

Exploring Slang Language in Different Songs Between Pop and Country Genres

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Abstract

This study examined slang in pop and country song lyrics from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on the types of slang and identifying the most dominant types in each genre. Song lyrics were obtained from internet transcripts, and a descriptive qualitative method was employed, based on the theory of Allan and Burridge (2006), which categorizes slang into five types, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping. 341 slang words were identified, with 248 from the pop genre and 93 from the country genre. Clipping emerged as the most dominant type in both genres, accounting for 44.76% of slang in pop and 73.12% in country music. Other types followed in varying proportions: imitative (28.23% in pop, 9.68% in-country), flippant (15.74% in pop, 12.90% in-country), fresh and creative (10.08% in pop, 4.30% in-country), and acronym (1.21% in pop, and there is no single type of slang acronym in the country 0%). The findings indicate that slang usage is more prevalent in pop music, reflecting its tendency to use concise and accessible language to engage listeners.

INTRODUCTION

Music is one of the most powerful forms of cultural expression. Music can reflect the social dynamics that occur in society and the use of language. Pop and country are two genres that are most widely adopted by various audiences. An interesting aspect of both genres is the use of slang, which not only adds color to the lyrics of the song, but also reflects the cultural identity, social values, and daily experiences of the listeners. Therefore, this study investigates the types of slang that have been used in pop and country song lyrics and analyzes their dominant forms in both genres. As Hughes also identified in his 2006 study, slang can be further divided into several subcategories such as abbreviations, new words (neologisms), and terms developed from a particular culture. In a pop song, slang will reflect the latest youth culture trends. Indeed, lately, these terms have turned into linguistic terms that are very well-known among its young target audience, words such as "lit" meaning an interesting event and "squad," meaning close friends. Slang can also be categorized based on its form and usage.

In a more critical review of these forms, Bloomfield (1993) describes slang as an abbreviation, humorous mispronunciation, shortened form, or interjection. However, the use of slang mostly

appears as a new word or phrase. Pop and country songs are common among the intended everyday listeners. For example, the use of the terms "lit" and "squad" in pop music is a reflection of youth culture, while the use of expressions such as "y'all" in country music shows its roots in the American South. Indeed, previous research on adolescent slang use has identified that slang is closely related to social context and environment. Eckert (2000) suggests that adolescents tend to use language as a tool to express their group identity. In the context of pop and country music, the use of slang functions not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of social identity.

The difference between pop and country is that Pop music tends to use more common language, The language used is more modern, cosmopolitan, and represents popular culture trends, is more universal, or can include words influenced by social media, the internet, or global culture. For example, in SZA's *Kill Bill* song "*still good even though I'm salty*", salty is slang for someone who is upset. *Snooze* song "*all the vibes I wanna stay*", vibes refers to the atmosphere, a popular term in social media culture and the younger generation. Country music tends to use more regional and often more conservative language, with many elements of dialect and slang that are more associated with certain regions of the United States. Slang in country music can be more traditional, often referring to rural life, family values, or simple living. For example, words like "dirt road" or "pickup truck" refer to the simple and typical rural life. In the song *Where Have You Gone* "*a little bit of steel guitar, a little bit of fiddle*", uses country music terms, such as steel guitar and fiddle to create a nostalgic country atmosphere.

Although much research has been done on the use of slang in social and cultural contexts, there is still little research that discusses the comparative analysis of slang use in pop and country song lyrics. Most previous studies have focused on a single genre or context without considering the interaction between the two genres. Baker in 2014 showed a greater emphasis on linguistic analysis in the pop genre, without comparison with the country genre. Previous studies have focused on slang in certain contexts, such as movies (Arianti & Lestari, 2021; Christiana, Fadilah & Rachmawaty, 2021; Delvary & Rosita, 2023; Kasitha & Ida Ayu, 2022; Lumendang, Samola & Kumayas, 2021; Shera & Fitrawati, 2021; Sitorus, Tampubolon & Napitupulu, 2024; Stefan & Dula, 2024), podcasts and YouTube videos (Ardianta, Rajeg & Dewi, 2022; Fadhillah & Nurweni, 2023; Mulyantini, Santika & Sulatra, 2023), social media (Aziza, 2021; Budiasa, Savitri & Dewi, 2021; Indra & Marhamah, 2024; Sapitri, Alpira & Iryana, 2024; Siregar, Tampubolon, Ribreka, Pratama & Tansliova, 2024; Supri & Nur, 2021; Tasyarasita, Duhita, Yulianti & Yustanto, 2023; Yusuf, Fata & Aini, 2023), song lyrics (Jayanthi, Suastini & Jayantini, 2022; Laksono, Tirtanawati & Prastiwi, 2024; Meray, Liando & Kumayas, 2022; Nugraheny & Yuwita, 2023; Paggih, 2023; Raodhatul & Ardi, 2019; Sabila & Irawan, 2023; Siahaan, Purba & Herman, 2021; Widyareka & Hikmaharyanti, 2024). However, what differentiates this research from previous research is that no one has researched slang for two different genres.

METHOD

The research design was analyzed data using a descriptive qualitative method, because this research method aims to describe a phenomenon, process, or perspective of the people involved. The data was obtained from the spotify playlist and transcripts of song lyric from internet. The following link is a source of the data song lyrics: <https://tinyurl.com/3cu9rr37>. The theory of Allan and Burridge (2006) was used to analyze the data. The types of slang are divided into five types, there are, fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping.

The songs on SZA's album "SOS" were chosen for analysis because of the immense popularity, trending and widely liked in the current era, and the album was released in 2022, while the songs on Alan Jackson's album "where have you gone" were chosen because it accordance with the theme being analyzed, and the album was released in 2021. On SZA's album "SOS" there are 23

songs while on Alan Jackson's "where have you gone" there are 21 songs, but to balance the data being analyzed, two songs from SZA's album, titled "I Hate You" and "Forgiveless (feat. Ol' Dirty Bastard)," were excluded.

The data collection process involved three main steps: first, selecting and determining which songs to analyze; second, collecting the song lyrics from the internet; and third, compiling the lyrics into a Microsoft Word document to facilitate analysis. The data analysis process involved reading and understanding the song lyrics, marking and underlining the slang words identified, categorizing and classifying the slang into the five types based on Allan and Burrige's framework, and finally drawing conclusions from the findings.

FINDINGS

The findings of this research are intended to address the previously established research problems, it is about the types and the most dominant slang in pop and country genre. 341 slangs were found from two album songs of pop and country genres, by using Allan and Burrige (2006) theory, which proposed five types of slang: fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, acronym, and clipping.

Table 1. Types of Slang Words in Pop and Country Genre

No	Types	Pop Genre		Country Genre	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Fresh and creative	25	10.08%	4	4.30%
2.	Flippant	39	15.74%	12	12.90%
3.	Imitative	70	28.23%	9	9.68%
4.	Acronym	3	1.21%	-	0%
5.	Clipping	111	44.76%	68	73.12%
Total		248	100%	93	100%

This "clipping" type is the most widely used type in both genres because this is the type that abbreviates words or partly removes part of the original word to make the word catch short and concise. The clipping is often found in informal language because it could create a relaxed, familiar, and relevant impression to the audience.

Table 1 shows the most dominant use of slang is in the "pop genre" with 248 data, where the most widely used types is clipping with a frequency 111 and percentage (44.76%), followed by imitative 70 (28.23%), then, it is followed by flippant 39 (15.74%), next is fresh and creative is about 25 (10.08%), and the last is acronym 3 (1.21%). While the country genre has 93 data, where the most widely used types is clipping with a frequency 68 and percentage (73.12%), followed by flippant 12 (12.90%), then, it is followed by imitative 9 (9.68%), next is fresh and creative 4 (4.30%), and no one slang in acronym types it is (0%).

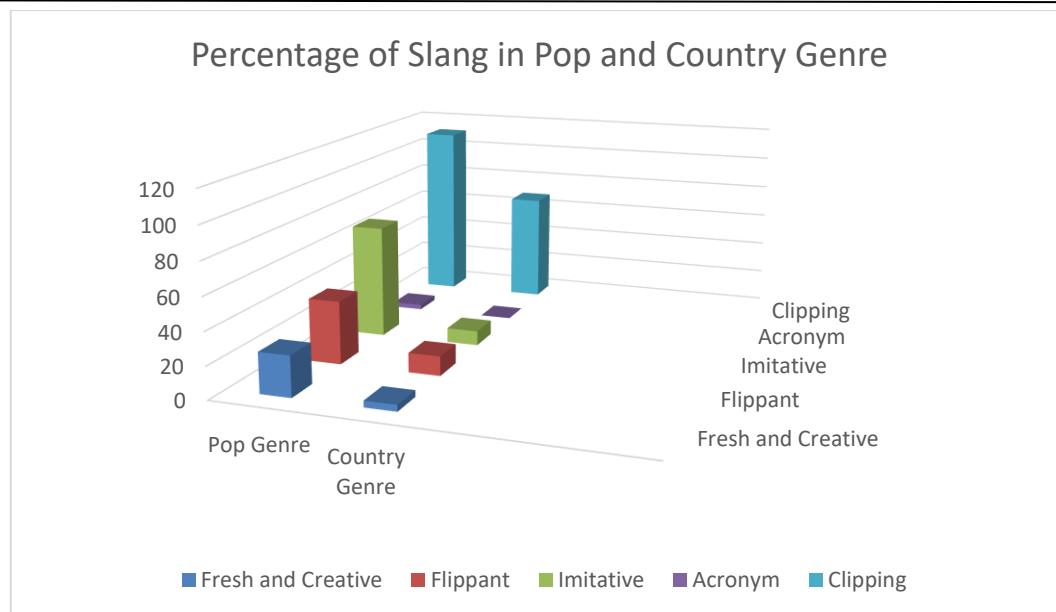


Figure 1. Percentage of Slang in Pop and Country Genre

DISCUSSION

In both genres, the most utilized type is the "clipping", this type of slang shortens words without changing their meaning, which makes it perfect for adapting to the rhythm and melody of the song while producing lyrics relevant for a young audience that has got used to quick communication by means of social media and text messaging. Moreover, clipping gives an impression of informality and friendliness, which corresponds absolutely with the simple cosmopolite features of pop and country. Cultural trends, which require a word to be short and effective, also promote the prevalence of clipping as an efficient way of message conveyance in a relaxed and modern manner.

This study is an exploratory study of the use of slang across music genres, highlighting the fact that this linguistic phenomenon occurs differently across genres. However, there are several areas that could be developed in this study. For example, it would be more holistic to examine in detail how cultural and social variables in the use and perception of slang vary across music styles. This study also focuses on the important role that songs play in shaping audiences' views of slang and its place in building cultural narratives. From the data, it appears that slang is one type of language that is quite often used in song lyrics. Most of the time, singers use it to describe identity, rebellion, or perhaps belonging to a certain group by using informal or uncommon words. This finding confirms the research conducted by Hartono (2021), Saraswati (2020), Putri (2019), and Wijaya (2017) because it proves that slang has an impact on listeners' attitudes and also helps build emotions or cultural markers in music. Therefore, these similar results reinforce the fact that slang is a cultural and emotional bridge for listeners.

1. Fresh and Creative

Fresh and creative is a type of slang word that has new vocabulary, clever imagination, informal variety, and can be current words or even old words that people don't know.

Extract 1 *"And you still playin' the pick-me"*

The term "pick-me" describe someone who tries to be seen as more attractive by criticizing or putting down others by making comments that seem to get more praise and attention.

Extract 2 “*That’s the way love goes babe*”

The slang “babe” is a term to someone that you love and care about, which is to refer to someone romantic in English, it is kind of like saying “darling”, “honey”, “love”, it speaks of warmth, closeness and affection.

Extract 3 “*Comin’ back snatched like bandit*”

the word 'bandit' creates an image of someone who stands out or stands apart, maybe with a strong sense of self-confidence after returning from some challenging situation.

Extract 4 “*I’m still a fan even though i was salty*”

It means annoyed, irritated, or angry with some idea of being cheated on, or things are just going completely out of the subject’s way.

Extract 5 “*No one thinkin’ i’m a groupie it’s lit*”

Groupie could refer to a very fanatical fan. For example, it might include the fan following his favorite celebrity or band anywhere they go. This term 'lit' has lately become very in use for youth and simply defines anything that is cool, awesome, and fun.

Extract 6 “*To my dead homie mothers*”

The term homie is a slang expression for someone close, such as a brother, sister, mother, father or best friend, and is primarily applied in close friendships in urban settings.

Analysis: The data above is categorized as fresh and creative because the terms represent linguistic innovations that create new meanings or bring a fresh nuance to communication.

2. Flippant

Flippant the key to grouping slang words into flippant is when the slang form consists of more than two words and has no relationship with the denotative meaning or it is a figurative meaning that has a certain meaning.

Extract 7 “*what the fuck you cryin’ for?*”

This term describe situation and expression of surprise, shock, disbelief or frustration. The use of the word “fuck” to adds a coarse and direct tone, which can convey a variety of emotions.

Extract 8 “*love can build you up and shut you down*”

This slang often used to show feelings of failure, fail, or deep disappointment. it means love is having a painful side that can also destroy or make someone feel broken.

Extract 9 “*Punk ass tried to replace me*”

Punk ass is a derogatory term, referring to someone who is considered weak, whos trying to take over the position.

Extract 10 “*kisses warm as a wild red rose*”

as a wild red rose is a poetic expression that describes the warmth and intensity of someone’s kiss. ‘wild red rose’ is used as a metaphor, as wild red roses are often associated with passionate love, intensity, and spontaneity.

Extract 11 “*Run from the rain I was tequila and she was champagne*”

tequila is often associated with strength, courage and excitement, while champagne is more elegant, refined and classy. This comparison shows that while there are similarities between the two, they have very different qualities-the speaker feels more bold or intense, while her partner is more refined and luxurious.

Extract 12 “*So necessary, the art of war God damn it, I'm drained*”

God damn it this expresses a feeling of emotional or lack of energy.

Analysis: The data above is categorized as flippant because it has a figurative form with a meaning that is not directly connected to its denotative meaning.

3. Imitative

Imitative is a form of slang word type that imitates other words or a combination of two words that produce a different meaning.

Extract 13 “*not tryna be a nuisance, this is urgent*”

The word “tryna” is a two words combined into one, it stands for (trying+to). It is frequently used in spoken language and informal writing, particularly in urban and youth culture. This term conveys a laid-back and is often used when someone is making an effort or attempting to do something.

Extract 14 “*You wanna see hard, try livin’ in bars*”

The word “wanna” is a two words combined into one, it stands for (going+to). It is commonly used in casual speech and writing to express desire or intention in a more relaxed manner. The word “wanna” often conveys a sense, making it suitable for expressing personal feeling as seen in the phrase above, someone asks to be loved.

Extract 15 “*And do just what you’re gonna do*”

gonna is two words combined into one, it stands for (going to).

Extract 16 “*You gotta pick yourself up*”

Gotta is two words combined into one, it stands for (go to).

Extract 17 “*Finna take me a ride to the shore now*”

finna is two words combined into one, it stands for (fixing to).

Extract 18 “*Just my mind gotta get outta here*”

outta is two words combined into one, it stands for (out of).

Analysis: The data above is categorized as imitative because it imitates words or combinations of words that create new meanings.

4. Acronym

The essence of an acronym is that the effect of the word comes from the main letter of each word in an expression or utilizes the initials of a group.

Extract 19 *“I still **otw**, i lay awake”*

The term “otw” is slang derived from the acronymization process, where the initial letters of each word are combined into one to form a shorter and usually faster word that refers to “on the way”.

Extract 20 *“**nvm** ridin’ backseat”*

The slang “nvm” stand for “never mind”, it is often used in casual conversation to indicates that something is no longer important or already changed mind about a topic. It means to disregard not to worry about something previously mentioned.

Analysis: The data above is categorized as acronym because this type of slang utilizes the initial letters of words in an expression.

5. Clipping

This type of clipping is a type of slang word that is removed in one or more parts but still has the same meaning as the word that is not cut.

Extract 21 *“**cause** you the only one that’s holdin’ me down”*

The word “cause” is formed as a result of the clipping process, namely cutting part of a word to form a shorter version of the word, it removes the “be” part from the original word “because”. The purpose of forming slang like this is to convey the words original meaning in a more straightforward and shorter version.

Extract 22 *“The rain was **comin’** down sideways”*

This term specifically a phonological process because it removes the “g” part from the original word “coming”, to create a more casual or colloquial form. This type of clipping is common in informal speech and is often used to reflect a relaxed or conversational tone.

Extract 23 *“You still talking **bout** babies”*

‘bout this slang called clipping because it removes the “a” part from the original word (about).

Extract 24 *“Hard to grow when you not here, i’m **sayin’**”*

sayin’ this slang called clipping because it removes the “g” part from the original word (saying).

Extract 25 *“i sat there **til** the sun came up”*

‘til this slang called clipping because it removes the “un” part from the original word (until).

Extract 26 *“i’m just **gettin’** to my best years yet”*

gettin’ this slang called clipping because it removes the “g” part from the original word (getting).

Analysis: The data above is categorized as clipping because this type of slang that shortens words without changing their basic meaning.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that slang is more frequently used in pop music than in country music. Clipped forms of slang dominate both genres, suggesting that the informal and concise language style in pop music is more appealing to younger audiences. This reflects a broader cultural trend among young people. This study focused only on pop and country music genres. Therefore, the results may not reflect the variation of slang in other music genres, such as hip-hop or rock, which have different linguistic characteristics.

Suggestions:

- 1) For Further Researchers: It is advisable to expand the analysis to other music genres, such as hip-hop, jazz, R&B, rock, or folk to explore a wider range of slang, or analyze the songs other than English songs, such as Indonesian song and many more.
- 2) For Students: It is advisable to conduct a study on the relationship between slang and socio-cultural context, so that they can understand the sociolinguistic implications more deeply.

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