh, istilah slang "bling" dianalisis melalui klasifikasi Chapman, mengidentifikasinya sebagai contoh "bahasa gaul primer", sementara kerangka semantik Leech menjelaskan konotasi kesombongan dan materialisme dalam konteks tematik lagu tersebut. Melalui pendekatan interdisipliner ini, tesis ini berupaya mengungkap implikasi sosio-kultural, fungsi retorik, dan inovasi linguistik yang melekat dalam penggunaan bahasa gaul di Barat, berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang evolusi bahasa dalam budaya musik kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Gaul, Jenis, Arti.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures that need to interact with each other to meet the various needs of life. Therefore, a person cannot live alone without interaction with others. This means that language has a very important meaning in human life. The language is currently undergoing great development, especially in slang. The development of slang language in modern human social life has been influenced by various factors. It reflects the ever-changing social and cultural landscape, shaped by technological advancements and the rise of social media. Slang serves as a tool for self-expression, group identification, and staying current with cultural trends. It evolves rapidly, incorporating new words, expressions, and abbreviations, often influenced by global interactions and the creative contributions of individuals. Language and society are very closely related. In other words, language is an interdependent personal and social property for interacting, communicating, exchanging, transmitting, and receiving information. One such variation is slang. Slang refers to informal and unconventional language that is commonly used within specific social groups or subcultures. It often involves the creation of new words, changes in word meanings, and unconventional grammar. Slang is dynamic and reflects the evolving trends, attitudes, and expressions of a particular time. On the other hand, idioms are fixed expressions that have a figurative meaning that cannot be deduced from the individual words used. They are widely accepted in standard language usage and reflect cultural or historical contexts. The main difference lies in their formality and stability. Slang is informal and subject to rapid change, while idioms are more widely accepted and enduring in standard language usage. Understand the difference between slang and idioms is essential for studying the dynamic nature of language and its cultural significance. Slang is the way that people in social relationships used language to express who they were. It was closely associated with the strong sense of identity that belonged to a certain social group.

Words and phrases classified as extremely casual, more frequently used in conversation than in writing, and usually limited to a specific setting or demographic make up the category of slang language. Slang is, broadly speaking, a phenomenon that results from changes in language use brought about by linguistic evolution and social dynamics within a community. According to Holmes (2001), slang will be a type of vocabulary that represents a person's age. Slang, according to Eble (1996), is everyday expressions and expectations that are

constantly changing and are used by speakers to build or strengthen social identity or cohesiveness within a group, such as a group of school children, motorcycle groups, animal groups, love groups, and various other social groups. Slang will also become a youth luxury and will be generally considered strange by the elderly. Furthermore, the slang will denote a distinct group's identity.

According to Burke (2010), slang comprises "secret" phrases or sentences that are utilized in song lyrics, novels, periodicals, televisions, films, and casual conversations. Slang terms and expressions will be used in a number of ways on the Kanye West album "Graduation," which was published in 2007. The purpose of this will find out what slang will be used by this artist, what types of slang will be used, and what impact this slang will have on the lyrics of the songs on this album. To analyse the slang in the album 'Graduation' would be the first endeavour by anyone, as until now, I have not come across any journals, articles, or theses discussing the slang within the album. Analysing with the theories of Chapman (2007) to categorize slang types and Leech (1947) to decipher the meaning of slang is crucial and will serve as the foundation for examining the slang present in the album. And to verify the slang words in the album 'Graduation,' dictionaries such as Urban Dictionary, Online Slang Dictionary, and Merriam Webster Dictionary will assist in identifying the slang used in the album.

Based on the explanation above, this research will be important to discuss especially slang in song lyrics will be to identify and classify the slang appearing in the song lyrics of Kanye West on the album "Graduation."

RESEARCH METHODS

Graduation is the third studio album by American rapper and producer Kanye West, released on September 11, 2007, through Def Jam Recordings and Roc-A-Fella Records. Recording sessions took place between 2005 and 2007 at several studios in New York and Los Angeles. It was primarily produced by West himself, with contributions from various other producers, including DJ Toomp. The album also features guest appearances from recording artists such as Dwele, T-Pain, Lil Wayne, Mos Def, DJ Premier, and Chris Martin. The cover art and its interior artwork were designed by Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami. In this album, there are many slang words that can be discussed and are certainly

interesting to know. This album is widely listened to because Kanye West provides lyrics and music of very high quality in that year.

The method will serve as a foundational approach for data investigation, enhancing the research process's efficiency. These methods will also serve as a framework for organized research, making the data more comprehensible for readers. In this study, a descriptive qualitative method will be employed for data analysis. The data for this research will derived from the lyrics of Kanye West's album 'Graduation.' The data source for this study will from two different platforms, namely music videos from YouTube and Spotify, and an observation method will employed to gather the information for the research. To analyse the data in this study, a qualitative method will employed. According to Creswell and J. David (2018), the qualitative method utilizes text or image data, and in this approach, researchers will required to undergo various analytical procedures to establish approaches for demonstrating the validity of the collected data. This study will use the theory from Chapman (2007) to divide types of slang and Leech (1974) to explain the meaning of slang

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis result of the type of conflicts was analysed by using the theories of type of slang by Chapman (2007).

1. Types of Slang

According to Chapman (2007) slang divided into two types. There are primary and secondary slang. Primary slang are general words that are usually spoken by people in everyday life. According to Chapman (2007) slang emerged from the special languages of subcultures and it has little to do with the main aim of language and it is the most nonlinguistic sort of language. Primary slang is considered as pure speech as a member of the subculture which is very natural for its speakers. Most of the speakers are teenagers who use primary slang in everyday conversation with their friends, such as "hang out" rather than "spend time". The word "hang out" is usually used by people to invite someone to go somewhere.

Secondary slang is an expression indicated by a part or group of people used in social interaction. According to Chapman (2007: 8-9) slang words are used to express something

in secret where only people who understand the meaning of the word are limited. Something secret which is to express one's attitude and reason towards disapproval, contempt, and superiority.

A. Primary Slang

The Lyrics	Type of Slang	Meaning of Slang
So I packed it up and brought it back to the crib ust a little something, show you how we live	Primary Slang	A house, shop, etc., frequented by thieves or regarded by thieves as a likely place for burglarizing.

Analysis:

In African American culture, the word house is referred to casually as crib. Additionally, according to Slang Online Dictionary, the slang word crib is a home, shop, etc. that is either frequently targeted by thieves or is thought to be a likely target for a break-in. In his wide slang research, according to Jonathan Green (1993), crib is the primary slang term. This classification is a result of its informal, impromptu characteristics and its close ties to youth culture, especially in big cities. In these lyrics, the use of crib not only conveys a sense of place but also reinforces the cultural context and authenticity of the artist's experience. This supports Chapman's theory that primary slang terms have cultural value and become embedded in the language of the communities in which they are used.

Since crib is a relatively new term and isn't connected to any particular social group or subculture, it is regarded as primary slang. Hip-hop culture helped to popularize this word. Crib is a key slang term that symbolizes the evolving vocabulary of contemporary urban society. In many cultures today, it is commonly accepted. These slang phrases frequently originate in any circumstances and may have particular connotations within any communities. Crib is an example of primary slang that spreads swiftly due to linguistic innovation, social dynamics, and cultural trends. Because it demonstrates how English changes in today's urban environments.

B. Secondary Slang

The Lyrics	Type of Slang	Meaning of Slang
Well, I'd do anything for a blonde dyke	Secondary Slang	A contemptuous term used to refer to a lesbian

Analysis:

The slang word **dyke** is an informal way to say a lesbian woman based on Slang Online Dictionary. Originally, an embankment or ditch used for defence or drainage was referred to as a **dyke** in a neutral sense. But eventually, it took on a negative connotation as a term for a lesbian woman, especially in the context of American English. This change most likely happened as a result of the stigmatized relationship between lesbians and the butch identity or perceived masculinity, which differed from conventional gender norms.

The word **dyke** is employed in an objectifying and disparaging way. The statement "Well, I'd do anything for a blonde dyke" is an illustration of how words may be used recklessly and feed negative views and stereotypes. In this instance, **dyke** is being used as slang to describe a lesbian woman. It's crucial to understand, though, that the song's use in the lyrics reinforces derogatory stereotypes and minimises the subject of the reference to nothing more than an object of desire, ignoring their humanity and sense of self. (Neuralword.com)

According to Urban Dictionary, the slang term **dyke** in Kanye West's song lyrics is secondary slang. This type of slang is less widely used and accepted in a specific social group or culture which is LGBTQ+ community, often with a meaning different from the word's literal definition. In this case, **dyke** is used as a derogatory term for a lesbian, which matches its informal usage, especially among certain groups or subcultures. However, its use in the song also carries a negative tone, indicating disrespect towards the lesbian community. This usage is less common and accepted in everyday language, classifying it as secondary slang.

2. Types of Meaning

According to Leech (1974), slang can be divided into seven meaning classifications: conceptual, connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, collective, and thematic. And here the analysis:

A. Conceptual Meaning

One of the examples of the slang word that conveys the conceptual meaning is a word **fly**. In Kanye West's album "Graduation." According to Leech (1974) theory, conceptual meaning is the general or the dictionary meaning of the word which gives a clear and specific reference of the item or concept without any socially or emotionally influenced connection. In relation to the show "Graduation", the word **fly** means that a thing or a person looks good. In the fashion context and other youth-related subcultures, this term has a more concrete and clear meaning and is a part of urban vocabulary. For instance, when the artist Kanye West uses the term **fly**, he is expressing a concrete, definitional sense of the word to mean fashionable and impressive. According to Oxford Dictionary the word **fly** is to move through the air, this proves that the slang word 'fly' is in the dictionary.

This fits into Leech (1974) theory as it provides a straightforward example that does not require the inclusion of extra cultural or emotional details. The regularity and pervasiveness of this slang within its cultural context enhance the communication efficiency since the term **fly** has a clear and straightforward meaning for the people who use the slang. Thus, the usage of the word **fly** in Kanye West's "Graduation" album is quite consistent with the elements that Leech (1974) mentioned about conceptual meaning since it offers the necessary and sufficient definition needed to comprehend this particular word in the context of the song.

B. Connotative Meaning

According to Leech (1974) theory, Connotative meaning is one of the various aspects of meaning which can be defined as the contextual and associative meaning that is associated with a word beyond its referential or concept meaning. The slang word **crib** from the context of Kanye West's album "Graduation" is an example of connotative meanings as the word **crib** is the connotative meaning of "house". The phenomenon of **crib**, as used in hip-hop culture, is deeply associated with such values as success, wealth, and status.

This usage of the word **crib** most of the time, means much more than just the physical structure; it represents the achievement of the luxurious lifestyle, and a substantial jump in the socio-economic status. For instance, when Kanye West sings in his lyrics, 'So I packed it up and brought it back to the crib, just a little something, show you how we live,' he is not

talking of a mere house. However, he wants people to imagine a luxurious palace that reflects the result of his hard work and wealth earned. This is in context to Leech's connotative meaning whereby it is the culture and achievement relating to the term. In addition to and moving beyond the material meanings, **crib** also suggests domesticity, coziness, and, most importantly, privacy. About this same, Kanye's use of the word **crib** is a clear indication of a home, a place he would want to be free and comfortable in as a black man.

C. Stylistic Meaning

Mink coat is the example of stylistic meaning according Leech (1974) described it saying that stylistic meaning is about what language says about the nature of the society in which it operates alongside aspects such as class, gender, sincerity, and the mode of communication. Everyone recognizes the image of a **mink coat** and when one of them appears in the conversation or a song, the listener will immediately associate it with wealth and high status. This term gives a clue as to the status of the wearer, indicating they are in the higher economic bracket or belong to a cult that revels in extravagance and the paraphernalia associated with the group. For example, the use of the word **mink coat** in hip-hop lyrics – another common technique – underscores aspects of success and financial wellbeing, which would highlight the lifestyle of the artists.

That this particular term was specifically chosen instead of a simpler 'expensive coat' because of the depth that this term introduces to the text, thus enriching the stylistic potential of the language used. Accordingly, the example of the **mink coat** phrase re-defines the utilitarian meaning as completely irrelevant for the said context while embodying profound information about the interlocutor's social persona – this again correlates with Leech's concept of stylistic meaning.

D. Affective Meaning

According Leech (1974), the slang term **go nuts** can be categorized under affective meaning because alludes to the passionate intentions or the emotions communicated by the speaker or evoked within the audience. The express **go nuts** passes on a tall level of enthusiastic concentrated, frequently utilized to depict extraordinary fervour, excitement, or disturbance. For example the lyrics of the song, "The swarm went nuts when the band begun

playing" brings out a striking picture of individuals responding fiercely, full of enthusiastic vitality.

The emotional effect of **go nuts** can shift depending on the setting, including to its full of feeling meaning as the express can evoke distinctive feelings based on its utilization. In a casual discussion, it can infer perky energy, whereas in a more genuine setting, it can recommend seriously disappointment or anger. This flexibility enhances its full of feeling meaning, as outlined within the sentence. The term **go nuts** gives understanding into the passionate air of a minute, adjusting superbly with Leech (1974) concept of full of feeling meaning by highlighting the passionate affect and expressive control of dialect.

E. Reflected Meaning

According to Leech (1974), reflected meaning is one of the seven types of meaning. Reflected meaning occurs when a word or phrase brings to mind another sense or association because of phonetic resemblance or a shared semantic feature. In the case of the slang word **whipped**, the most obvious meaning is related to being whipped with a whip. The slang definition that is the description of a person who is submissive to their partner primarily refers to physical abuse and slavery. Thus, the meaning is reflected, which belongs to the category of Leech (1974) theory, as it determines that the second, less concrete image is influenced by the primary one. The notion is even more relevant in this context because the secondary slang meaning of being **whipped** increases the effect and understanding of the slang term based on the relation and reference to the primary meaning's severity.

F. Collocative Meaning

The slang word **hop back** falls into the category of collocative meaning. According to Leech (1974), collocative meaning is about words that are often used together, creating specific associations. **hop back** suggests a quick, easy, and casual action of getting into the car. It's more than just "get back"; it paints a picture of someone moving quickly and effortlessly, adding a playful and informal vibe. This phrase shows how words that commonly go together (hop and back) can create richer and more vivid meanings. The collocative associations of **hop back** contribute to its overall meaning and usage patterns. By examining how it is typically used in context, we can discern its collocative meaning,

which encompasses the specific nuances and connotations that arise from its frequent pairings with other words or phrases.

G. Thematic meaning

The lyrics “cause she feel booze like she bombed at apollo” can be considered an example of what Leech (1974) defined as thematic meaning in his book “Semantics”, thematic meaning has to do with the way messages are built and how their construction informs the meaning of the message. Because thematic meaning has to do with the way messages are built and how their construction informs the meaning of the message, analysing the data could not only be with one slang word but with the whole sentence in the lyrics. Thus, the mention of the Apollo theatre – the place, where an Amateur Night is held, and people can be booed, – invokes a specific cultural and historical association. This allusion paints a very gloomy picture of failure, or rather, being left high and dry in front of people. Thus, comparing the feeling of being drunk (booze) to the worse feeling of bombing at the Apollo, the lyricist introduces the sense of social pressure and individual failure. These themes are highlighted by the format of this line, which uses the cultural resonance of the Apollo theatre to boost the emotional charge and express the song’s reflection on society and the singer’s life. This kind of comparison between the immediate and the culturally iconic shows thematic meaning because it organizes the experience and the meaning of the song in a way that is culturally resonant and that impacts the listener’s emotions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the study, it can be concluded that there are 57 slang words in Kanye West's album "Graduation". In Chapman's theory (2007), there are two types of slang, namely primary and secondary slang. Primary slang has 42 slang words and 13 secondary slang. While from Leech (1974) theory there are 7 types of meaning, such as conceptual meaning 15 slang word, connotative 16 slang word, affective 15 slang word, stylistic meaning 8 slang word, collocative meaning one slang word, reflected meaning one slang word and thematic meaning one slang word.

By knowing the aspects of slang given by Chapman (2007) and Leech (1974), we can use slang words according to our place and portion based on the context where we are.

According to chapman (2007) slang can divide the core of primary and secondary slang which means that we can use slang based on our environment and interlocutors because not everyone knows the slang we use is included in their culture or not. Meanwhile, according to Leech's (1974) theory, we can learn that slang has many meanings. From here we learn that slang can have many meanings based on semantics. With this we can learn that slang does not only have its literal meaning but also has a meaning based on semantics. Overall, from the data included in this study, slang can be differentiated based on slang type and meaning type. From this study, slang can also be used according to the portion, culture, and environment of the interlocutor.

REFERENCES

- Aditya, A., & Fitrawati. (2022). Word Formation of English Slang in Rich Brian's Album 1999.
- Ardiana, I. M., & Sulatra, I. K. (2002). An analysis of types of slang words found in Green Day song lyric albums. Denpasar: Mahasaraswati University
- Chapman, R. (2007). Dictionary of American Slang. 9-12
- Dewi, P.A. (2013). Primary and Secondary Slang and Word Formation of Slang in the Movie Script Entitled Bad Boys.
- Green, J. (1993). The Dictionary of Contemporary Slang. 123-124.
- Haspo, F. C. (2018). An analysis of slang word in song lyrics Eminem on album Kamikaze. <http://repository.unp.ac.id/20873/>
- Khoo, O. (2006). Slang images: on the 'foreignness' of contemporary Singaporean films. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370500463166>
- Leech, G. (1974). *Semantics*. 22-37
- Lillo, A. (2018). Etymological myths and compound etymologies in rhyming slang. *English Studies*, 99(6), 688–703. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838x.2018.1492233>
- Mutiara, I. M. (2023). An analysis of slang word-formation in Bruno Mars' album 'An Evening with Silk Sonic'. <https://repository.uhn.ac.id/bitstream/handle/123456789/9653/IGATI%20MENANTI%20MUTIARA%20GEA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

- Sam, O. A., & Ordu, S. (2023). Slang and catchy phrases used in selected Nigerian hip hop songs: A pragmatic analysis. *Journal of Humanities Music and Dance*, 32, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.55529/jhmd.32.1.9>
- Siahaan, R., Herman, H., & Purba, C. N. (2021). Slang words in song lyrics by Billie Eilish on the "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" album. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 6(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v6i1.80>
- Suartini, K., Kardana, N., & Clara, D. A. K. (2022). Slang found in Carrie movie, 310- 318.
- Triyatono, M. (2017). An analysis of types and functions of slang words used by presenters in mtv movie awards 2016 live promo.
- Wartati, D.M.E., & Sulatra, K., & Utami, M. V. (2022). Analysis of Slang Words in Song Lyrics by Megan Thee Stallion on Tina Snow Album
- Wulandari, P. D., & Ardi, H. (2012). The types of slang words in the lyrics of the "Jigsaw" album by Lady Sovereign. *The Journal of English Language and Literature*, 1(1). <http://repository.unp.ac.id/id/eprint/6451>