



Exploring Slang Words Used by the Male and Female Main Characters in “Anyone but You” Movie

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Abstract

Slang is an informal form of language commonly used in casual conversation to express identity, emotions, and social connections. It is especially prevalent in spoken English among younger generations and is frequently featured in films, music, and social media. This study analyzes the types and functions of slang used by the male and female main characters in the film *Anyone but You* (2023), applying Allan and Burridge's (2006) classification. Data were collected through script analysis of approximately 120 minutes of dialogue and examined using a descriptive qualitative approach. Out of the 25 slang expressions identified, four types of slang were found: flippant, clipping, fresh and creative, and imitative. Flippant slang was the most common. Although both characters used expletive and taboo words, the male character, Ben, used slang more frequently and focused on masculine identity and peer-group language. In contrast, the female character, Bea, employed slang that was more emotionally expressive and context-dependent. Overall, the use of slang enriches the dialogue by making it more natural, relatable, and reflective of the characters' social identities and emotions. These findings also highlight gender differences in slang usage and contribute to sociolinguistic studies on film discourse.

Keywords: *slang types, slang function, film discourse, gender differences*

Introduction

Sociolinguistics explores the intricate relationship between language and its social environment, aiming to uncover how language is structured and how it operates within various communicative contexts (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). A key area of study within this field is language variation, which reflects the fact that individuals adjust their speech depending on whom they are interacting with and the setting in which communication occurs (Murthi et al., 2023). These

variations can be observed at multiple linguistic levels, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and are shaped by social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and situational context Holmes & Janet (2013), one of the most recognizable forms of lexical variation is slang, an informal, often playful or creative language used primarily in casual interactions. Slang expressions are frequently encountered in everyday conversations, among youth, entertainment media, and especially in films, where they are embedded in authentic, dynamic dialogues. Films, in particular, serve as accessible and influential sources for learning informal language. Through visual and auditory exposure, audiences are able to internalize not only the words themselves but also the gestures, tone, and social nuances that accompany them (Ariyanti et al., 2018). This makes film a powerful medium for observing how slang functions as a reflection of social identity and group belonging within modern discourse.

Slang is an informal language that does not follow the grammar structure normally used in informal situations. According to Yule (2010), slang refers to informal language that is limited to a specific environment or group. Slang encompasses a wide range of linguistic expressions, reflecting the dynamic and creative aspects of informal language (Bahar et al., 2025). It is widely utilized among people with similar origins, interests, or social connections. According to Munthe et al., (2023); Rahardi, (2023); Khotimah et al., (2024), slang is informal language used by social groups to express identity and emotion in casual contexts like songs, movies, and social media. Slang is frequently used as a sign of group identification, allowing speakers to convey a sense of belonging or togetherness. Slang provides insight into native speakers' everyday interactions. In the context of foreign language learning, slang is valuable component for developing fluency and cultural competence (Tanamal et al., 2020).

Slang usage is heavily influenced by various social factors, including a person's background, the situation in which they are speaking, and their gender. Individuals from various socioeconomic classes or professions may use slang in different ways to express their identity or social group (Trudgill, 2000). The formality of a conversation also influences the use of slang; casual environments, such as speaking with friends, foster more informal language (Crystal, 2003). Gender, as a key sociolinguistic variable, influences not only communication styles but also the frequency, type, and function of slang used in different contexts (Saffa, 2022). Men and women may prefer different slang terms, apply them for varying purposes, and display differing patterns of usage, reflecting broader social norms and identity constructions (Holmes & Janet, 2013).

Numerous sociolinguistic studies have shown that men and women tend to use slang differently in terms of frequency, type, and function. Men are generally found to use slang more frequently, particularly in informal, peer-group settings where nonstandard language is used to assert masculinity or group solidarity (Labov, 1972; Eckert, 2000). In contrast, women may use slang more

selectively and are often more sensitive to the social context in which it is used. Research by Holmes & Meyerhoff (2003) indicates that men tend to prefer slang related to topics such as sports, aggression, or sexuality, while women are more likely to use slang associated with relationships, emotions, or social bonding. Additionally, men often employ slang to reinforce social hierarchy or toughness, whereas women may use it to foster rapport or maintain group harmony (Coates, 2015).

Allan & Burridge (2006) classified five forms of slang. The first is fresh and creative, with newly invented phrases that are unique and entertaining. The second type is flippant, which is composed of unrelated words and is frequently employed to convey comedy or emotion. The third is imitative, which comes from Standard English but is used in distinct or casual contexts. The fourth is an acronym derived from the first letters of words, such as LOL for laughing out loud. The sixth is clipping, which involves cutting lengthy terms like bro from brother. Slang is frequently used in daily conversations, social media, song lyrics, and, especially, film and television dialogue, where it adds realism and character. People use slang to address, to initiate relaxed conversation, to humiliate, to form an intimate atmosphere, to express impression, to reveal anger, and to show intimacy.

Several studies have been conducted regarding slang words from many sources which help to provide deeper insight in doing this study. Mulyantini et al., (2023) and Yuniar et al., (2023) both employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Mulyantini et al., (2023) applied Allan & Burridge (2006) theory to slang in an Australian cultural podcast. They discovered five categories of slang, with fresh and creative being the most popular. Meanwhile, Yuniar et al., (2023) examined TikTok creator's language using Munro (2007) approach. They discovered 50 slang words from six English-speaking countries, the majority of which originated in the United States, and concluded that slang aids in the expression of emotions and communication in informal environments such as social media.

Another study by Arbhawa & Santika (2024) focuses on slang in Green Day's song titled Jesus of Suburbia. They identified 11 slang words using Chapman's (2007) primary and secondary slang theory. They found five primary and six secondaries. According to the study, primary slang is casual teenage vocabulary, whereas secondary slang has deeper cultural or symbolic value. Overall, the researchers emphasized how slang in music serves as a form of self-expression and cultural critique, particularly in punk rock settings. Building on these studies, Wirajaya & Winarta (2024) applied the same theory to slang in the film Plane, revealing that secondary slang was more dominant. Their work adds to the growing literature by showing how slang enhances character interaction and narrative realism in movies.

To gain a different perspective on where slang words can be used, previous studies investigated slang in various contexts and used various theoretical frameworks. This study provides a different perspective by focusing on the slang words used by the male and female main characters in the *Anyone but You* (2023) movie, which were analyzed using Allan & Burridge (2006) classifications of types and functional. Both the types and functions of slang expressions found in their dialogue. In addition, it briefly compares how the male character (Ben) and the female character (Bea), who come from different social backgrounds, use slang differently in terms of frequency and context. This movie was selected due to its natural, emotionally expressive dialogue, which provides relevant and varied examples of contemporary slang in casual conversation of everyday living context.

Method

The data for this study were derived from the movie script of *Anyone but You* (2023). The film lasts one hour and forty-three minutes and is entirely in English. The research focuses on the dialogue of the male and female main characters, Bea and Ben who speak English natively. They were chosen as the key data sources because they appear most frequently and participate in casual, spontaneous talks with a wide range of slang terms. Furthermore, Bea and Ben come from different social and professional backgrounds, Bea is an intelligent and independent lady with a psychology degree, whilst Ben is a laid-back and extroverted financial analyst. Their different personalities, habits, and worldviews influence how individuals communicate, as does their capacity to employ slang.

The data in this study were collected using the documentation method. The researcher watched the movie *Anyone but You* (2023) and obtained its movie script from an online source to examine the male and female main characters, which are Bea and Ben's dialogue. The script was analyzed to identify the slang words, which were then collected and listed for further analysis. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method. The researcher identified the types and functions of the slang words and classified them based on Allan and Burridge (2006) theory of slang types and functions. The results are presented in descriptive form. The findings are presented in both formal and informal formats. The formal method entails presenting the data in tables, but the informal method uses descriptive explanations to help the reader grasp the results.

Results

The table below classifies the slang phrases used by the male and female main characters, Bea and Ben, in the film *Anyone but You* (2023), according to Allan and Burridge (2006) theory. It highlights five categories of slang; Fresh and Creative, Clipping, Flippant, Acronym, and Imitative, as well as the amount and

examples of each type used in their conversation.

Table 1. Types of Slang Words Used by The Main Characters in *Anyone but You* (2023)
Movie Script

Types of Slang Words	Bea		Ben		Total	
Fresh and Creative	2 (Props, Bum out)	17%	3 (Fuckboy, Dude, Hot girl fit)	23%	5	20%
Clipping	1 (Bro)	8%	2 ('Sup, Dawg)	15%	3	12%
Flippant	7 (Fuck, Fucking, Asshole, What the fuck, Bitch, God damn, Shut the fuck up)	58%	7 (Fucking, Fuck, Assholes, Shut the fuck up, Bitch, What the fuck, Shit)	54%	14	56%
Acronym	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Imitative	2 (Big time, Rock bottom)	17%	1 (Cringe)	8%	3	12%
Total	12	100%	13	100%	25	100%

The analysis shows that Ben uses slang slightly more frequently than Bea, with greater variety across categories. He appears more dominant in clipping and fresh and creative slang, which reflects his confident, sarcastic, and socially assertive personality. Bea, while also expressive, tends to use more imitative slang, showing emotional spontaneity rather than verbal dominance. The absence of acronym slang in the movie likely reflects the characters' face-to-face spoken conversations, where natural and expressive speech is prioritized. Since the film focuses on realistic, spontaneous dialogue, using acronyms is less common than in texting, for example. Both characters frequently use expletive-based slang such as fuck, bitch, and what the fuck, indicating that taboo language is employed by both genders in emotionally intense or informal moments.

However, Bea, the female character, uses a wider range of affective and expressive slang (e.g., props, bum out, big time, rock bottom), suggesting a tendency to express emotional states or reactions through informal language. Her use of slang appears more reflective of personal experience and mood. In contrast, Ben, the male character, favors slang that emphasizes masculine identity and social positioning, such as dude, fuckboy, hot girl fit, and dawg supports

previous findings in sociolinguistics that men are more likely to use slang to assert status or affiliation within male peer groups, while women may use slang for self-expression and emotional emphasis (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003; Coates, 2015). Despite sharing several expletive terms, their differing choices in topic-specific slang reflect how gender can shape not only the frequency but also the function and type of slang used in casual discourse.

Discussion

In this section, the writer presents the data in descriptive form to make the analysis clearer. The slang words are shown in the form of sentences as spoken by the main character in the movie. The analysis is based on Allan and Burridge's (2006) theory to help identify and categorize the types and functions of slang found in the dialogue.

Fresh and Creative Slang Words

Data 1

Ben: You're calling me a *fuckboy* like it's an insult? I own that shit.

The slang word used by Ben is *fuckboy*, a term commonly used to describe a man who avoids emotional commitment and often behaves selfishly in relationships. In this scene, Bea uses it as an insult toward Ben, but he turns it around by saying, "You're calling me a *fuckboy* like it's an insult? I own that shit," showing a dismissive and confident response.

According to Allan & Burridge (2006), "*fuckboy*" falls under the fresh and creative category of slang because it is a recently invented term that does not come from standard English forms. Its main function is to humiliate, as it is intended to criticize Ben's personality. However, Ben's reaction reflects a defensive strategy by using the slang to project confidence and deflect emotional vulnerability. In this context, slang becomes both a protective tool and a form of emotional expression.

Data 2

Ben: What is this?

Bea : Wait, *no props*.

The slang spoken by Bea is "*no props*" a shortened and informal way of saying "no problem," in a light response to Ben. Amid a chaotic game night, Bea uses the phrase to ease tension between her and Ben and keep the mood casual.

As described by Allan & Burridge (2006), "*no props*" is categorized as fresh and creative slang because it is a modern expression that doesn't come from Standard English structure. Its function is to express impression, as Bea used it to

appear relaxed and unfazed. This choice of words also reflects her effort to keep the conversation friendly and smooth, avoiding any tension.

Clipping Slang Words

Data 3

Ben: Then I'm gonna get a drink and toast to never seeing you again.

Bea: Cheers to that, *bro*.

The term "bro" was found in the movie that was spoken by Ben. In a playful moment during their fake breakup, Bea uses the slang term "bro" while raising a toast to Ben, saying, "Cheers to that, bro." The term "bro" is an informal abbreviation of "brother," commonly used to refer to a male friend in casual or teasing situations.

As stated by Allan & Burridge (2006), "bro" falls under the category of clipping slang, as it is a shortened form of an existing word. Its function is to address, and in this context, Bea used it to maintain a sense of distance and humor. The choice of slang helps her avoid emotional seriousness and reinforces the performative nature of the scene, keeping their interaction light and sarcastic.

Data 4

Pete: Yo, let's go, Benny. Come on, cupcake. We're gonna be late.

Ben: 'Sup, Pete.

The slang words used in this movie is "'sup". In a brief interaction between Ben and Pete, Ben casually greeted him by saying, "Sup, Pete." The term "'sup" is a shortened, informal version of "What's up?" and is commonly used as a casual greeting among close friends.

Based on Allan & Burridge's (2006) classification, "'sup" is a type of clipping slang, formed by shortening a standard phrase. Its function is to address, as it serves as a relaxed way to initiate conversation. Ben's use of this slang reflects his easygoing personality and shows his comfort and familiarity with Pete. It also reinforces the informal and friendly bond between the two characters.

Flippant Slang Words

Data 5

Bea: Oh, *fuck* that's hot! Oh my God.

The slang terms spoken by Bea above, namely "fuck". In this scene, Bea is trying to dry her wet pants using a hand dryer in a public restroom. When she suddenly feels how hot the air is, she exclaims, "Oh, fuck that's hot! Oh my God."

Her reaction shows that she is caught off guard by the intense heat. The word "fuck" in this expression highlights her spontaneous and strong emotional response. Even though it isn't directed at another person, it emphasizes her shock and discomfort in a dramatic way.

Based on Allan & Burridge's (2006) classification, the word "fuck" is an example of flippant slang, which refers to slang that is deliberately rude or offensive in tone, often used for emotional emphasis. The function of this slang in the conversation is to reveal anger, specifically surprise and discomfort. Bea's use of this strong language makes her reaction feel more natural and relatable. It also adds humor and realism to the scene, showing her unfiltered personality and making the moment more engaging for the audience.

Data 6

Bea: I hated you. I didn't really give you a choice.

Ben: I definitely didn't hate you. Even though You called me a *bitch*.

The slang term "bitch" comes in Ben's line, "Even though you called me a bitch." While the word is usually considered unpleasant or insulting, it is used in this context in a lighthearted and amusing way. According to Allan & Burridge (2006), this usage is classified as flippant slang, which includes irreverent or casually contemptuous language meant to relieve tension or add humor to a discourse. Ben is not sincerely offended; instead, he mentions the phrase in a sardonic tone, indicating that he has moved on from the conflict and now sees it with comedy.

Depending on the context, the role of this slang phrase is to show intimacy. Ben's casual recall of the insult implied that he and Bea are emotionally close and comfortable together. Rather than creating space, the term bridges it, signifying that their bond has strengthened. This demonstrates how slang, even if potentially derogatory, may be repurposed to show trust, familiarity, and emotional connection when spoken between people with a strong bond.

Imitative Slang Words

Data 7

Ben: Are you okay?

Bea: Big time. I am *big time* okay. I just had to pee for like the last six hours and I just started this new internship. And I didn't want to ask anyone where the bathroom was because I didn't want them to think I was weak and not a problem solver.

The slang word “big time” was spoken by Bea. In this scene, she replied to Ben’s question with, “Big time. I am big time okay,” even though she was clearly nervous after a stressful moment in the coffee shop. The phrase “big time” is an informal way to strongly say something, and Bea used it to hide her nervous feelings and try to act like she was fine.

According to Allan & Burrige (2006), this slang is part of the imitative type because it copies the way people speak in casual conversations. Its function is to express an impression, meaning Bea used it to make her emotions sound bigger and more dramatic. The slang shows that she was trying to be funny and cover up her stress.

Data 8

Bea: Come on.

Ben: This is so *cringe*.

In the conversation above, the word “cringe” was used. When Bea asked Ben to do the Titanic pose with her, he replied, “This is so cringe.” The slang word “cringe” comes from the internet and youth culture, and it’s often used to describe something that feels awkward, embarrassing, or silly. Ben said it to joke about how cheesy the pose was, but it also showed that he felt a little shy or uncomfortable showing affection in front of others.

Based on Allan & Burrige (2006), “cringe” is an imitative slang word because it copies how people normally speak in casual conversations. The function of this slang is to express an impression. Ben used the word to express how he felt, he was taking part in the moment, but used slang to hide his real feelings and not seem too emotional.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the *Anyone but You* (2023) movie script shows that slang is often used by the two main characters to express emotions and build their personalities. Based on Allan and Burrige’s (2006) classification, four types of slang were found: flippant, fresh and creative, clipping, and imitative. Flippant slang was the most common, while acronym slang was not used at all. The slang in the film mainly helped the characters show feelings, express anger or frustration, and talk casually with others. The two characters showed different slang patterns. Ben used more slang with a strong and confident tone which match a more masculine and bold style. In contrast, Bea used slang that was more emotional and expressive to show how she felt in certain situations.

These findings generally support previous research Labov (1972); Eckert (2000); Holmes & Meyerhoff (2003) on gendered slang use, confirming that men use slang more frequently and in masculine coded ways, while women apply it more contextually and expressively. However, cases like Bea using “bro” or Ben

repurposing “bitch” suggest greater flexibility than earlier studies indicate. Culturally, the slang observed is embedded in contemporary American English, with expressions like “cringe” and “fuckboy” reflecting online and youth culture of the 2020s. The characters’ backgrounds urban, educated, and American, also influence their slang choices, making the findings relevant primarily to similar cultural contexts.

Future studies that want to explore the relationship between slang and gender should use larger data sets from various movies and include characters with more diverse backgrounds. This will help provide a clearer and more complete understanding of how slang use differs between men and women across different social and cultural contexts. Using different methods, such as pragmatics or discourse analysis, can also offer deeper insights into how slang shapes character and communication in films.

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