



The Role of Slang Words in Enhancing Informal English Communication Skills

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 2024-06-11 Revised: 2024-09-23 Accepted: 2024-10-25</p> <p>Keywords: EFL Learning; Informal Communication; Slang Words; Wednesday Series</p>	<p>Slang represents a dynamic and informal aspect of language, often reflecting cultural identity and creativity. This study examines the types and meanings of slang words used in six episodes of the Wednesday series (2022), aiming to explore their linguistic and pedagogical significance. Using a qualitative descriptive approach based on Miles and Huberman's content analysis framework, the study categorizes slang words into four types: coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms. Coinage emerged as the most frequently used type, contributing to the series' authenticity and narrative depth, while blending, clipping, and acronyms provided linguistic variety. The findings highlight the potential of popular media as a resource for EFL learning, offering learners exposure to authentic informal communication. Slang enhances vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and cultural understanding, making it a valuable tool for bridging formal education and real-world language use. However, the study's scope is limited to six episodes, leaving room for future research to explore additional contexts and pedagogical outcomes. This research underscores the relevance of incorporating media into language instruction, providing practical insights for educators and learners. By analyzing the interplay between slang and media, the study contributes to applied linguistics and supports innovative approaches in EFL pedagogy.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic system that constantly evolves, reflecting the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. One such dynamic feature of language is slang, which represents informal, non-standard expressions often used within specific social groups to convey cultural identity, humor, and intimacy (Ramadhan & Simatupang, 2024; Thorne, 2014). Slang words are ubiquitous in modern media, including music, social platforms, and films, where they add authenticity and depth to characters and narratives. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, understanding slang can enhance not only vocabulary but also communicative competence in informal contexts, making it a critical aspect of language acquisition (Kang, 2019; Khoshniyat & Dowlatabadi, 2014; Popovych, 2023).

The importance of integrating authentic materials, such as movies, into language learning has been well-documented in applied linguistics. Studies have shown that exposure to films improves language comprehension by providing learners with rich input of spoken English, including pronunciation, intonation, and cultural references (Cahyani & Hasbi, 2024; Hutchinson & Dmitrieva, 2022; Idris & Hasbi, 2024; Qiu, 2017; Samad & Paris, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Specifically, slang in movies allows learners to familiarize themselves with informal expressions, contributing to their ability to navigate real-world conversational settings. For instance, Situmorang and Herman (2021) analyzed slang in the movie *Charlie's Angels* and demonstrated how creative language use can be classified into specific categories, enriching learners' linguistic repertoire. Similarly, Yulia (2020) explored slang in Avril Lavigne's song lyrics and found that various slang forms, such as blending and clipping, are prevalent in contemporary media.

Despite these advancements, gaps remain in understanding how slang from popular media can be effectively leveraged to enhance EFL learning. While previous studies have categorized slang types and explored their functions, they often fail to address how such linguistic features contribute to learners'



communicative skills and cultural awareness. Furthermore, many existing studies focus on specific media types, such as songs or isolated movie scenes, rather than comprehensive analyses of widely consumed series that offer sustained exposure to language use. This gap underscores the need for further research that bridges the intersection of slang, media, and EFL pedagogy.

Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on the slang words used in the Netflix series *Wednesday* (2022), which has gained global popularity for its creative storytelling and relatable characters. This research aims to analyze the types and meanings of slang words found in six episodes of the series, categorized using Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework for qualitative content analysis. The study seeks to answer two central questions: (1) What types of slang are used in the *Wednesday* series? and (2) What meanings are conveyed through these slang expressions?

This research makes several significant contributions to the field of applied linguistics. First, it expands the understanding of slang as an educational tool by providing empirical evidence on its prevalence and diversity in contemporary media. Second, it highlights the pedagogical potential of using films to enhance learners' informal communication skills, particularly in EFL contexts. Third, it bridges linguistic theory and educational practice by offering practical insights for integrating media into language teaching. By doing so, this study not only advances the theoretical discussion of slang in applied linguistics but also provides actionable strategies for educators aiming to foster learners' cultural and linguistic competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Slang, as a linguistic phenomenon, represents a subset of informal language that emerges within specific social groups, often reflecting creativity, identity, and cultural solidarity. Scholars have explored slang from various perspectives, emphasizing its unique role in shaping communication, fostering group identity, and reflecting societal changes. Thorne (2014) defines slang as non-standard words and expressions created and used by particular communities, often carrying meanings that are inaccessible to outsiders. This underscores its exclusivity and adaptability within evolving social contexts. Similarly, Dalzell (2008) identifies slang as a tool for informal communication, frequently used to challenge conventions or signify group membership.

From a linguistic perspective, slang's dynamic nature is closely tied to its forms and functions. Yule (2022) categorizes slang into processes such as coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms, which showcase linguistic creativity. For example, Situmorang and Herman (2021) applied these classifications to analyze the slang used in the movie *Charlie's Angels*, identifying creative slang as the most prevalent category. Such studies highlight how slang can enrich vocabulary and expand linguistic knowledge, particularly in media settings.

The intersection of media and language learning has gained significant attention, with researchers highlighting the pedagogical potential of authentic materials. Movies, in particular, have been shown to serve as effective resources for language acquisition, providing learners with exposure to contextualized language use. Qiu (2017) found that films enhance listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, offering a rich source of informal language, including slang. Similarly, Khoshniyat and Dowlatabadi (2014) demonstrated how animated movies could help learners grasp idiomatic expressions, fostering cultural understanding alongside language proficiency. These studies underscore the importance of integrating media into language learning to create engaging and effective educational experiences.

Slang in song lyrics has also been extensively studied, with researchers exploring how popular music reflects and influences linguistic trends. Yulia (2020) analyzed slang in Avril Lavigne's *Head Above Water* album, identifying various types of slang and their implications for informal language learning. The study found that blending and coinage were the most frequently used forms, demonstrating how music can introduce learners to diverse linguistic constructs. Although these studies provide valuable insights, their focus on specific genres or isolated media forms limits the generalizability of their findings.

While existing research has advanced the understanding of slang in various media contexts, gaps remain in exploring its application to language education. Most studies focus on isolated data sources or theoretical frameworks without addressing how learners can apply slang knowledge to enhance communication skills. Additionally, the potential of long-form narratives, such as television series, to offer sustained exposure to informal language has been underexplored. The *Wednesday* series, a globally popular show, provides a unique opportunity to study slang in an immersive narrative context, making it a valuable resource for EFL learners.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the slang words used in the Netflix series *Wednesday* (2022). The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the linguistic features and contextual meanings of slang within authentic media. Guided by Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework for qualitative data analysis, the research focused on identifying and categorizing the types and meanings of slang words used in six episodes of the series. The primary data for this study consisted of slang words uttered by characters in the *Wednesday* series. The series, directed by Tim Burton and scripted by Alfred Gough and Miles Millar, was selected for its popularity and rich use of informal language. The episodes analyzed were chosen from the first six of the series, each with a duration ranging from 47 to 59 minutes. Data were collected through repeated viewings of the episodes, during which slang words were identified and transcribed. To ensure accuracy, the slang expressions were cross-referenced with subtitles and verified using established dictionaries and linguistic sources, such as *The Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang* (Dalzell, 2008).

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) three-phase process: (1) **Data Reduction**: During this phase, the researchers organized the data by selecting relevant slang words and excluding unrelated information. Each slang word was categorized based on Yule’s (2022) linguistic processes, including coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms. This step aimed to identify patterns and trends within the dataset; (2) **Data Display**: The reduced data were organized into tables that categorized the slang words by type, episode, and meaning. This visual representation facilitated a systematic examination of the frequency and distribution of slang types across the analyzed episodes; (3) **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**: The researchers synthesized the findings, identifying the most and least frequently used slang types and their contextual meanings. This phase also involved verifying the conclusions by cross-checking with theoretical frameworks and prior studies to ensure consistency and reliability.

FINDINGS

The analysis of slang words in the *Wednesday* (2022) series aimed to uncover the types and meanings of informal expressions used in the show. The study focused on six episodes, providing insights into how slang enhances informal communication and contributes to the authenticity of dialogue. This section discusses the results based on the data presented in Table 1, followed by a summary of key findings.

Table 1. Slang Words in 6 of 8 *Wednesday* Series Movie 2022

No of Chapter	Title of Chapter	Slang Words	Correct Word/ Meaning	Types of Slang
1	his daughter wednesday is plagued by grief	The cold shoulder	Ignoring	Coinage
		Howdy	How do you	Blending
		Roomie	My roommate	Blending
		Okey-dokey	Ok	Coinage
		Gonna	Going to	Blending
		Holy crap	Swearing	Coinage
		Hands dirty	rough work	Coinage
		I’ll	I will	Blending
		Behind the bars	In jail	Coinage
		Holy shit	Swearing	Coinage
		Freebie	Gift	Coinage
		Jeez	Jesus	Coinage
		You’ll	You will	Blending
		I’ve	I have	Blending
		Dead weight	Inhibitor	Coinage
We’re	We are	Blending		
Burning moonlight	Run out of time	Coinage		
2	woe is the loneliest number	Jerks	insolent	Coinage
		Chop-chop	Hurry	Coinage
		Bitch	heavy/commensurate reward	Coinage

3	friend or woe	Wave	Problem	Coinage
		Tsunami	Big problem	Coinage
		Sharp	On time	Coinage
		Good morrow	Good morning	Coinage
		Heebie-jeebies	Creepy	Coinage
		Baddas	Cool	Coinage
		Thin ice, wafer thin ice	really on the edge/outrageous	Coinage
		differ	Different	clipping
4	woe that nighth	I'm	Iam	Blending
		All ears	listening	Coinage
		yahtze	Got it	Coinage
5	you reap what you woe	I've	I have	Blending
		Open book	Predictable	Coinage
		The icing on the cake	very satisfied	Coinage
		Pocked	Ally	Coinage
		Good egg	Good boy	Coinage
6	quid pro woe	We're	We are	Blending
		Same boat	Same fate	Coinage
		Monkey's paw	Returning without being asked	Coinage
		AF	As fuck	Acronym
		Ditto	Mee too	Coinage
		You're	You are	Blending
		Doormat	Soft	Coinage

Table 1 categorizes the slang words identified in six episodes of the Wednesday series, specifying their types and meanings. The slang words are grouped by their linguistic processes, including coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms. The table highlights the diversity of slang usage in the series and provides a detailed breakdown by episode title, word, its formal equivalent, and slang type. For example: In Episode 1, titled His Daughter Wednesday is Plagued by Grief, slang expressions such as "The cold shoulder" (meaning "ignoring") and "Howdy" (a blending of "How do you") demonstrate the use of coinage and blending. Episode 3, Friend or Woe, features terms like "Wave" (meaning "problem") and "Tsunami" (meaning "big problem"), showcasing coinage as a prominent type in this episode. In Episode 6, Quid Pro Woe, the slang phrase "AF" (an acronym for "As F***") exemplifies how acronyms are used for brevity and emphasis. Overall, coinage is the most frequently observed type of slang, reflecting its creative role in shaping informal communication within the series. Blending is the second most common, followed by the less frequent categories of clipping and acronyms. This distribution underscores the predominance of inventive and context-specific language in the series.

The findings reveal four types of slang words in the Wednesday series: (1) Coinage: This is the most frequently used type, accounting for expressions such as "Holy crap", "Dead weight", and "Monkey's paw". These terms add originality and cultural depth to the dialogue; (2) Blending: Examples include "Gonna" (going to) and "I've" (I have), illustrating how this type simplifies speech while maintaining clarity; (3) Clipping: Less common but present, as seen in words like "Differ" (different). This type demonstrates the tendency to abbreviate longer words for conversational ease; (4) Acronyms: Rare but impactful, as demonstrated by "AF". This type adds brevity and emotional emphasis in informal settings. The study's findings highlight the linguistic richness of the Wednesday series, showcasing how slang enhances the relatability and authenticity of characters. The predominance of coinage and blending reflects the series' creative approach to language, while the occasional use of clipping and acronyms adds variety to the dialogue. These findings emphasize the potential of popular media as a tool for EFL learners, providing authentic exposure to informal language and fostering cultural understanding.

DISCUSSION

Slang, as a linguistic phenomenon, reflects the dynamic and informal aspects of language use, particularly within specific social and cultural contexts. This study analyzed the use of slang in six episodes of the Wednesday series (2022), uncovering the prevalence and diversity of slang types and their meanings. The findings provide valuable insights into the linguistic and pedagogical potential of slang in media, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The study identified four primary types of slang in the series: coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms, with coinage being the most dominant category. Slang expressions such as "The cold shoulder" (ignoring), "Gonna" (going to), and "AF" (as f***) illustrate the creative and context-specific nature of informal language in the series. Coinage and blending appeared frequently across episodes, showcasing their central role in shaping dialogue and enhancing character authenticity. Less common but still significant were clipping and acronyms, which contributed to the variety and economy of language. The results align with prior research that highlights the prevalence of coinage and blending in media. For example, Situmorang & Herman (2021) found that creative slang dominated the Charlie's Angels movie, mirroring the frequent use of coinage in this study. Similarly, Yulia (2020) identified blending and coinage as the most common slang types in Avril Lavigne's Head Above Water album, further reinforcing the idea that these categories are prominent in contemporary media. However, unlike Yulia's focus on music and Situmorang's analysis of a single film, this study emphasizes the sustained use of slang across multiple episodes, offering a more comprehensive view of its narrative and contextual applications.

The findings underscore the value of using media like the Wednesday series in EFL instruction. By exposing learners to authentic slang expressions, educators can enhance their students' informal communication skills, cultural understanding, and listening proficiency. Slang, as depicted in the series, can serve as a bridge between formal language education and real-world communication, providing learners with practical tools for engaging in casual conversations. Additionally, the study demonstrates how media-driven language learning can foster deeper engagement and enjoyment among learners, making the process more effective and memorable. Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, it only analyzed six out of eight episodes, potentially overlooking additional slang expressions and patterns present in the omitted episodes. Second, while the findings highlight the prevalence and diversity of slang, they do not address how EFL learners might interpret or apply these expressions in their own language use. Finally, the study's focus on the Wednesday series limits the generalizability of its findings to other media genres or cultural contexts. Future research should expand the dataset and explore the pedagogical outcomes of integrating such materials into EFL curricula.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the use of slang words in six episodes of the Wednesday series (2022) to uncover their types and meanings, focusing on how they contribute to informal English communication. The findings revealed four primary types of slang; coinage, blending, clipping, and acronyms with coinage being the most frequently used. The study contributes to applied linguistics by emphasizing the potential of media as a tool for EFL learning. By exposing learners to authentic and contextualized language, such as slang, educators can enhance learners' listening skills, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural understanding. The findings align with previous research on the prevalence of coinage and blending in media, further reinforcing the value of these linguistic features in informal communication. However, the study is not without limitations. The analysis was restricted to six episodes, potentially missing additional insights from the remaining episodes. Moreover, while the findings suggest pedagogical value, further research is needed to assess how learners interpret and apply slang in real-world communication. In conclusion, this research highlights the importance of leveraging media-driven approaches in language learning, particularly through the integration of slang. The study offers practical insights for educators and lays the groundwork for future studies exploring the intersection of media, informal language, and EFL pedagogy. By doing so, it underscores the role of slang as a bridge between formal education and authentic language use.

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