



Slang Variations in Dax's Song Lyrics: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the sociolinguistic functions of slang variations in the lyrical repertoire of rapper Dax, an artist notably absent from existing academic literature despite his significant cultural impact. Applying Eble's theoretical framework of slang effects, this research employs qualitative analysis of four commercially successful songs spanning Dax's creative evolution from 2018 to 2023. The methodology integrates computational screening with rigorous validation through Green's Dictionary of Slang, ensuring lexicographical authority. Findings reveal 27 validated slang expressions functioning as sophisticated rhetorical instruments that simultaneously cultivate informality, signal group identification, and articulate opposition to authority. The analysis demonstrates Dax's artistic progression from establishing hip-hop authenticity through multifaceted slang usage toward more focused explorations of spiritual turmoil and systemic critique. Theoretically, this study extends Eble's framework to contemporary musical discourse, revealing slang's multidimensional role in constructing identity and negotiating social meaning. Practically, it offers pedagogical applications for bridging sociolinguistic theory with authentic language practices. This investigation advances the field by documenting understudied linguistic phenomena in popular culture while providing a replicable model for analyzing vernacular speech in artistic contexts.

Keywords: *Sociolinguistic; Language variation; Slang words, Song lyrics, Dax*

Introduction

Language, the fundamental mechanism of human communication, not only reflects individual and collective identity but is also the core object of linguistics. Within this field, sociolinguistics specifically examines the intricate relationship between language and society, revealing how linguistic variation acts as a systematic marker of identity and social belonging (Jean, 2023). These variations are not arbitrary but are structured differences across social, geographical, and contextual

settings that reflect broader cross-cultural patterns (Adli & Guy, 2022) and function as a key mechanism for negotiating social meaning and identity amidst ongoing social change (Eckert, 2016). The spectrum is vast, encompassing phonological, grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic differences, demonstrating how community interaction continually reshapes linguistic systems (Ravindranath, 2015). Collectively, these variations underscore linguistic diversity and mirror the underlying dynamics of daily social interaction.

Among the various forms of language variation, slang stands out as a particularly potent and dynamic phenomenon. Slang can be defined as a non-standard, informal language variety typically created and adopted by specific social groups to facilitate in-group communication and serve as a substitute for standard terms. In contrast to formal language, which adheres to prescribed rules and maintains a neutral tone, slang is inherently expressive, flexible, and deeply embedded in popular culture. Its primary function is to foster a relaxed, familiar, and less formal atmosphere in communication, often underpinned by interpersonal closeness, such as that found in close friendships on a university campus. The pervasive use of slang across various domains of life, from educational institutions and homes to social media and daily conversation, highlights its role as a vital communicative tool that adapts to and reflects ongoing social and cultural shifts (Lestari et al., 2022; Silalahi & Silalahi, 2023).

Scholars have positioned slang as a “living laboratory” that captures linguistic evolution in real time, offering a direct window into contemporary social dynamics (Umar et al., 2025). It acts as a powerful marker of group identity, fostering solidarity among members while simultaneously establishing a boundary against outsiders (Kazmi & Anawar, 2025). Its expressive nature allows it to encapsulate contemporary values and societal concerns in ways that formal language often cannot (Polvonniyozova, 2025). However, the very properties that make slang so insightful, its spontaneous emergence and often short lifespan, also necessitate timely documentation and analysis before these linguistic artifacts fade from use (Umurzakova, 2024). This transient yet impactful nature provides a compelling rationale for its continued study.

A rich and authentic source for analyzing slang is found in music, particularly within the rap genre. In rap, slang transcends mere stylistic ornamentation; it is a core component of artistic expression and cultural identity (Magro, 2019). It functions as an essential linguistic instrument for constructing authenticity, conveying social critique, and narrating community experiences (Bansal et al., 2025). As Gbogi (2016) demonstrates in the context of Nigerian hip-hop, the linguistic process of “slangifying” is used to forge sub-identities among youth, articulating their unique cultural narratives (Eckert, 2016). Therefore, rap lyrics provide a coherent and semantically dense corpus for a comprehensive exploration of the social functions of slang.

This study focuses on the lyrics of the rapper Dax (Daniel Nwosu Jr.), an artist who utilizes slang not merely as a stylistic trait but as a pointed rhetorical weapon to dissect contemporary social issues. Dax's approach to slang differs notably from that of many mainstream rappers. While artists like Lil Wayne may use terms like "bling bling" to signify wealth and street credibility, or Drake popularized "YOLO" to embody a carefree lifestyle, Dax employs slang for more reflective and emotional purposes. For instance, in *Dear Alcohol*, the phrase "got wasted" is not a celebration of partying but a raw expression of escaping inner turmoil. Similarly, in *Dear God*, the slang term "shit" conveys deep frustration with superficial judgments of faith. This distinctive application, where slang serves as a vehicle for social criticism, emotional vulnerability, and personal reflection, makes Dax's lyrical output a compelling and underexplored subject for sociolinguistic analysis.

Although the study of slang in rap lyrics is well-established, prior research has predominantly centered on a specific set of artists. Existing studies have extensively analyzed the slang in the works of Eminem, Nicki Minaj, Drake, Megan The Stallion, and Rich Brian (Aryawan, 2017; Budasi & Bhuwana, 2020; Hidayat & Mu'man, 2020; Leko et al., 2023; Wiartati et al., 2022). This research seeks to address a clear gap in the literature by providing the first focused analysis of slang variations in the lyrics of Dax, an artist who has garnered significant popular appeal but limited academic attention.

The theoretical framework for this analysis is provided by Eble (1996), whose work on slang emphasizes its social functions and effects over purely formal linguistic classification. Eble identifies key effects of slang, such as creating informality, signaling group identification, and expressing opposition to authority. This perspective is particularly apt for analyzing rap music, where slang operates as a cultural strategy to convey authenticity, belonging, and resistance. Eble's framework allows the researcher to connect individual linguistic choices in Dax's lyrics to broader issues of identity, cultural expression, and social reality.

Based on the outlined background, this research is guided by two principal questions. Primarily, it seeks to identify and systematically document the empirical inventory of slang terms present in four popular songs by Dax, each drawn from a distinct album. The secondary and more substantive aim involves interrogating the sociolinguistic effects of this slang usage through the application of Eble's theoretical framework (Mendrofa et al., 2025). Thus, the study extends beyond merely cataloguing lexical items to elucidate slang's functional dimensions in fostering informality, constructing group identity, and articulating oppositional stances within Dax's selected lyrics.

The findings of this investigation yield substantive implications for both sociolinguistics and language pedagogy. The analytical documentation of slang within a contemporary musical corpus advances comprehension of linguistic praxis within youth-oriented cultural domains and popular media. For educational practitioners, these insights provide a foundation for developing pedagogically

robust materials that bridge theoretical sociolinguistic constructs with students' authentic linguistic realities, thereby furnishing a framework for cultivating metalinguistic awareness and enhancing critical discourse analytical capabilities.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design to systematically investigate the sociolinguistic dimensions of slang usage within contemporary musical discourse. The methodological framework was structured to ensure analytical rigor through systematic data collection, robust validation protocols, and theoretically grounded analysis. The primary data comprised lyrical texts from four commercially successful songs by artist Dax, selected based on high streaming numbers and representation across different creative periods to capture potential stylistic evolution. These tracks were sourced from Genius.com, a recognized digital repository for musical transcriptions.

The data collection and validation process implemented a multi-phase procedural framework. Initial compilation of lyrical texts was followed by AI-assisted preliminary screening to identify potential slang candidates through pattern recognition. To establish academic validity, a rigorous verification process was implemented using Green's Dictionary of Slang as the authoritative reference, with only verified entries retained for analysis. This validation protocol effectively mitigated limitations inherent in AI classification and user-generated resources. Subsequent auditory analysis of musical recordings facilitated contextual understanding of the validated slang terms within their performative context.

The analytical phase employed systematic categorization guided by Eble's theoretical framework concerning slang's social functions. Each validated term underwent coding according to three sociolinguistic dimensions: informality establishment, group identification markers, and opposition to authority expressions. This structured approach enabled comprehensive investigation beyond mere lexical cataloging, providing substantive insights into slang's functional dynamics within contemporary musical expression while maintaining interpretive depth characteristic of qualitative inquiry.

Results

The analysis of the four selected songs by Dax, *Did It First* (2018), *Dear God* (2020), *The Devil's Calling* (2021), and *Dear Alcohol* (2023), yielded a total of 27 validated slang expressions. The application of Eble (1996) theoretical framework revealed that these slang terms function not as mere stylistic ornaments, but as sophisticated sociolinguistic tools that serve three primary effects: creating informality, signaling group identification, and expressing opposition to authority. The distribution and predominance of these effects across the albums illustrate a distinct evolution in Dax's artistic focus, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Slang Effects Across Dax’s Songs

Song	Number of Slang Data	Primary Effect(s)	Secondary Effect(s)	Representation of Data
Did It First	13	Informality + Group identification	Opposition to Authority	<i>Fucking, guppy, hit, had no pot to piss in, ass, out a pocket, thunk, niggas, game, a 40, made, bore, and fuck.</i>
Dear God	4	Informality	-	<i>Damn, fucked up, shit, and broke.</i>
The Devil’s Calling	4	Group identification + Opposition to Authority	-	<i>Spittin’, stayed down, fiends, and greed.</i>
Dear Alcohol	6	Informality + Group identification	-	<i>Wasted, deal, cocky, don’t give a damn, shot, and beatin’ down.</i>
Total			27	

Discussion

1. The Construction of Informality: Establishing Authentic Connection

The most prevalent effect observed throughout the data was the use of slang to create informality. This function served to establish a direct, emotional, and conversational tone, effectively breaking down the barriers between the artist and the audience. The data reveals that this was the foundational effect, particularly dominant in Dax’s earlier work, *Did It First*, and the introspective *Dear God*.

In *Did It First*, this informality is often achieved through intensifiers and grammatical deviations that convey raw emotion and spontaneity. For instance, the word “fucking” in the lyric “I fucking warned you man” operates not with its literal vulgar meaning but as a potent intensifier. Its validation in Green’s Dictionary of Slang confirms its function as an amplifier of emotion. Through Eble’s lens, this usage creates a strong informal effect by rejecting standard, neutral language in favor of a term that injects the lyric with urgency, anger, and a sense of unfiltered conversation. Similarly, the non-standard morphological form “thunk” in “Who’da thunk it be me” is a deliberate stylistic choice. This deviation from the standard past tense “thought” creates a colloquial and almost self-consciously humble tone, enhancing the narrative’s authenticity and making the expression of surprise more relatable and grounded in casual speech.

The trend of employing slang for visceral emotional expression continues powerfully in *Dear God*. Here, informality is harnessed to articulate profound spiritual doubt and personal failure in a language that feels brutally honest. The word “damn” in “for my whole damn life” functions as a universal intensifier, amplifying the speaker’s lifelong frustration. The phrase “fucked up” undergoes a significant semantic shift from a vulgar term to an expression of mental chaos and repeated error. By choosing this slang over a more formal alternative like “made mistakes,” Dax creates an informal tone that conveys the depth of his personal turmoil and regret with a starkness that standard language would dilute. This aligns with Eble’s observation that slang often serves to communicate emotional states with greater immediacy and impact than formal lexicon (Roth-Gordon, 2021).

Table 2. Manifestation of Informality Effect in Dax’s Lyrics

Song	Slang Term	Lyrical Context	Function	Standard Language
Did It First	Fucking	<i>I fucking warned you</i>	Emotional intensifier	“I seriously warned you”
	Thunk	<i>Who'da thunk it be me, D-A-X on the TV, not you</i>	Grammatical informality	“Who would have thought”
	Out a pocket	<i>I knew it was out of pocket and I knew I needed to work</i>	Metaphorical informality	“I knew it was an inappropriate situation”
Dear God	Damn	<i>And it seems like they've been lyin' for my whole damn life</i>	Emotional intensifier	“my entire life”
	Fucked up	<i>Dear God, where were you when I needed it? When I fucked up and repeated it?</i>	Expression of failure/chaos	“When I made serious mistakes”
	Shit	<i>But have never took the time to fuckin' read the shit (fuck)</i>	Informal reference	“Read the material”
Dear Alcohol	Wasted	<i>I got wasted 'cause I didn't wanna deal with myself tonight</i>	Vivid description	“I became heavily intoxicated”
	Deal		Conversational metaphor	“Confront my psychological issues”

2. *Solidarity and Belonging: The Function of Group Identification*

The second major finding pertains to slang’s role in fostering group identification. This effect transforms language into a symbolic marker of membership, creating solidarity among listeners who share specific cultural knowledge, experiences, or values. This function was particularly prominent in *Did*

It First and evolved into more philosophically complex forms in *The Devil's Calling* and *Dear Alcohol*.

In *Did It First*, Dax establishes his place within the hip-hop community through culturally specific slang. The term “niggas” is a potent example. As documented in Green’s Dictionary of Slang, its use here signifies a reappropriation, a term of familiarity and solidarity within the in-group, particularly among Black men. Eble’s framework clarifies that such usage is a classic marker of group identity; it forges a bond with listeners who understand its nuanced, non-pejorative context while simultaneously distinguishing them from outsiders. Similarly, the word “game” in “how I’m molding the game” serves as an industry-specific code.

It does not refer to a literal game but to the entire system and rules of the hip-hop industry. Its understanding is largely restricted to those “inside” the culture, functioning as a shibboleth that reinforces in-group boundaries. The phrase “a 40”, referring to a 40-ounce bottle of beer, further cements this identity by referencing a specific element of urban and hip-hop-associated lifestyle, creating a sense of shared experience and cultural practice.

In *The Devil's Calling*, the group identification effect deepens, moving from cultural to moral and philosophical solidarity. The slang term “spittin’” is more than a colloquialism for “speaking”; it is a term reserved for the act of delivering authentic, powerful rap lyrics. Its use identifies both the artist and the comprehending listener as members of a community that values lyrical prowess and truth-telling. The phrase “stayed down” carries a profound meaning of humility, perseverance, and loyalty to one’s roots. This slang fosters group identity by uniting those who have experienced struggle and value resilience. Finally, “fiends” is expanded from its drug-related origins to describe a collective human obsession with sin and temptation. This usage builds group identification through a shared, honest acknowledgment of moral fallibility, creating a community bound by an understanding of shared human weakness (Shuaibu, 2025).

This effect is also present in *Dear Alcohol*, where “beatin’ down” metaphorically describes the psychological pressure of life. This term creates solidarity among listeners who collectively understand the experience of being emotionally overwhelmed, transforming an individual struggle into a shared one.

Table 3. Manifestation of Group Identification Effect in Dax’s Lyrics

Song	Slang Term	Lyrical Context	In-Group Meaning	Solidarity Forged Around
Did It First	Niggas	<i>I told ‘em niggas I would make it ‘cause I wasn’t stopping</i>	In-group familiarity & solidarity	Shared racial/cultural identity and struggle
	Game	<i>Pottery, how I’m molding the game, my gift is</i>	The hip-hop industry/system	Insider knowledge of the music industry

		<i>an artistry</i>			
	a 40	<i>Pouring up a 40 nigga, I'm getting drunk</i>	Specific culture	drinking	Shared urban lifestyle experiences
The Devil's Calling	Spittin'	<i>So keep it quiet when I'm spittin' real (Spittin' real)</i>	Authentic performance	rap	Appreciation for lyrical artistry and truth
	Stayed down	<i>Stayed down, ten toes, hands up, case closed (Go, go, go, go)</i>	Perseverance and humility	and	Shared values of loyalty and resilience
	Fiends	<i>In this world full of evil, we all sinners and fiends</i>	Moral obsession/fallibility		Shared acknowledgment of human weakness
Dear Alcohol	Beatin' down	<i>This world is beatin' me down; it has pushed me right to the brink</i>	Psychological pressure		Shared experience of mental struggle

3. Challenging Structures: Slang as Opposition to Authority

The third significant finding is the strategic deployment of slang to articulate opposition to authority. This effect elevates slang from a marker of identity to a rhetorical weapon for challenging established power structures, including those within the music industry, religious institutions, and overarching societal values like materialism. This function aligns with sociolinguistic findings that rap discourse frequently transforms colloquial speech into a medium of protest and resistance (Colima & Cabezas, 2017). This effect is most aggressive in *Did It First* and becomes more systemically critical in *The Devil's Calling*.

Did It First is replete with slang that challenges the status quo of the rap game. The word “bore” in “these rappers bore me nigga” is a prime example. Its meaning here shifts from “to cause boredom” to “to mock or humiliate.” This semantic flexibility allows Dax to level a sharp, dismissive critique at his peers, challenging their legitimacy and credibility. Under Eble’s framework, this constitutes opposition to the established hierarchy and authority within the industry. A more direct and potent example is the phrase “fuck a fake nigga”. The word “fuck” is transformed from a vulgarity into a clear verb meaning “to reject or ignore.” This usage is a direct, confrontational act of opposition against inauthenticity and hypocrisy, serving as a discursive weapon to assert independence and cleanse his artistic environment of perceived falsehood.

This oppositional stance is scaled up to a systemic critique in *The Devil's Calling*. The lyric “fuck fame, fuck greed” uses slang to express a profound rejection of societal values institutionalized by capitalist and materialist authority. The word “greed” itself is narrowed in this slang context to specifically symbolize the oppressive system of materialism. By repeatedly using the oppositional frame “fuck + [concept],” Dax positions himself in direct conflict with these dominant, authority-

sanctioned values, using slang as a tool for ideological resistance.

A subtler but equally powerful form of opposition is found in *Dear Alcohol*. The phrase “don’t give a damn”, coupled with the deliberately non-standard grammar “he doesn’t,” is not merely informal. In the context of hip-hop, this grammatical “deviation” is itself an act of linguistic resistance. It rejects the prescriptive grammatical rules often associated with educational and institutional authority, asserting linguistic autonomy and an identity separate from the mainstream, standardizing power structures.

Table 4. Manifestation of Opposition to Authority Effect in Dax’s Lyrics

Song	Slang Term	Lyrical Context	Authority Challenged	Nature of Opposition
Did It First	Bore	<i>These rappers bore me nigga</i>	Legitimacy of industry peers	Dismissive critique and challenge to hierarchy
	Fuck	<i>Fuck a fake nigga</i>	Inauthenticity in the music industry	Direct rejection and verbal aggression
The Devil’s Calling	Greed	<i>Fuck fame, fuck greed, all the material things</i>	Materialism/Capitalist society	Systemic ideological critique

Synthesis: The Evolution and Interplay of Slang Effects

The analysis reveals a clear evolution in Dax’s use of slang across his artistic timeline. *Did It First* serves as a comprehensive showcase, densely employing slang for all three effects to establish his authenticity, his place in the hip-hop community, and his rebellious stance. *Dear God* represents a narrowing of focus, where slang is almost exclusively harnessed for the effect of informality to articulate raw, spiritual vulnerability. Subsequently, *The Devil’s Calling* and *Dear Alcohol* mark a maturation, where the effects of group identification and informality are explored in more philosophical and psychological depths, while opposition to authority evolves from industry-level criticism to a broader societal critique.

Crucially, these three effects are not mutually exclusive; they often interact and reinforce one another within a single slang term. The word “fuck” is a quintessential example: it creates informality through its vulgarity, can signal group identification among a community that values blunt expression, and is fundamentally an expression of opposition to authority (Hunt et al., 2023; Miller, 2022; Zamiry-balasbaneh et al., 2022). This multifunctionality underscores Eble’s core premise that slang is a rich, social practice rather than a simple linguistic deviation.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide a robust and detailed empirical foundation. They demonstrate conclusively that the 27 slang variations in Dax's selected lyrics are strategic artistic choices. These choices systematically build rapport through informality, foster community through group-specific codes, and wage a rhetorical battle against various forms of authority. This layered functionality sets the stage for a discussion that connects these linguistic findings to broader sociolinguistic themes of identity, power, and cultural expression in contemporary music.

Conclusion

This study has systematically illuminated the strategic deployment and sociolinguistic functions of slang within the lyrical repertoire of rapper Dax. The analysis of 27 validated slang expressions across four distinct albums demonstrates that slang operates as a sophisticated rhetorical instrument, far exceeding its role as mere linguistic ornamentation. The application of Eble's theoretical framework confirms that these lexical choices are deliberate artistic strategies employed to cultivate informality, signal group identification, and articulate opposition to authority.

The findings reveal a discernible evolution in Dax's sociolinguistic praxis. His early work, *Did It First*, functions as a comprehensive manifesto, densely leveraging slang across all three functional domains to assert authenticity, claim his position within the hip-hop community, and challenge industry paradigms. This expansive approach subsequently narrows into more focused explorations: *Dear God* channels slang primarily for raw, informal expression of spiritual turmoil, while *The Devil's Calling* and *Dear Alcohol* delve into deeper philosophical and psychological territories, employing slang to forge solidarity around shared moral struggles and to critique systemic societal structures. Crucially, the research underscores the dynamic interplay of these effects, where a single term can simultaneously create conversational intimacy, reinforce in-group bonds, and serve as a vehicle for ideological resistance.

Theoretically, this investigation substantiates and extends the applicability of Eble's framework to the domain of contemporary popular music. It affirms that slang serves as a potent marker of social practice, encapsulating the values, identity, and ideological stance of a community. In the context of Dax's oeuvre, slang is revealed not merely as a tool for social resistance but as a nuanced medium for introspection, emotional articulation, and the construction of a resilient personal and collective identity.

For the field of sociolinguistics, this study contributes a detailed empirical analysis of an underexplored artist, enriching our understanding of language variation in modern cultural productions. Pedagogically, these findings offer valuable insights for language education, providing authentic material to bridge theoretical sociolinguistic concepts with the evolving linguistic realities of students. Ultimately, this research confirms that the analysis of slang in artistic contexts provides a critical

window into the ongoing negotiation of social meaning, identity, and power in contemporary society.

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