

INTERPRETATION OF SLANG WORDS THROUGH CONTEXT AND SITUATIONS IN THE FILM BACK IN ACTION (SEMIOTIC STUDY)

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Abstract:

Slang is an informal language used by a community to show social familiarity. In addition to communicating, the use of slang is also used to express certain expressions and meanings as semiotic signs can be interpreted for language delivery. In the context of sociolinguistics, it shows that slang is used to describe how close relationships are in society. The use of slang began to be applied in the world of entertainment such as films. This study aims to find out how the use of slang in the film 'Back in Action' is interpreted by collaborating the sociolinguistic approach and the theory of situation context proposed by M.A.K Halliday regarding the elements of Field, Tenor, Mode. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, documentation and observation as data collection techniques, this research is analysed narratively and strengthened through data triangulation. So that the research results obtained in the form of 28 slang data found. Data interpretation based on Field elements with dominant data in the form of Parent-Child Debate, Tenor with dominant data in the form of Relationship between Family, Mode with dominant data in the form of Direct Spoken Language.

Keywords:

Slank, Situation
Context, Field, Tenor,
Mode



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INTRODUCTION

The development of the times triggers changes in communicating using language from time to time. Especially, in the contemporary era, language is used as an illustration of social and cultural changes in society in communicating. Language is one of the communication tools used by everyone. Not only as a communication tool, language is also used as a tool for expression and conveying ideas. This bears close relation to the study of linguistics which is based on the dynamics of language in society.

Halliday (1985) argues that Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) describes language as a form of social semiotics through a cultural context and situation in performing oral or written activities. Language as a theoretical material forms functions and systems in a contemporary manner. Therefore, language also plays a role in expressing oneself, organising social life, and expanding information to fulfil its contemporary functions and systems. In a similar vein Sudrajat & Kartanegara (2021) posits that linguistics is the science of language objectively. Linguistics is included in the class of sciences to convey language narration to meet the standards of scientific research, specifically, factual, scientific, reasonable, and wise. Based on the thoughts of linguistic experts, linguistics is usually distinguished by forming several parts, including: structural

linguistics, historical linguistics, philological linguistics, applied linguistics and comparative linguistics.

However, there is a linguistic focus that examines the meaning of signs in aspects of language delivery. A theorist named Ferdinand de Saussure created a linguistic science about the meaning of signs in language transmission called Semiotics. Then Roland Barthes expanded the theory to provide further understanding of semiotics. Semiotics is a linguistic science that uses language as a tool to provide signs in order to convey the responses of a culture in a certain period (Harahap & Alfikri, 2023). The semiotics researched by Roland Barthes provides clues for people in utilising objects, signalling intentions to convey language (Nanda, 2023). Therefore, to understand semiotics, it is necessary to deepen the meaning of language that will be interpreted based on the social and cultural scope that exists in society. This is based on the behaviour of society in language that develops gradually.

The social sphere that builds people's behaviour in language is interconnected to the role of sociolinguistics which focuses on being a bridge between language and social elements in building dynamic communication. Sociolinguistics examines the interdependence between implementation in society and social elements, such as age, gender, character, group, ethnicity, and environment. Combining knowledge of sociology and linguistics, sociolinguistics seeks to explain language variation and modification of language use in society (Surapongraktrakool, 2023).

As a result, social interaction in language is divided into two groups, that is formal and informal language. This grouping is intended to sort out the context of language use in society so that there is no misunderstanding in communication. The understanding between the interconnectedness of society and the communication that occurs, has triggered the disparity of formal and informal language. Formal language is applied in formal situations to show manners and politeness. While informal language is applied in casual situations to build daily relationships (Aubakirova, 2024). However, there is a difference in lexis or vocabulary use in formal and informal language that needs to be known, which is stated by Eggins (2004) with coverage: Formal lexis (Full forms and No slang) and Colloquial lexis (Abbreviated forms and Slang). The majority of people tend to use Colloquial lexis (Abbreviated forms and Slang) informal vocabulary in communicating because of its casual nature and the familiarity that is established in communicating in everyday life.

However, following the flow of time and era, people tend to express themselves through vocabulary with meanings that they create. This vocabulary is often referred to as slang because it is used according to the context and era. According to Munthe et al. (2023) slang is an unofficial language applied by the community related to non-standard communication. Generally, it is done for the sake of interacting with groups to express ideas, verbal communication, emotions, and imagination of each individual. Meanwhile, each individual implements non-standard language as a form of convenience, happiness and easier when spoken by a group of people. Slang is an internal language that is only

recognised by groups of people but cannot be defined because of its erratic nature as trends from time to time (Nuraini & Pahamzah, 2021).

The use of slang is not only used directly by community groups to communicate, currently slang is starting to be applied in various entertainment platforms such as movies. Film is a mass communication medium filled with audio and visuals in a complex cinematographic form (Alfathomi & Manesah, 2016). Therefore, many films use slang in their conversations, especially in modern films. One film that communicates in a casual or informal way by using slang in its conversation is the film "Back in Action". This film tells the life of a pair of spies who have retired and must return because of a problem. Reported by IMDb, the film "Back in Action" received a rating of 5.9/10 from 56,000 users. The film, which released on 17 January 2025, attracted attention because of the return of one of the actresses that film lovers have been waiting for after 10 years, that is Cameron Diaz to the world of acting.

In the previous study, Halliday's theory is used as a reference to analyse slang on the elements of field, tenor, mode. As in research (Melissa et al., 2024) discusses the use of slang in Gen Z and Gen Alpha on various social media platforms. Whereas in research (Najuba, 2025) tends to discuss language variations such as Register, and lexical features where slang is used by Gen Alpha on Tiktok. The relationship between field, tenor, mode is not only used for slang analysis but focuses on other language variations. Then in the research of (Eryanto et al., 2024), it tends to discuss field, tenor, mode as a register. The slang in the study is only limited to vocabulary and sentence structure translated with a focus on Field as a sentence reference in the film *Forrest Gump*. However, there are still rare studies that examine the use of slang based on the context of the situation in the film whose analysis focuses on the elements of field, tenor, mode.

This study aims to find out what slang used as informal language in the film "Back in Action" is interpreted. With the main focus of the interpretation of the context and situation of the use of slang in the conversation presented in the film through the theory put forward by Halliday. Because the context of the use of slang is often interpreted differently depending on how the context or its use in a particular group.

METHOD

The researcher used descriptive qualitative method to find out the use of slang as an unofficial language in the film "Back in Action". Qualitative descriptive research method is a method applied to explore knowledge or theory in previous research through books, national or international journals. In the study stage, researchers observe similarities and dissimilarities, conveying ideas into a new idea (Waruwu, 2024).

The data collection techniques employed in this study included documentation and observation. To collect data, researchers took several steps to collect data, that is (1) Researchers watched the whole film while understanding the storyline. (2) The researcher read the subtitles in the film and documented them through screenshots. (3) Identifying dialogues with documented slang. The data analysis used by the researcher is narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is an analytical method applied to inform or establish the structure of a story, whether fiction such as novels, fairy tales, films or facts in the news. The researcher used data triangulation in the form of theoretical triangulation.

Triangulation is a data collection technique by combining existing data collection techniques and data sources (Sugiyono, 2020). This theoretical triangulation is a triangulation that takes the form of a delivery of information. Then juxtaposed with relevant theoretical understanding to maintain objectivity, ensure validity, and credibility of the findings or conclusions obtained. In this current research, the authors will need helps to get the data validity from lecturer of linguistic University of Indraprasta PGRI.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research data found shows that slang in the movie “Back in Action” is used in various contexts and situations. To identify the context and situation used, the researcher analyzed the theoretical data about context and situation. Based on Halliday (1985) theory, context and situation are classified into 3 elements of context and situation, that is Field, Tenor, and Mode. After the analysis, the slang findings were identified and presented through a table below :

Table 1 Slang and Situational Context

NO	SLANG	CHARACTERS	FIELD	TENOR	MODE	INTERPRETATION
1	I don't take that as a dig	Matthew	Reaction to stereotypes	Relationship between co-workers	Spontaneous Spoken Language	While Baron stereotypes Americans as being a bit rude, Matthew does not take it as an insult.
2	I'm in	Matthew	Responsible for his girlfriend's pregnancy	Relationship between couple	Direct Spoken Language	Although Matthew and Emily's relationship was short-lived, Matthew was willing to take responsibility for Emily's pregnancy.
3	Damn it	Matthew	Casual conversation about sports	Relationship between spouses	Expressive Spoken Language	The expletive spoken by Matthew was due to a mobile phone alarm that
4	What's up, but?	Matthew	Morning greetings	Father-son relationship	Direct Spoken Language	A casual greeting spoken by Matthew to his son, Leo.
5	Juicy gossip	Emily	An invitation to spend time together at	Mother-daughter dynamic	Direct Spoken Language	Emily invites Alice (her daughter) to spend time at home with her friends by
6	Hell no	Matthew	Reaction to his child's behavior	Relationship between spouses	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Matthew was upset and couldn't believe that his daughter was kissing her boyfriend's.

7	Mom Sux	Emily	Response to notes (laptop password) found	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language & Scripted	Emily found her son's laptop password note.
8	Yes, Karen, boomers!	Tyler	Mockery of the elderly	Stranger in the club	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Tyler patronises Emily as a white woman who uses her privilege to make demands on others (Karen), she is also considered conservative (Boomers) by Taylor.
9	Paying for that shit	Matthew	Parent-child debate	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew and Emily argued with Alice, but Matthew was so upset that he did not want to respond Alice's nonsense.
10	Kicked the shit	Alice	Parent-child debate	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Alice's argues about the fight her parents had at the club because her parents beat up her friends.
11	That was nuts, right?	Emily	Parent-child debate	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Emily could not get over Alice's mindset, thought it was crazy.
12	God, you are such a nerd	Alice	Brother and sister debate	Relationship between siblings	Direct Spoken Language	Alice could not get over Leo's bookish mindset or his lack of socialising.
13	To feel like "that bitch"	Emily	Husband- wife debate	Relationship between spouses	Direct Spoken Language	Emily was frustrated because she wanted to feel alive again.
14	Gross	Leo	Reaction to their parents' behavior	Relationship between family	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Leo is disgusted with his parents' behavior
15	You ain't gotta hit everything	Matthew	Husband- wife debate	Relationship between spouses	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew tells Emily not to break other people's furniture.
16	Dude	Boy 1	Reaction to other people	Relationships with people around	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Other people give special calls that are spontaneous situations that occur.
17	Why are you so freaked out?	Alice	Reaction to her parents' behavior	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Alice was surprised by her parents who picked up Alice and Leo.

18	Get off the grid	Matthew	Threatened Condition	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew tells his children that they must leave modern life and hide from the system for safety.
19	Deadass	Matthew	Serious condition	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew's words to his children are serious.
20	So fucking dead	Emily	Parent-child debate	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Emily responded to her child with swearing.
21	And that is not a chick	Matthew	Parent-child debate	Relationship between family	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew gave a special call to Alice.
22	Still killing shit, huh?	Emily	Reaction to mother's daily activities	Mother-daughter dynamic	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Emily gave a knee-jerk reaction to her mum who was still shooting.
23	Twinsies	Nigel	Excited Reaction for something	Relationship between step-grandparents and grandchildren	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Nigel responds to the ring worn by Leo which has a resemblance.
24	Hey, kiddos	Chuck	Mocking Greeting	Spy and childrens of spies	Direct Spoken Language	Chuck greets Alice and Leo.
25	Say hello, fellas	Chuck	Mocking Greeting	Former spy and spy relationship	Direct Spoken Language	Chuck taunted Emily and Matthew with the greeting.
26	Get his ass	Matthew	Anger reaction	Former spy and spy relationship	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Matthew gave an annoyed reaction to Chuck.
27	Was gonna be shook	Leo	Shock reaction	Father-son relationship	Spontaneous Spoken Language	Leo gave a surprised reaction to Matthew.
28	Was gonna be shook	Matthew	Proud or pleased reaction	Relationship between spouses	Direct Spoken Language	Matthew was delighted with Alice's victory.

Table 2 Data Recapitulation of Slang in Situational Contexts

CONTEXT OF SITUATION	SUBCATEGORIES	AMOUNT OF DATA	PERCENT AGE (%)	TOTAL
	Reaction to stereotypes	1	3,70	

	Responsible for his girlfriend's pregnancy	1	3,70	
	Casual conversation about sport	1	3,70	
	Morning greetings	1	3,70	
	An invitation to spend time together at home	1	3,70	
	Reaction to her child's behavior	1	3,70	
FIELD	Response to notes (laptop password) found	1	3,70	100%
	Mockery of the Elderly	1	3,70	
	Parent-child debate	5	18,52	
	Reaction to her parents' behavior	2	7,42	
	Reaction to other	1	3,70	
	Threatened condition	1	3,70	
	Serious condition	1	3,70	
	Reaction to his mother's daily activities	1	3,70	
	Excited Reaction for something	1	3,70	
	Mocking Greeting	2	7,42	
	Anger reaction	1	3,70	
	Shock reaction	1	3,70	
	Proud or pleased reaction	1	3,70	
	Reaction to her parents' behavior	2	7,42	
	Relationship between co-workers	1	3,57	
	Relationship between couple	1	3,57	
	Relationship between spouses	5	17,86	
	Father-son relationship	2	7,14	
	Mother-daughter dynamic	2	7,14	
	Relationship between family	10	35,71	
TENOR	Stranger in club	1	3,57	100%
	Relationship between siblings	1	3,57	
	Relationship between people around	1	3,57	
	Relationship between step-grandparents and grandchildren	1	3,57	
	Spy and children spies	1	3,57	
	Former spy and spy relationship	2	7,14	
	Direct spoken language	18	62,07	
	Spontaneous spoken language	9	31,03	
MODE	Expressive spoken language	1	3,45	100%
	Scripted	1	3,45	

Discussion

The researcher has found and identified slang data in the movie *Back in Action* based on Halliday's theory in the elements of field, tenor, mode that provide meaning or interpretation contained in the movie.

Field

Field is a situation in communication to identify ongoing activities. Based on the data found, the use of field in the movie is dominated by the Parents-Child Debate situation with a percentage of 18.52%. In this situation, slang is widely used in family groups who argue with each other as a form of expression of annoyance at certain characters. As in the use of slang "Paying for that shit" and "So fucking dead. The use of "Paying for that shit" in the movie shows a debate situation when Matthew rejects the arguments raised by Alice regarding her college plans abroad that have no clear purpose. While in the slang "So fucking dead" when Emily expressed the slang as a form of swearing to her children.

Tenor

Tenor is a relationship that exists in a situation in certain communication. Based on the data found, the use of tenor in the movie is dominated by Relationship Between Family with a percentage of 35.71%, which shows that the movie tells more slang in family relationships or groups. Some slangs such as "Mom Sux" and "Deadass" are expressions of relationships between families. However, there are differences in the context of the two slangs, especially "Mom Sux", which was uttered by Emily after reading a note belonging to her child, which shows a negative context in a family relationship because it is a harsh expression aimed at a mother's annoying attitude. Different from before, the slang "Deadass" was thrown by Matthew to show a positive attitude in a relationship in the form of seriousness or seriousness in certain situations.

Mode

Mode is a type of communication in the form of symbolic interaction. There are various ways of communicating such as oral and written. But in the movie studied, most of them use Direct Spoken Language or face-to-face conversation with a percentage of 62.07%. This direct conversation often triggers someone to speak informally such as the use of slang. Commonly used slang includes "What's up, bud?" and "Juicy Gossip". In direct conversation, the use of the slang "What's up, bud?" is a greeting when someone meets each other, in which the character Matthew greets and gives a special nickname "Buddy" to Leo. While "Juicy Gossip" is a slang expression that is easy to understand when someone wants to invite a fun and controversial chat.

Based on the explanation described about the use of slang on the elements of field, tenor, and mode. The results show that the use of slang in the context of certain situations is dominated by the Parent-Child Debate situation, the familiarity of the context of use based on Relationship Between Family, until the type of communication that occurs is Direct Spoken Language. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by (Melissa et al., 2024) regarding the context of the situation in the use of slang based on the elements of field, tenor, mode. That slang that is often used in informal communication is usually closely associated with familiar relationships in the social sphere. Although it has a different research object, the study with the focus of Halliday's theory implied has a similar form of result exposure. Thus, the context of the situation affects how language use is presented in an event so that Halliday's theory is relevant to use.

CONCLUSION

This research discusses the slang used in the movie “Back in Action” revealing how language as an interactive response in context and situation when communicating. Through M.A.K Halliday's theoretical framework, it is clear that the specific Field, Tenor, and Mode for communicating in each generation play an important role as in the movie “Back in action”. The variations in Field, Tenor, and Mode in the movie “Back in Action” provide an action-packed family comedy that is relaxed and energized, as well as strengthening the character and attachment between characters. Slang functions as a non-standardized communication tool that allows individuals to communicate within the context and situation at hand. Along with the times, communication uses modern and unexpected ways for future generations. In short, this research illustrates that communication in slang in the context and ongoing situation to find out the slang used in daily life.

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