



An Analysis of Slang in Benjamin Zephaniah's Selected Songs

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Abstract

Slang is the most informal form of communication in certain communities, Yule (2006). Slang comes in different kind of varieties based on the process it appear. Song is one of many media that slang could appear and exist. Some song creator include slang as one of their prefer word selection putting in the lyrics. One of the singer is Benjamin Zephaniah. Benjamin uses a lot of slang in his song. This kind of phenomenon in language, slang, interest linguists to analyze songs that have slang but only a few study in Benjamin Zephaniah works. This research analyze slangs that occur in Benjamin Zephaniag songs using theory of language varieties by Yule. There are six types of slangs that exist in Benjamin's selected songs. Most common slang are coinage and multiple process. The goal of Benjamin using slang on his works are to show his identitiy as african born and to show his hate against racism.

Key words: Slang, Word Formation, Language Varieties

A. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a significant function in human's life. Without language, individuals would not have the option to express their thought. Language is a communication system which is expected to help to do human activities easier in the society. Individuals at any rate utilize one language to pass on and express their thoughts and feeling through language to communicate with others. Yule (2014) clarifies that language is a set of symbols being utilized mainly for communication. The symbol is either spoken or written. Language is a part of human life. In written structure it is tools to pass on information starting with one age then onto the next, while in spoken structure it methods is more direct and more simple. Thus, language and society are two substances which are indivisible.

Sociolinguistics is a study of language which is related to social conditions. It implies that language utilized dependent on what is being done and the idea of

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its exercises. In certain group or network, the individuals who live in there utilize the language that is not the same as others. According to Hudson (1980) Sociolinguistic is the study to understand the connection between human language and their society including all aspect such as ; language, culture, norms, and context on the language it used.

The field of sociolinguistics is moderately new yet significant part of linguistics. It examines language in its social setting and dissects the genuine language use by various speakers. Sociolinguistics investigate language on its social context in one communities or ntworks and compare it with others. Sociolinguitics investigates languages on different levels of communication.

From one perspective, language serves individuals to satisfy individual needs of expressing their thoughts , which shape the language in the everyday situation context. Language use and language variety influences other language in unique ways. The utilization of language inside the communities incorporates language varieties. It can be shaped by time, social, event, or individual factors. Soeparno (2003) said that language varieties consist of chronologycal variation, gheographycal variation, social variations, functional variations, style variation, cultural variation and individual variation. Moreover, language variety is partitioned into a few structures and one of them is slang.

Slang is one of the types of language variety. Slang is used by a wide range of individuals who share circumstances or interests and it is regularly used in casual circumstance. According to Fromkin and Rodman (2003), slang is a result of development of making new words and used to make language simpler and easier to be utter in everyday situation. Slang language is an informal form of language that would be someday vanish eventhough it is widely use by people. But, some slang word stay in communities and become coinage and event some others words become formal word by the time it used. There is no formal shape in slang because it is a subclass of the language.

There are many slang words used in rap songs, one of them is song and poem lyrics by Benjamin Zephaniah. Dr. Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was born and raised in Birmingham, England. Born in 15 of April 1958, now he is 59 years old and still writing and make another literary works. He already make so many books and also relese some songs, some of them already translate into other language. His writing movement usually about 'Rastafaria Movement' ; a movement about power of black people from Jamaica; but also about British imperialism.

Benjamin remains one of most controversial poet and singer in the word especially Great Britain. He is known as his movement againts the English Goverment and againts racist. Yet, Benjamin still manage to resist all critics and honored the doctorate from Unversity of Brmingham. He also listed as the number 48 from 50 greatest postwar writers. He already won some awards sucha as BBC Young Playwright's Award. He also been awarded by University of North London in 1998, the University of Central England in 1999, the Staffordshire University in 2001, London South Bank University in 2003, University of Exeter and University of Wesminter in 2006.

Up until this point, there have been a few study about slang. The main slang study is directed by Wulandari (2012) in her research entitled *The Sorts of Slang Words In The lyrics of "Jigsaw" Collection By Lady Sovereign*. She has done an research of song lyrics. The point of her research is to identify and the types of slang and analyze the function of the slang. She also analyze the meaning of the slang found in the song lyrics. In this research, she used descriptive method and analyze the data from song lyrics of Lady Sovereign collection.

Second, Gemilasari (2013) in her research entitled *An Analysis of Word Formation of Slang Words Found in Short Stories in Teenager Magazines Aneka Yess*. The researcher has researched how slang words form in short stories on *Aneka Yess* magazine. She analyzes and describes the types of slang words formation on 2002-2012 editions. Then, she made description of types of word formation of slang that is often used every year. After that, she described the slang words, which were changing at that time. Based on the research, she found 10 types of word formations. Those are acronym, abbreviation, blending, clipping, coinage, compounding, multiple processes, borrowing, reduplication and affixation. Based on the entire slang words, coinage is the type of word formation that is mostly found in every magazine edition.

After that, Marzita (2013) entitled *An Analysis of Word Formation Process of English Slang in Teenager Movie Scripts*. Same as Gemilasari research, but different in object. Based on the result, Marzita found some formation process of slang word in the two movies; those are coinage, internal change, clipping, affixation, derivation, compounding, blending and acronym.

Based on the previous studies above, slang studies done by Gemilasari and Wulandari are similar with this research. Same as Gemilasari, this paper analyze slang words based on the word formation processes. The difference between Gemilasari studies and this paper is in source of data, Gemilasari took a Megazine as her data source. Meanwhile, the writer took data from song lyrics. This research same with Wulandari reasearch by taking songs lyric as the data and also the study used to analyze the data. The different is the object of the data while Wulandari use Lady Sovereign collection, meanwhile this research use Benjamin Zephaniah collection.

This study interest in researching the slang because of the wide possibilities of varities of slangs that can appear in speaking or in writing. Especially in songs, the slang appearence is not common because some singer or song writer use their own slang or words. Yule (2006) said that slang is the most informal form of cammunication in certai communities. This special community in this research is the songs by Benjamin especially the RNB or Rap genre performe by Benjamin Zephaniah.

To sum up, the researcher is interested in discussing about slang especially slang in song lyrics. The data source of this analysis is selected song lyrics by Benjamin Zephaniah. The researcher choose six most popular and controversial songs.

B. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

a. Finding

The researcher collected 60 data that consist of slang words. The data of slang words were collected from song lyrics of Benjamin Zephaniah selected songs. In the study, the researcher finds six characteristic of slang word that used in Benjamin Zephaniah song lyrics. They are Multiple Process, Back Formation, Blending, Clipping, Compounding, and Coinage.

1) Coinage

Datum 1

1. *Wot a Pair*

Wot is a slang word that appear in ghettto or suburband places around big city in England and America. This slang word / /wät/ is a non standar form of what, but have a different meaning as wot is more humorous meaning. this word could be pronoun, determiner or adverb. Wot appear in slang language to express a happiness felling in a situation.

Datum 2

2. *Dis regime is bent*

Bent is a slang word in rapper community. In dictionary meaning of bent is sharply curved or have an angle. In rapper community this word usually appear to tell others about a government that corrupt.

2) Clipping

Clipping is one of slang word formation which is formed by making the word shorter than it should be. Clipping may occur in front of the word or back part of it. Beside, in clipping process, it may be replaced with certain new spelling.

Datum 3

3. Be nice to *yu* turkeys dis christmas

You	→	yu
/yo̯o/ /yə/	→	/yu/

From the datum above, the process of slang is happened by deleting one alphabet 'o'. This process change how the word sounds and also made the word become informal.

Datum 4

4. Dis poetry is designed fe *rantin*

Ranting → Rantin
'ran(t)iNG/ → /'ran(t)in/

The datum above present a usual slang used by African American in English language country. This process is cllid clipping. The process commonly deleting the /ŋ/ and change it into /n/. This process also appear in the word ending with /NG/ such as 'doing' /'dooiNG/ become 'doi'n' /dooin/. Same process happen in datum number four. Deleting the /ŋ/ in the word and change it into /n/.

Datum 5

5. I pass *thru* University
through → thru
/THru:/ → /Tru:/

The datum above

The datum above shows the same process as datum 3. The slang exist by deleting some alphabet in the end of the word. It does not change how it sounds, but it change the spelling.

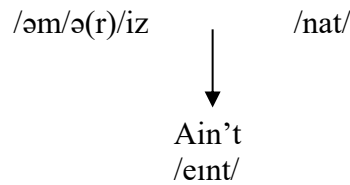
3) Blending

Datum 6

6 You *ain't* got

The word *ain't* above is slang word. It consist of two combination of word, am/are/is + not. It can be seen as follow:

am/are/is + not

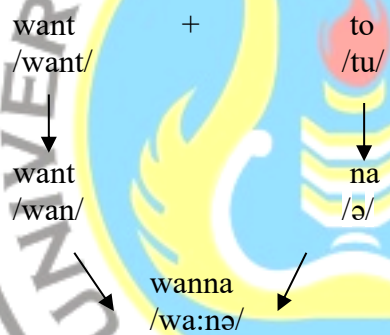


This is the systematic process of word formation of *ain't* which comes from four words: *am*, *are*, *is* and *not*. *am*, *are*, *is* is taken as a first alphabet become 'ai', while the part of *not* which that is taken is 'n't'.

Datum 7

7 Cos' turkeys just *wanna* hav fun

The word *wanna* in the data above is considered as slang word because it consists of the words *want* + *to*. There is a process of blending in forming the word *wanna*. It can be seen as follow:



This is the systematic process of word formation of *wanna* which comes from two words: *want* and *to*, *want* is taken as a half word *wan*, while the part of *to* /tu/ which is taken is /u/. Therefore, the word *to* /tu/ experiences changes in vowel to match the vowel /a/ in /wan/, in which the word changes to become /ə/.

4) Compounding

Datum 8

Brock-Lacs

Brock + Lacs

This kind of slang is coumpounding. This slang appear by combinig two diffrent word. The first word is *brock* the second is *lacs*. By combinig this two words the meaning is change. *Brock* is a comman name

in Great Britain for and *lacs* means covered with white paint. These two words used by Benjamin to make a substitution to tell person who is white.

5) Multiple Process

Multiple process is a word formation process happens when more than one or multiple word formation types appear in one word formation process. This process appear many times in Benjamin Zephaniah song lyrics.

Thes some multiple process appear in Benjamin songs ;

Datum 9

Be nice to yu turkeys *dis* christmas

From the datum above , the word *dis* is a slang word. In this word multiple process appear such as coinage, conversion, and also cultural variation.

This → Dis
/THis/ → /dis/

This kind of process of word formation firstly showing the changing of sound /TH/ become /d/ from more voiceless to voiced sounds that indicated the cultural variation of Benjamin. He shows his bold Jamaican accent by voiced the sound that should not be voiced.

Second, coinage appear in this word because by changing the sound also effect the the alphabetic change from *this* to *dis*. Dis is informal word used to critisized or moking someone. This word mainly use by rapper when they make songs to critisize other rapper. This word become so popular in rapper song writer and singer and widely use around the word.

Thridly, conversion also appear in this word. Depend on how people read this lyric, dis could be mean as /THis/ or might be /Dis/ this different would effect the meaning to be greatly change the pourpose of the song

This research found 60 slang words appear in Benjamin song lyric, after that marking the slang word that found in the lyrics and classify the types of slang words. After collecting slang word, the researcher looking to characterize the slang word that appear in the song lyrics of Benjamin. The characteristic was found is multiple process, blending, compounding, coinage, clipping, and back formation.

Based on the analysis of slang words that is used in selected song lyric in Benjamin Zephaniah selected songs the most common slang that appear is Coinage that appear 23 times, the second most common is multiple process. Blending and Clipping both appear 6 times, Back formation appear 3 times. The least common slang type is compounding that only appear 2 times. The data shows in the table below :

No	Types of Word Formation	Frequency	
		Number	Percentage (%)
1	Multiple process	20	33.3%
2	Blending	6	10%
3	Compounding	2	3.3%
4	Coinage	23	38.3%
5	Clipping	6	10%
6	Back formation	3	5%
Total		60	100.0%

Based on the table above, it shows that from 60 data coinage is the most common slangs that appear in the lyrics. The second one is multiple process appear 20 times in the selected songs. Then it follow by other kind of slangs such as compounding, blending, clipping, and back formation. But, not one kind of slang is too dominat.

Coinage and multiple process is the most common slangs that appear. Coinage mean new word that use by certain society. Especially for Benjamin song coinage that appear mostly word from ghetto which is community populated by black skinned people or African American. Another slang, Multirprocess means that the slang appear by more than one process of slang made process

b. Discussion

Wulandari (2012) in The Sorts of Slang Words In The lyrics of "Jigsaw" Collection By Lady Sovereign found for types of slang in the research. The four types are clipping, acronym, blending, and back formation. The meaning of the slang process found in the research is denotative because is not change the meaning of the words. Thus, the slang only change the form.

Otherwise in Benjamin more slang process appear and the slang word mostly change the meaning as explain in the data analysis. It can be seen in the Benjamin songs beside coinage the most common slang process is multiple process, appear for 20 times. This indicate that Benjamin used connotative meaning to change the form of the word such as *wot*, *dis*, *dat*, *etc* and also change the meaning because of the form change give the word new meaning.

Marzita (2013) in her research in Juno movie script found that the most common slang that appear is coinage the same as in the Benjamin songs. One example of coinage in Marzita finding is *gob* that means mouth. This kind of slang, coinage, appear by forming a word that does not has any correlation to the original word. Diffrent from the object, This research use songs as the data, but find most of slang process as the same such as coinage.

In Benjamin some coinage motly old but some also new, indicate that Marzita found in Juno that the slangs user moslty teenager also correlated in Benjamin songs because the user of slangs types in Benjamin motly young person lived in the Ghetto or suburb area. The coinge that used only by certain society.

Third in Gemilasari (2013) in the researched analysis of *Aneka Yess!* Magazine conclude coinage as the most common slang process in that magaizne. The study of the magazine conclude that in order to make reader interes to read their magazine their often made some coinage such as *lebay*, *gebetan*, *etc*. The used of slang in the magazine also become more common not only in the magazine but also used by the reader in their normal daily conversation.

Same as Benjamin in his song, the common slang process is also coinage. The words such as *wog*, *black house*, and *wot*. Also has the same process as Gemilasari said to make interes the reader but diffrently in Benjamin the coinage also used to expalin the condition of Black people in the Great Britain and also other country that racis to Black people. He strongly used the identity as person from African immigrant to tell that people are equal and cannot be judged bad only because of the skin color.

The coinage used in Benjamin some are new but some others already exsit or only used by Benjamin. The old such as *wog* and newet one is *black house*. Howard (1984:12) said that slang tend to be disapper fast enough, but some others might be stand and become more common to used and become standar use. The use of coinage in Benjamin beside as his identity also as reminder to others not to do racism against each people. He wrote his story in the songs and poem and tell people and make it as reminder to young generation.

Coinage process not appear once or twice in his songs but almost in all his creation, song and peom. Slangs is kind of the everyday meals in Benjamin creation. Schendl (2001) said that the change of language is the change of attitude of the native speaker widespreadly to good or worse. Creator such as Benjamin tend to change the mindset of people by his creation, as in his songs he is against the racism and tell stroy about racism to black person and only ask for equal treatment.

So, based on finding and discussion and comparison above the researcher use other as support and comparison such as Wulandari (2012), Marzita (2013), and Gemalasar (2013). The researcher has kind of the same object with Wuldari

(2012) that is songs but chose different singer. Other, Marzita (2013) use magazine and Gemalasri use movie script. The same took place in the slang process, this research found coinage as the common slang process also Marzita and Gemalasari found coinage as the common slang. This research also agree with others that slang mostly used by teenager. The coinage also means to attract reader such as teenager. Different from other the slang in Benjamin exist to strongly show his personality and also to show people about racism that happen in his country and he falls by himself.

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The types of slang process that mostly appear in Benjamin Zephaniah selected songs are Coinage and Multiple process. First coinage appear as the most common slang process, the coinage that appear some are new and some others are old coinage that still popular. Second most common is multiple process, the multiple process usually appear as the ultimate explanation to who is he and how he react against racism. The use of coinage and multiple process that associate to African or black skinned person is to show his personality and to show his will against racism.

Furthermore other slang process also appear such as compounding, blending, clipping, and back formation. This slang process also the slang that used by African American that lived in the ghetto or suburb. The slangs used by Benjamin mostly the slang that only use by black person community and widely know by other person so the songs is more understandable and more attractive to young person.

The slang occur in Benjamin's songs because of the social, cultural, and individual variation. The social variation and cultural variation is the power that Benjamin want to show to the listener of his songs. The objective of showing his identity as African American and express his anger to the racism situation in his country. The individual variation such as new creole that he made shows his creativity and intelligences of Benjamin to create new words.

The researcher suggests that there will be more other researcher or linguist that interest to conduct research about slangs and find more language phenomenon to reveal other new coinage and slangs in other Benjamin Zephaniah songs or other object that found interesting by other researcher. The researcher also hopes that this paper can become a reference to other researcher to conduct studies to slangs and Benjamin Zephaniah.

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