

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents some points related to this research. They are background of the study, research question, research objectives, significance of the research, scope and limitation of the research, and the definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Slang is regarded as informal language and expressions predominantly used by specific groups or individuals for communication. Slang is defined as colloquial language and expressions that are mainly used for communication within a particular group or individual ¹. Slang facilitates adaptation within groups by providing a shared linguistic code that fosters a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. People often use slang to demonstrate familiarity, strengthen solidarity, and immerse themselves in a shared lifestyle ². Slang can refer to any word or phrase that differs from its formal usage. Slang often incorporates humor and informality, which can facilitate casual communication and strengthen interpersonal relationships within a group ³.

While many films utilize slang to connect with young audiences, *Mean Girls* stands out for its particularly influential and enduring use of teenage

¹ Connie Eble, *Slang & Sociability*, 1996.

² Eric Partridge, *Slang To-Day and Yesterday*, 1st Editio. (London: Routledge, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315692111>.

³ Jule Coleman, "The Life of Slang," *Oxford University Press* (2012): 1–367.

vernacular, especially among female characters. In this film, slang functions as a tool for authenticity, helping to create relatable characters and scenarios that resonate with the target demographic of teenage girls. It also acts as a marker of coolness or insider status, often becoming a defining feature of cult classics and quotable content. The relationship between media and teenage language use is bidirectional and dynamic. On one hand, screenwriters and producers strive to capture current linguistic trends, incorporating popular slang to reflect real-world youth speech patterns. On the other hand, memorable slang from influential media can rapidly permeate teenage vernacular, with catchy phrases or novel expressions being adopted and disseminated through peer groups⁴. This symbiotic relationship creates a feedback loop where media both mirrors existing language use and introduces new linguistic innovations, ultimately shaping the evolution of teenage slang. The power of media to influence language is particularly pronounced in the age of social media, where memorable quotes and expressions can quickly go viral, further blurring the lines between fictional dialogue and real-world communication⁵. The film's use of slang reflects the language and communication patterns of teenage girls, which is a crucial aspect of their social identity and cultural expression. The movie's portrayal of slang helps to capture the essence of teenage culture and its influence on modern society. The widespread use of slang in the movie

⁴ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, ed. Lancaster University Geoffrey Leech & Mick Short, 4th editio. (Routledge, 2012).

⁵ Sarah Angela Almaden, "'The Plastics' and Other Cute English Phrases With Mean Girls," last modified 2022, accessed September 22, 2024, <https://beelinguapp.com/blog/english-phrases-with-mean-girls>.

significantly impacts its audience, particularly teenage girls. The film's slang terms, such as "fetch," become popular and are often used in everyday conversations, demonstrating the movie's ability to shape and influence language usage.

"Mean Girls," released in 2004, is a comedy film that follows Cady Heron, a previously homeschooled teenager, as she navigates the complex social hierarchy of an American high school. The movie centers on Cady's involvement with "The Plastics," a clique of popular girls led by the manipulative Regina George. Through sharp wit and satire, the film critiques teenage social dynamics, bullying, and the pressure to conform, particularly among young women. "Mean Girls" quickly transcended its status as a teen comedy to become a cultural phenomenon. Its impact on popular culture has been both significant and enduring, with many of its quotes and catchphrases becoming deeply embedded in everyday language, particularly among millennials and Gen Z ⁶. Phrases like "That's so fetch," "On Wednesdays we wear pink," and "You can't sit with us" have achieved iconic status, frequently referenced in social media, fashion, and other media.

Furthermore, the use of slang in "Mean Girls" can contribute to a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic context in which the movie was produced. The film's portrayal of teenage life and language use reflects the cultural and social norms of the time, providing a window into the language and social

⁶ Uzlifatul Jannah, "Slangs in Teen Talk Context in Mean Girls (A Sociolinguistic Approach)" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta, 2023).

practices of the early 2000s. In films like *Mean Girls*, where characters are crafted with authenticity, reflecting real teenage social dynamics ⁷. This relatability enhances the film's ability to connect with its audience, making the slang used by the characters both relevant and impactful. Through its witty dialogue and satirical take on high school life, *Mean Girls* offers humor that resonates with viewers while addressing deeper issues like bullying and peer pressure. By analysing the slang used in the movie, researchers can gain a better understanding of the ways in which language is used to create social meaning and how it reflects the cultural and social context in which it is used.

Slang has been the subject of several previous studies that provide insights into its typology, purpose, and use in various contexts. Using Sumarsono's theory, Situmorang and Herman⁸ examined the different types of slang used in the "Charlie's Angels" movie, they are: clipping slang, creative slang, existing words slang, metaphor slang and analyze the functions served by the slang language used by characters in the movie, referencing the theories of Zhou & Fan. Through a sociolinguistic perspective, Lumendang, Samola, and Kumayas⁹ investigated and identified 4 different slang roles. In addition, their research distinguished three types of slang terms and observed patterns in how slang is employed, including its frequency and the contexts in which it is used,

⁷ Lucien Hilaire, "Mean Girls and the Likes: The Language of Girlhood in American Pop Culture" (2020).

⁸ Renita Krisdayanti Situmorang and Herman Herman, "An Analysis of Slang Language Styles Used in Charlie'S Angels Movie," *Journal of English Educational Study (JEES)* 4, no. 1 (2021): 21–29.

⁹ Ien Meise Lumendang, Nurmin Samola, and Tirza Kumayas, "An Analysis of Slang in Geek Charming Movie," *Journal of English Culture, Language, Literature and Education* 8, no. 2 (2021): 117–128.

highlighting its role in informal communication. Finally, Dewi and Widiastuti¹⁰ conducted a study to determine the classification of slang words proposed by Eric Partridge encompasses six distinct categories: Publicity Slang, Public School and University Slang, Society Slang, Theatre Slang, Soldier's Slang, and Public House Slang, each reflecting unique social contexts and cultural nuances within the English language. The researcher utilizes Allan & Burridge's framework to examine the meanings of the identified slang words, concentrating on six essential aspects: conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, stylistic meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, and collocative meaning, thus offering an in-depth exploration of their semantic intricacies.

In this study, the film *Mean Girls* was chosen because the actors use a significant amount of American slang that is quite popular among Indonesian teenagers¹¹. Additionally, American slang in this film can help viewers become more familiar with American language culture in society. The researcher tried to analyse slang by using another theory that also discusses slang according to Allan & Burridge. This analysis will provide insights into the ways in which slang is used to create social relationships, express emotions, and convey meaning, as well as its role in shaping social interactions and relationships. This research explores how slang in the film can be misunderstood by viewers,

¹⁰ Ni Luh Karmila Dewi and Ni Made Ayu Widiastuti, "An Analysis of Slang Words in Song Lyrics Used in the Songs 'That's What I Like', 'Smoke On The Water', and 'Ch-Check It Out,'" *Udayana Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (UJoSSH)* 4, no. 2 (2020): 85.

¹¹ Hilaire, "Mean Girls and the Likes: The Language of Girlhood in American Pop Culture."

especially non-native English speakers, due to unfamiliarity with American teenage language and culture. Readers can also add to the vocabulary of American slang. Therefore, based on these reasons, the researcher would like to conduct a study entitled “An Analysis of Slang Used in Movie Mean Girls”.

B. Research Question

Based on this background, the research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What types of slang are most prevalent in “*Mean Girls*”?
2. What lexical semantic characterize the slang used in “*Mean Girls*”?
3. How do slang contribute to the movie's humor and social commentary?

C. Objective of the Research

Based on the formulation of the research, this research is intended:

1. To reveal types of slang found in “*Mean Girls*”.
2. To identify lexical semantic, characterize the slang used in “*Mean Girls*”.
3. To explore how the use of slang in *Mean Girls* contributes to the movie's humor and social commentary.

D. Significance of the Research

The purpose of this study is to fulfil both practical and scientific needs. The academic goal is to improve teachers' and students' understanding of slang. The practical goal is to be a useful guide for future linguists researching language-

related topics. The film's use of slang, such as 'That's so fetch,' not only contributes to its humor but also cements its status as a relatable and timeless teen comedy. These phrases have transcended the movie, influencing pop culture and the way teenagers communicate. This research can help educators to better connect with their students by building a more engaging learning environment, clarifying the meaning and purpose of slang, and offering concrete examples to use in language classes. This research also assists educators in addressing inappropriate use of slang in the classroom.

By understanding slang, its creation, and its use based on context, students' communication skills will improve through this research. With this understanding, students can connect with native English speakers by using slang in appropriate and productive ways, improving their conversational skills and cultural awareness. For future researchers, this study serves as a basic reference for investigating similar topics in linguistics, offering insights into the formation and function of slang in film and popular culture. It also provides a basis for broader research into new areas or different contexts where slang is significant. Overall, this research advances our knowledge of slang in educational settings and offers useful resources and tools for future educators, learners, and scholars.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

This research is focused on analyzing slang as presented in the film "Mean Girls" (2004). It specifically examines the types of slang, drawing upon Allan

and Burridge's (2006) framework, and various aspects of lexical semantics, primarily focusing on polysemy, metaphor, metonymy, hyponymy, homonymy, and antonymy, within the movie's script and performances. This analysis aims to understand how these linguistic features contribute to the film's humor, social commentary, and portrayal of teenage identity. The study does not include interviews with the film's creators, actors, or audience members, nor does it use questionnaires to assess public understanding of the slang. Consequently, while the research provides an in-depth analysis of slang in the film's fictional context, it cannot evaluate its impact on actual teenage speech or its long-term cultural influence. Additionally, the fixed nature of the film as a text offers a snapshot of teen language at the time of its creation, rather than an evolving linguistic landscape. The researcher utilized several online dictionaries, including the *Routledge Dictionary of Contemporary American Slang and Unconventional English*, to understand slang meanings. Some words not found in dictionaries require deeper comprehension of context and nuances. Despite these limitations, the study allows for a detailed examination of how slang functions within "Mean Girls." It does not cover all branches of lexical semantics, focusing specifically on aspects relevant to slang analysis in the film.

F. Definition of Key Terms

In this part, there were some explanations from the title mentioned in the previous items. The title was “An Analysis of Slang Used in Movie Mean Girls”. The definitions of key terms were as follows:

1. Slang is informal language consisting of words and expressions that are considered very casual, often transient, and restricted to a particular context or group.
2. Lexical semantics is a branch of linguistic semantics that focuses on the meanings of words. It examines how individual words convey meaning, how those meanings can change, and how words function within sentences.
3. Humor refers to the ability to evoke amusement or comedy, particularly as conveyed through language or situational contexts within the film.
4. Social commentary involves critical perspectives or opinions regarding societal issues and concerns, as portrayed through the dialogue and scenarios presented in the film.
5. *Mean Girls* is a 2004 American teen comedy film that serves as the central focus of this linguistic study, examining the intricacies of language and social dynamics within a high school setting.