

A Socio-semantic analysis of Slang in Bruno Mars' Song Lyrics

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Abstract. Song has been used as a pedagogical tool for different purposes in the EFL classroom. Song lyrics mostly tell the story of an artist's life using a variety of language styles. This study analyzed the lexical and contextual meaning of slang words used in Bruno Mars's song lyrics. Three lyrics from *Grenade*, *Lazy Song*, and *Runaway Baby* song titles were selected to identify slang words based on their construction includes the social meaning embedded in the lyric. The result indicated twenty-eight slang words that fall into the category of blending, clipping, acronym, coinage, and compounding. Coinage, the dominant characteristic of slang, relates to the association made with an object to create new meaning. Slang words compose of blending and clipping are understood in the lyrics, but acronyms, coinages, and compounding need contextual interpretation. The social meaning of all the slang words identified from the three lyrics is to express feelings and emotions about love, power, painfulness, and humiliation.

Keywords: Song, socio-semantic, analysis, slang.

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the use of language in social context becomes essential in English foreign language teaching and learning. It is the field of sociolinguistics that emphasizes the use of language in a social and cultural context. This new view of language teaching and learning evolves as a result of the failure of traditional grammar-translation language teaching which only focuses on knowing the grammar and vocabulary of the language. Although knowing grammar and vocabulary are essential, it is only one thing of mastery of the language, while other things require other types of knowledge and ability to use the language (Cook, 2013). Fromkin & Rodman (2014) emphasize that knowing a language means knowing how to produce and understand the meaning of the language in different contexts.

In line with the new concept of language competence, sociolinguistic competence becomes part of the 2013 English curriculum in school. Sociolinguistics dealt with the way people speak in which factors such as gender, race, and culture determine the language choice. Wardhaugh, (2000) describes it as a study about relationships between language, culture, and society. In the 2013 English curriculum, sociolinguistic competence is presented through teaching and learning activities from several different texts, such as short

stories, social dialogue, advertisement, song, poem, poetry, and spoof. The objective is mainly to learn vocabulary, a variety of language expressions, and the meaning embedded in the text.

The field of sociolinguistic study is very broad which covers language variety such as dialect, register, jargon, style, and slang (Holmes, 1997; Finegan, 2008; Fromkin & Rodman, 2014). As a part of language variety, slang draws specific attention in sociolinguistic study. Slang is used among a particular group of people who want to deliver their message the way they like to each other within the group. It is a very informal, casual language variety that produces new and sometimes impolite meaning (Crystal, 2010; Parera, 2004). Take Maluku slang for example, '*Manusia planet*' or '*Alien*' which refer to someone who dresses, acts or behaves weirdly or strangely, *Cakar bongkar*, or '*disorder*' which refers to chaotic, messy, or disorder situation or manner. This type of slang has an impolite meaning.

Several studies have been conducted in this field. Widyanto (2013) analyzed the syntactic forms, meanings, and the reason for using slang in the script of '8-mile film'. The result of his analysis showed three syntactic forms and four reasons for using slang. The syntactic form contains acronyms that refer to denotation and connotation. The four reasons for using slang are to express the exuberance of spirit and the sheer joy of living, the exhilaration of the moment, to escape from clichés- intention, to enrich the language, and to prove that someone has belonged to a certain school or university. Similarly, Sari, (2010), analyzed the types of slang and the meaning of those types in a 'two hours rush' movie. The result of her analysis showed three types of slang such as society slang, workmen slang, and public house slang. Society slang was among the types that were frequently used in the movie.

Other studies were also done in a short story and daily conversation. Gemilasari & Jufrizal, (2013) studied the word-formation of slang used in short stories in Teenagers Magazines 'Aneka Yesss' edition 2002-2012. The study revealed that acronym, abbreviation, blending, clipping, coinage, compounding, multiple processes, borrowing, reduplication, and affixation are the common word-formation of slang, however 'coinage' was the dominant word-formation that was frequently used in every edition. Furthermore, Muhartoyo & Wijaya, (2014) investigated the reason for using slang words in informal communication among students at the English department of Binus University. They found that more than half of the respondents use English slang to cut down the time when talking, texting, or tweeting. Their study also revealed that acronym was the most frequent type of word formation used as slang by the respondents. In another study, Pradianti, (2013) investigated the use of slang words among Junior High School Students in Everyday Conversation. Her study revealed the involvement of morphological processes in slang word formation such as clipping the word.

Slang is not only found in the interaction between a group of people as in the movie, short story, and daily conversation, but it also becomes an inspiration for the musician, especially the songwriter to use it in their song. Slang in song lyrics is also a form of

communication. Through the song, the singer delivers his/her message to the listener. Concerning the use of slang in a song lyric, Haryanto (2017) studied the figurative language of the song lyric in 'firework' sang by Katy Perry. In another study, Hidayat, Moehkardi, & Mada, (2018) analyzed the slang words 'Bitch' and 'Nigga' in British and American Hip Hop/Rap song lyrics. A cross-analysis revealed semantic changes that associate with the place of origin.

This present study concerns the use of slang words in song lyrics and the social meaning they portray to the listeners. The song is often used as media in English foreign language teaching and learning. However, the use of a song may not be that easy when it comes to understanding the meaning and the intended message it portrays. Students may get confused to depict specific meaning because part of the lyric may contain slang, idiom, or colloquial that can not be understood without studying the context. At the practical level, the result of the study provides an insight to the English language teachers in selecting and designing meaningful EFL teaching and learning activities from the song.

2. METHOD

The research employs descriptive qualitative methods. The data were slang words used in the song lyric sung by Bruno Mars. Bruno Mars is among many musicians who used some slang in his song lyrics. He is an American singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, record producer, and choreographer. His song albums are very famous among teenagers and are sometimes used by English teachers to teach English in the classroom. Three song lyrics, 'Grenade', 'Runaway baby', and 'The lazy song' were selected to identify slang words and to describe the social meaning of those slang in the context of the lyric. Word formation of slang theory prescribed by Yule, (2016) was used to identify the slang words. These are compounding, borrowing, coinage, blending, clipping, back-formation, acronym, derivation, conversion. The procedure covers the identification of slang words, categorizing and analyzing the lexical and contextual meaning of the slang. The lexical and contextual meaning of slang was analyzed using semantic discourse analysis by Dijk (1985).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Construction of Slang words and phrases found in Bruno Mars's song lyrics

The data revealed that the common construction of slang words frequently appeared in the lyrics were fell into the category of blending, acronym, coinage, and compounding and clipping. Tables 1 to 3 shows slang words and phrases identified in the three-song lyrics.

Table 1. Slang words and phrases identified in song lyrics entitle “Grenade” by Bruno Mars.

Lyric	Slang words/Phrases	type of word formation	Meaning
Easy come, easy go. That's just how you live. Oh take, take, take it all but you never give.	Easy come, easy go	Compound	Something that is achieved easily is also lost easily.
Shoulda known you was trouble from the first kiss. Had your eyes wide open. Why were they open. Gave you all I had and you tossed it in the trash. You tossed it in the trash, you did. To give me all your love is all I ever ask. 'Cause what you don't understand is (ref)	Shoulda	Blending	Should have
I'd catch a grenade for ya (yeah yeah). Throw my head on a blade for ya (yeah yeah) .I'd jump in front of a train for ya (yeah yeah). You know I'd do anything for ya (yeah yeah)	grenade ya	Coinage Clipping	Explosive weapon you
Oh whoa oh.I would go through all this pain.	whoa	Coinage	To express surprise/exclamation of surprise
Take a bullet straight through my brain. Yes I would die for you baby. But you won't do the same No no no no. Black, black, black, and blue. Beat me till I'm numb	Take a bullet Black, black, black and blue	Coinage Coinage	To kill or to take one's life bruises as a result of fighting
Tell the devil I said hey when you get back to where you're from Mad woman, bad woman that's just what you are. Yeah you'll smile in my face then rip the breaks out my car. Gave you all I had and you tossed it in the trash. You tossed it in the trash, you did. To give me all your love is all I ever ask. 'Cause what you don't understand is (Ref)	<u>The devil</u>	<u>Coinage</u>	<u>Evil spirit</u>
. If my body was on fire. Ooh you'd watch me burn down in flames. You said you love me, you're a liar. 'Cause you never ever, ever did. But darling I'd still (ref)			

Table 2. Slang words and phrases are identified in the ‘Runaway Baby’ song lyric by Bruno Mars.

Lyric	Slang words/Phrases	type of word formation	Meaning
Well looky here looky here ah what do we have?. Another pretty thing ready for me to grab . But little does she know that I'm a wolf in sheeps clothing cause at the end of the night it is her I'll be holding	looky	Blending	look here
I love you so. That's what you'll say You'll tell me baby, baby please don't go away. But when I play, I never stay To every girl that I meet here, this is what I'll say.	a wolf in sheep clothing	Coinage	A person or thing that appears friendly or harmless but is really hostile
(Ref) Run, run, run away, runaway baby Before I put my spell on you. You better get get getaway, getaway darling, cause everything you heard is true. You poor little heart will end up alone, cause lord knows I'm a rolling stone . So you better run run runaway, runaway baby Uh, ah yeah.	a rolling stone	Coinage	stay active to avoid stagnation
Well let me think, let me think, ah what should I do?. So many eager young bunnies that I'd like to pursue. Now even though they're eating out the palm of my hand. There's only one carrot and they all gotta share it. I love you so. That's what you'll say You'll tell me baby, baby please don't go away. But when I play, I never stay To every girl that I meet here, this is what I'll say.	young bunnies	Coinage	young beautiful girls
	gotta	Blending	Going to
(Ref)	ain't	Clipping	am not
See I ain't tryna hurt you baby. No no no I just want to work you baby. See I ain't tryna hurt you baby. No no no I just want to work you baby. If you are scared, you better run (you better run)	tryna	Blending	trying to

Table 3. Slang words and phrases identified in the” Lazy song” lyric by Bruno Mars.

Lyric	Slang words/Phrases	Type of word formation	Meaning
(Ref) Today I don't feel like doing anything. I just wanna lay in my bed	wanna	Blending	Want to
Don't feel like picking up my phone So leave a message at the tone, 'Cause today I swear I'm not doing anything. Uh, I'm gonna kick my feet up and stare at the fan	gonna	Blending	Going to
Turn the TV on. Throw my hand in my pants. Nobody's gone tell me I can't, no. I'll be loungin' on the couch, just chillin' in my snuggie	TV	Acronym	Television
	chillin'	Clipping	Chilling
	Snuggie	Coinage	warm knitted underwear
Flip to MTV so they can teach me how to Dougie , 'Cause in my castle I'm the freakin' man.	MTV	Acronym	Music television
	Dougie	coinage	a little dog or puppy
Oh Yes I said it I said it, I said it 'cause I can. (back to ref)	castle	Coinage	strong building built for the king and royal family
Nothing at all. oh hoo ooh hoo. Hoo ooh ooh. Nothing at all. Ooh hoo ooh hoo. Hoo ooh ooh.	freakin	Clipping	freaking
Tomorrow, I'll wake up, do some P90x . Meet a really nice girl, have some really nice sex. And she's gonna scream out, "This is great"	P90x	Acronym	Power 90 Extreme, is a commercial home exercise regimen
I might mess around and get my college degree. I bet my old man will be so proud of me. But sorry pops, you'll just have to wait	gonna	Blending	going to
Oh Yes I said it, I said it, I said it 'cause I can. (back to ref).....	ain't	Clipping	am not
No, I ain't gonna comb my hair, 'Cause I ain't goin' anywhere. No no no no no no no no oh. I'll just strut in my birthday suit And let everything hang loose	goin	Clipping	going
Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah, Oh, (back to ref)			
Nothing at all. Ooh hoo ooh hoo, hoo ooh ooh. Nothing at all. Ooh hoo ooh hoo Hoo ooh ooh . Nothing at all.			

The distribution of the characteristic of slang in each song lyric is varied from one title to another. The dominant characteristic of slang came from coinage which relates to the association made with an object or animal to create new meaning.

3.2 Social meaning of slang words and phrases

Lyric of the songs mostly tells the story of the artist's life. In telling the story, the songwriter sometimes creates new meanings from old words or any new events or brands. From the list of slangs words identified above, some slang words can be understood in the lyric, but some need context to understand the social meaning of the slangs words. Here is the explanation about slang words that require contextual explanations.

1. Easy come, easy go.

Lyric: **Easy come, easy go** that's just how you live.

'easy come, easy go' is a compound phrase that means something that is achieved easily is also lost easily. In this context of this lyric, Mars used 'easy come easy go' to describe his girlfriends' characters or behavior that seem to have no intention to build a serious relationship. This is a kind of humiliation to one's behavior of ignorance.

2. 'ya'and 'grenade'

*Lyric: I'd catch a **grenade** for ya (yeah yeah)*
Throw my head on a blade for ya (yeah yeah)
I'd jump in front of a train for ya (yeah yeah)
You know I'd do anything for ya (yeah yeah)

The word 'ya' in the lyric above is clipping for 'you' which is used in an informal situation. Lexically the word 'ya' is a pronoun but contextually the word 'ya' refers to his girlfriend. The word 'grenade' refers to a type of explosive weapon. In this lyric, the word 'grenade' is used as a coinage to indicate the song writer's willingness to sacrifice him or to die for his girlfriend. In other words, it shows the depth of love.

3. Whoa and take a bullet

*Lyrics: Oh **whoa** oh*
I would go through all this pain
*'**Take a bullet**' straight through my brain*
Yes I would die for you baby
But you won't do the same
No no no no

'Whoa' in this context is an expression of surprise, something that happened beyond imagination. 'Take a bullet' in this context means to commit suicide by shooting oneself. This slang means that the singer, Mars was willing to die or take any risks for his girlfriends. He gave everything that he could give to this one girl and it still wasn't enough for her and even though he tried everything to make her happy he could not do anything at all and then he sees her with another man and it was too much for him to handle. The words 'whoa' is an expression of astonishing. iT has no meaning, while in this context the word 'whoa' show us how Bruno scream to tell his expression.

4. Black, Black, Blue

Lyrics: Black, black, black and blue
Beat me till I'm numb.

The slang words "Black, black, blue" is a coinage. Lexically, the words 'black, black and blue' refer to color but contextually, these slang words refer to bruises as a result of fighting even though it doesn't take the literal meaning of physical fighting, but rather emotional painful as it supposed to be.

5. Devil

Lyrics: Tell the devil i said 'hey' when you get back to where you're from
Mad woman, bad woman that's just what you are.

Lexically, 'Devil' means profoundly an evil spirit or monster. Overall, the meaning of this song is the struggle of a man because he loves his woman very much, but the woman doesn't love her and has an affair with another man. As the contextual meaning, the word 'devil' here refers to this woman's affair with another man. This is a kind of humiliation to the woman.

6. Looky

Lyrics: Well looky here looky here ah what do we have?
Another pretty thing ready for me to grab.

The slang 'looky' is a blending that lexically refers to a person who looks at something. Contextually, the slang 'looky' refer to flirting with another girl or searching for another girl. The lyric tells about something special is about to happen that the man is about to find a pretty girl.

7. A wolf in sheep clothing

Lyric: But little does she know that I'm a wolf in sheep clothing
'Cause at the end of the night it is her I'll be holding

The phrase '**a wolf in sheep clothing**' is a coinage that contains two distinct animals 'the wolf' which is strong and wild, and 'the sheep' which is tame and weak. The phrase 'a wolf in sheep clothing' in this song lyric refers to the deceiver, in this case, the singer who refers to himself as someone who likes to deceive a girl to achieve his desire or a playboy. In this context, Mars mentioned himself as a cunning, disloyal person because Mars only makes the women mere escapees. It is intended to make fun of the situation.

8. A rolling stone

Lyrics: You poor little heart will end up alone
*'Cause lord knows I'm a **rolling stone***
So you better run run runaway, runaway baby
Uh, ah yeah.

The phrase '**Rolling stone**' is a coinage contain two words, 'stone' which is an object or a noun, and 'rolling' which is an adjective to describe the noun 'stone'. Lexically the phrase refers to the stone that spins around. Taking the context into account, 'rolling stone' refers to someone who does not stay with the same friend. In the context of the song lyric, the phrase 'rolling stone' refers to Mars/ singer being somebody known as a player who goes around flirting with other women and breaking their hearts. So, it can be said as contextual meaning 'a rolling stone' here means a player or playboy. This is also intended to make fun of the situation.

9. Young bunnies

Lyrics: Well let me think, let me think, ah what should I do?
*So many eager **young bunnies** that I'd like to pursue.*

The phrase '**young bunnies**' contain two words, 'young' which function as an adjective and 'bunnies', name of an animal which lexically mean young rabbit. In this context of the song lyric, 'young bunnies' means a sexy young woman. So the lyrics tell the story of many young sexy women who want to be with Mars, and he can't decide between them so he just goes for all of them one after another. This slang is intend to make fun of the situation.

10. Chillin', Snuggie, Doggie, MTV

*Lyrics: I'll be loungin' on the couch, just **chillin'** in my **snuggie***
*Flip to **MTV** so they can teach me how to **Doggie***

The slang '**Chillin'**' is a clipping from 'chilling'. It is an adjective means hang out or do nothing. The word '**Snuggie**' means warm knitted underwear especially long underpants for women or children. **MTV** is an acronym for a Music television channel. The word '**doggie**' means little dog or puppy. However, the contextual meaning of the word, **chillin'** is relax, **snuggie** means a blanket, and '**doggie**' relates to a hip-hop dance generally performed by moving one's body in a shimmy style and passing a hand through or near the hair on one's head. Studying the individual word meaning, it can be said that the whole lyric tells that the singer was having a good time watching a hip-hop dance from a music television channel. This is intended to create an image of having fun.

11. Castel, P90x, freakin

*Lyrics: 'Cause in my **castle** I'm the **freakin'** man*

Tomorrow, I'll wake up, do some P90x

The word 'castle' literally refers to a strong building built for the king and royal family. In this context of the song lyric, 'castle' refer to a mansion or a house that the singer, Bruno Mars is so proud of being a nobleman. The word 'freakin' is a clipping from 'freaking'. It is an adverb that means 'extremely'. In this context, the singer/Bruno Mars refers to himself as a powerful man or an authoritative person

Furthermore, the word ' P90x' is an acronym for 'Power 90 Extreme' It is a home exercise or gym that consists of a training program that uses cross-training and periodization, combined with a nutrition and dietary supplement plan. So in this context, the slang 'P90x' refers to home exercise or gym.

12. Pops.

*Lyrics: I might mess around and get my college degree
I bet my old man will be so proud of me
but sorry pops, you'll just have to wait*

Lexically, **Pops** has no meaning, but in this context, the words pops can be said as an informal greeting to father. And this lyric pops referring to the old man who is believed to be his father.

3.3 Discussion

Language by nature is dynamic. Every language is changing, modifying, and developing with the change of social structure, cultural values, and norms. As language evolution is a continuous process, many new words are coming into the scene and enriching the languages. The new words and phrases are adding to the list of words through different word-formation processes ((Patridge, 2003; Yule, 2016).

In Bruno Mars's song lyrics, five types of word formation are found. These five types are blending, acronym and coinage, clipping, and compounding. Blending is a process of combining two separate forms to produce a single new term. It is informal contractions or short forms of other words that people use when speaking casually. There are 3 types of blending or constructions found in Bruno Mars song lyrics. These are the construction of 'to' such as 'want to' to be 'wanna', 'going to' to be 'gonna' and 'tryna' to be 'try to'; the construction 'have' such as 'should have to be 'shoulda', and other construction such as ' am not' to be 'aint'. These types of slang can be understood without putting them in the context of the text.

Different from blending is the acronym and clipping. The acronym is formed from the initial letters of a set of other words as found in Bruno Mars' song lyrics such as 'P90x', 'MTV' and 'TV'. Clipping is formed by shortening the word such as 'freakin', chillin', and 'ya'. According to Zhou, (2013), these informal contractions are more common

in American English. These informal contractions are not correct in English. They are only used in an informal conversation with friends but are not in a formal conversation or writing. However, these forms are also found in a comic strip because the written words represent in the comic strip are the spoken words or dialogue.

Other characteristics of slang found in Bruno Mars's song lyrics are made up of coinage and compounding word-formation. Coinage is word-formation that associates with an object or any brand name (Yule, 2016). In Bruno Mars song lyrics the examples of coinage are phrases such as 'wolf in sheep clothing', 'rolling stone', 'young bunnies' and 'Dougie', while an example of compounding is phrases such as 'easy come, easy go'. This type of slang is the colloquial language used by people in everyday conversation. From this analysis, it was found that slang is not only containing words but also phrases regard as colloquialisms and idioms using by some groups within majority cultures. The different types of word formation that are made up of slang, acronym, coinage, and compounding need context to understand the meaning. In other words, the true meaning can only be understood when slang phrases are put in the context of the lyric. Most of the slang words or phrases in Bruno Mars's song lyrics are intended to express feelings and emotions about love, power, painfulness, and humiliation.

4. CONCLUSION

Slang is a non-standard use of words in a language. It is a very informal language variety that is generally perceived as the language of the youth. Slang is not only found in the interaction between groups of people and in a short story, but it also becomes an inspiration for the musician, especially the songwriter to communicate the message to the audience. This research has identified some slang words and interpreted the social meaning of those words in Bruno Mars's song lyrics namely, *grenade*, *runaway baby*, and *the lazy song*. From the three songs, the study revealed twenty-eight slang words including some phrases based on the word-formation category such as coinage, blending, and acronym, clipping, and compounding. These slang words are mostly used to express feelings and emotions such as love, power, painfulness, and humiliation. The study has practical implications for English teachers who intend to use songs in schools for English language teaching and learning. It provides an insight to the teacher that the song contains an informal language form that can only be found in informal social interaction. It incorporates slang words in which the meaning can only be understood in the context of the lyric. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers need to be more thoughtful when using the song for meaningful English language learning activities with students in the classroom.

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