

SLANGS IN ARCTIC MONKEYS' SONG: A STUDY OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Muhammad Faiq Athallah Nurindra

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

Retno Purwani Sari

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This objective of this research is to investigate social and cultural meanings while examining the English teens' slang used by Arctic Monkeys in their songs. Achieving this research goal, a descriptive qualitative approach provided empirical stages. In the data collection stage, listening the songs and reading the lyrics of Arctic Monkeys song were the main activities. These activities were proceeded by analysing and describing the cultural and social concepts conveyed in the slang, utilizing sociolinguistic perspectives during the analysis stage. The results reveal that the slangs in Arctic Monkeys' songs reflect the band's social and cultural meanings, giving the lyrics a unique character. The influence of Yorkshire values involves in the creation of the slangs, adding depth and authenticity to the narratives, shaping the band's identity, and contributing to the discourse of music culture.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic, Linguistic, Slangs, Songs

INTRODUCTION

The uniqueness of slangs brings about collective emotions. It gives a specific groups identity for a particular time within society. Slang is a product of human creativity, potentially raising collective emotions among speakers; functioning to impress others and reflect collective identity. Slang is a matter of style in a certain context for a specific register (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

Within the framework of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, slang is evaluated based on its acceptability in accordance with ethical and social considerations (Pollman, 2022). While slangs potentially promote discriminatory language and sometime provoke anxieties among outsiders, they foster creativity, vibrancy, poetic expression, and revolutionary – promoting positive social interaction and addressing important social issues in the present moment (Coleman, 2012).

In the perspective of sociolinguistics, language is recognized as a communication tool used to express ideas, opinions, and messages. Speakers may produce various language for the 'same' information. For example, a teen may utter, *"This food is very good"* to his mother when he appreciates her mother's cooking. However, he may use different language with his close friend, saying, *"This food is bussin."* The form of language dramatically changes, influenced by context and register. The variety of language expression is relevant to society (Wardaugh, 2006). Slang manifests the interaction between language and society.

Slang is informal language that is commonly used every day, particularly among people, especially teenagers who use social media platforms like TikTok, for example. Although slang is common in daily social interaction among teenagers, understanding the meaning is another case (Fromkin et al., 2023),

resulting in miscommunication and sometimes unintentional offense to those outside the social group. For example, when an Indonesian teenager uses the slang word “cuaks,” by saying “*Katanya mau diet, cuaks.*” – “On a diet, *cuaks*” – people unfamiliar with this slang may think that the teenager is addressing them as an animal used to attract a wild animal in a wild forest. Its usage may evoke anxiety. However, in social media life, “*cuaks*” is a slang word functioning as a concluding remark. Users often use this slang to give a comedic or dramatic effect.

Additionally, slang has the power to introduce some innovative words, when they give old words new meanings, as evidence by the English slang “Quarantine and chill,” that emerged during the Covid 19 pandemic. Moreover, slang is commonly found in spoken language within social contexts and can be observed in various forms of literary works such as music, songs, poems, and dramas. Slang used in music, for example, has captured teenager’s attention. It is undeniable that slang continues to grow and spread among particular groups. These intriguing phenomena have initiated the research.

In this research, we examine songs by Arctic Monkey, a band from Sheffield, South Yorkshire, United Kingdom, whose primary audiences are teenagers. We propose that Arctic Monkey’s songs exploit slangs to evoke strong emotions, impress, and resonate with audience – allowing audience to relate to the emotions conveyed. It can also be argued that Arctic Monkey’s language style represents a strong Sheffield accent, portraying human experiences in nightclubs and in the culture of the band’s hometown of Sheffield. The songs explore theme such as failed relationships, nostalgia, and coming-of-age issues. The objective of this research is to investigate social and cultural meanings embedded in the English slang used by Arctic Monkeys in their songs. This research explores the meanings of English slangs, using a descriptive qualitative method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous research on the study proposed that slangs are related to community environment, where the researcher analysed R&B’s songs made famous by Mariah Carey (Putri & Zakrimal, 2019). Mariah Carey is a famous African American singer, and a member of the African American community, known for the frequent use of slang in their social verbal communications. The result of the research found that Mariah Carey used 41 slang word that occurs in society, such as social media and daily conversations, in her songs.

In this research, the variables used are slangs that are used in Arctic Monkeys songs which are analysed in order to find the social and cultural meaning of the slangs used. This research is similar to the previous research where it focuses on analysing slangs used in the songs, but with different artist. The artist in this research is Arctic Monkeys, originating from England, that has different cultures from Mariah Carey, resulting in different slangs used in their songs.

Sociolinguistics discusses the interaction between language use and social factors such as register, gender, ethnicity, age, and social class. Coulmas in Fromkin (Fromkin et al., 2023) claims that sociolinguistics investigates, discusses, and describes choices motivated by social factors. One important issue of this study is how language is used in social interaction, and how social factors effect the choice of language. In relation to this, Wardaugh claims that sociolinguistics studies a socially relevant variety of linguistics – how we speak varies on social context (Wardaugh, 2006). Moreover, a specific function of language conveys social meaning or aspects of identity. Sociolinguistics serve an access to learn real-life attitudes, style, and social situations.

The frequency of slang usage is an indicator of an informal style. Slang may be defined as a highly colloquial type of language, referring to new words or current words conveyed unique nuances but not standard language (Coleman, 2012). This type of colloquial may be created through recombination of existing words. Unfortunately, the meanings of slang are not easy to defined because of its

independence to a particular group within a specific society. Outsiders may face difficulty accessing the meanings (Wardaugh, 2006).

Moreover, slang obtains general acceptance across different context within society . Slang from Sheffield, for example, may differ from that in London. In Sheffield slang, a particular group may call a friend a “mate’ or “brethren,” whereas in London, they may refer to them as “pal” or “chum.” Every society may have a unique slang that is acknowledged and approved across different contexts.

Arctic Monkeys, a British rock band, formed in Sheffield. England 2002. They are one of the first band to gain fame from the internet. With their musical style and intricate lyrics delivered in strong Sheffield accent, they examined human behaviour in nightclubs and the culture of their hometown, Sheffield, as a subject matter for their lyrics of their first album. These themes continue onto the next album, exploring themes about failed relationships, nostalgia and growing old. They use Sheffield slangs very often, in interviews and in their lyrical works (Beach, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive qualitative approach from (Moleong, 2007), facilitated this research with empirical stages to achieve the research objective. This approach intended to understand the phenomena of slang usage by Arctic Monkey. It covered identification and investigation of meanings, resulting in the individual’s choices triggered by social factors, including registers and attitudes. A textual analysis was conducted to uncover the meanings. The analysis process involves the meaning of the slang words used in the song. The data were obtained by observing and searching through songs and lyrics from Arctic Monkeys. The researcher selected songs that contained slangs, then proceeded to search and examine the slang words used in the song lyrics. Finally, the data were analysed.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a significant and varied use of slang, reflecting the band’s uniqueness constructed by the influences of Sheffield’s culture and language accent. This section presents the findings and discusses the social and cultural meanings conveyed within the context of sociolinguistics. By exploring the meanings of this slang, the research shows how slang shapes identity.

Data 1 “Making eyes”

“I bet You Look Good on The Dancefloor”

*Stop making the eyes at me
I’ll stop making the eyes at you*

“Making eyes” is British slang for looking at someone in a way that is clearly motivated by sexual attraction. The singer feels uncomfortable seeing a girl do this to him, even though he’s doing the same thing back.

Data 2 “All tarted up”

“Still Take You Home”

*Well, fancy seeing you in here
You’re all tarted up and you don’t look the same*

"All tarted up" is British slang for getting dressed up, put your best clothes on, wearing very few clothes. The singer here sees someone that dressed differently than their previous meeting, now the person the singers see don't look the same and all tarted up.

Data 3 "Copper"

"Riot Van"

*And all the **coppers** kicked him in
And there was no way he could win
Just had to take it on the chin*

"Copper" is British slang the original, un shortened word, originally used in Britain to mean "someone who captures" on these lyrics the singer said the coppers "*kicked him in*" and "*Just had to take it on the chin*" Which means that the person the singers refers to are captured, as coppers means "someone who captures" and that person just had to accept it.

Data 4 "Mardy"

"Mardy Bum"

*Well, now then, **mardy bum***

"Mardy" is a British Slang that are famous in Yorkshire, for someone who looks upset or moody – in this case his girlfriend. It's often applied to a child, who may be acting immature; though it can be applied to anyone behaving in this manner. A good way to identify if someone is being mardy: when if you ask someone if they're fine, and they say they're fine – but they are clearly not fine with whatever is going on.

Data 5 "Summat"

"When the Sun Goes Down"

*And oh, he must be **up to summat***

"Summat" is a British slang that are famous in Yorkshire, that means the word something. "*Up to summat*" if translated means up to something. This slang also shows up in the band most popular songs

"Do I Wanna Know"

*Do you ever get that fear that you can't shift the type?
That sticks around like **summat** in your teeth?*

"*summat in your teeth*" if translated something in your teeth, just like the singer refers as something that you can't shift and sticks around

Data 6 "Scantily-clad"

"When The Sun Goes Down"

Scantily-clad beneath the clear night sky

It don't stop in the winter, no

"Scantily-clad" is a British slang for being under-dressed or wearing very few clothes. This song takes on themes about a prostitute that works when the sun goes down, just like the song title said. And her job doesn't stop even though it's winter

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATION

As argued, slang contributes to the unique character of the lyrics, reflecting the band's social and cultural values, Yorkshire roots, and conveying social and cultural meanings. The use of slang in songs adds depth and authenticity to the narratives. The slang terms allow the audience to connect with and access the themes on the level of culture and language. These slangs shape the band's identity and contribute to the discourse of music culture. Through their music, Arctic monkeys make themselves significant in the British music scene.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Muhammad Faiq Athallah Nurindra, email: faiq.63720016@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id

Muhammad Faiq Athallah Nurindra is an English Literature student in his final semester at English Literature Study Program, Universitas Komputer Indonesia.

Retno Purwani Sari, in her current research, explores the relationship between style, register and individual identity. Aligned with her interest in cultural studies, stylistics, and new media platforms, she investigates the contribution of innovative linguistic elements, such as slangs, to forming cultural identity within socio-cultural contexts. This research aligns with her research roadmap on new media, cultural studies and translation studies, giving perspectives of the interconnection between language, culture, and communication.