

# An Analysis of Slang Used in 13 Going on 30 (2004): Study of Sociolinguistics

Keyza Alifah Mokoginta<sup>1</sup>, Mayzia Sabiha Fidhinillah<sup>2</sup>, Nurlaila Safitri<sup>3</sup>, Aulia Dagna Hasy<sup>4</sup>, M. Eriansyah<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Universitas Pamulang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author :

**Keyza Alifah Mokoginta**

[keyalifah05@gmail.com](mailto:keyalifah05@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as an essential tool for expressing identity, constructing social relationships, and reflecting cultural values. Within sociolinguistics, slang represents one of the most dynamic and socially meaningful forms of language variation because it conveys informality, emotional intensity, and group belonging. This study examines every slang expression found in the film 13 Going on 30 (2004) by classifying and analyzing each term through Allan and Burridge's (2006) taxonomy of slang. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher identified forty-three slang expressions and analyzed their use in terms of meaning, formation, speaker identity, and sociolinguistic function. The findings reveal that slang in the film reflects early 2000s American youth culture and serves as an expressive tool for identity construction, interpersonal bonding, humor, and informal evaluation. Fresh and creative slang expresses attitude and emotion; flippant slang conveys sarcasm and playful challenge; imitative slang reflects natural spoken patterns; acronym slang demonstrates digital influence; and clipping slang reveals linguistic economy. This study contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by offering a comprehensive analysis of slang in audiovisual media and showing how linguistic variation supports characterization and cultural atmosphere in film.

**Keywords:** *slang, sociolinguistics, language variation, film linguistics.*

## Introduction

Language is a central component of human social life because it enables individuals to communicate ideas, emotions, and intentions while simultaneously constructing identity and shaping social relationships. As Fishman (1972) emphasizes, language must always be examined through the lens of "who speaks what language to whom and under what conditions," meaning that linguistic choices cannot be separated from social context. This perspective positions language not merely as a structural system of grammar and vocabulary but as a social tool through which individuals express belonging, negotiate meaning, and reflect cultural norms. Sociolinguistics, therefore, becomes essential for understanding how linguistic variation functions within society.

Sociolinguistics examines the interaction between language and society by analyzing how social factors such as age, gender, class, ethnicity, and cultural background influence linguistic behavior (Holmes, 2013). Speakers adjust vocabulary, tone, and structure depending on context and relationship. Such variation reflects identity, solidarity, distance, power, and social roles. Meyerhoff (2011) states that sociolinguistics also explores how people make sense of their worlds through language, including informal,

playful, and creative forms. One of the most dynamic forms of language variation that captures these social dimensions is slang.

Slang is a type of informal, nonstandard vocabulary used primarily by specific groups such as young people, subcultures, or communities sharing close social ties. Yule (2010) defines slang as a linguistic marker that signals intimacy and informality, often associated with youth identity. Crystal (2003) further explains that slang reflects linguistic innovation because it evolves rapidly and creatively. Eble (1996) adds that slang strengthens in-group identity by enabling speakers to distinguish themselves from outsiders. Coleman (2012) likewise emphasizes that slang functions not simply as informal vocabulary but as a creative and socially meaningful linguistic resource that responds to cultural shifts.

The media play a crucial role in shaping and spreading slang. Film dialogue, in particular, mirrors informal speech patterns, emotional expression, and generational linguistic trends. Androutsopoulos (2014) notes that audiovisual media offer a rich linguistic environment where slang circulates, adapts, and becomes normalized. Therefore, analyzing slang in film provides insight into cultural representation, youth identity, and contemporary linguistic practices. The film *13 Going on 30* (2004) presents an ideal object of study because it portrays early 2000s American culture and contains numerous slang expressions used by characters across different age groups and social settings.

To study slang systematically, Allan and Burridge (2006) propose a classification that has become one of the most widely used frameworks in linguistic research. Their system categorizes slang into five types based on linguistic formation and social function: fresh and creative slang, flippant slang, imitative slang, acronym slang, and clipping slang. This taxonomy provides structure for analyzing how slang expressions emerge, how they function socially, and how they shape identity within communication.

The first category, fresh and creative slang, consists of newly formed or highly imaginative expressions used to convey emotion, attitude, personality, or humor. Allan and Burridge (2006) argue that such slang emerges when speakers create new forms that are not yet conventionalized but carry strong expressive meaning. This type of slang often reflects emotional intensity and strong evaluation, making it especially popular in youth language. In sociolinguistic terms, fresh and creative slang functions as a marker of expressiveness and identity, demonstrating the speaker's involvement, enthusiasm, or emotional stance. Its rapid change and novelty make it a significant part of generational linguistic style.

The second category, flippant slang, includes expressions that are humorous, sarcastic, or intentionally ironic. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), flippant slang often contains two or more words whose combined meaning does not match their literal components. These expressions serve to soften criticism, convey disbelief, or add a humorous or playful tone to conversations. Holmes (2013) notes that such language choices often reflect relational management, as speakers use humor or mild sarcasm to navigate interpersonal tension or create solidarity. Flippant slang thus represents a sociolinguistic strategy that allows speakers to express evaluation without sounding overly direct or confrontational.

The third category, imitative slang, consists of expressions that imitate or adapt existing words or pronunciations. These expressions include phonological reductions such as *gonna*, *wanna*, and *lemme*, which arise naturally in spoken English. Meyerhoff (2011) emphasizes that these reductions reflect informal speech processes and are strongly associated with casual conversations. Because imitative slang mirrors real

spoken language, it reveals how speakers relax linguistic formality when interacting with peers, expressing familiarity and social closeness.

The fourth category, acronym slang, includes shortened forms created from the initials of multi-word expressions. Allan and Burridge (2006) note that the rise of digital communication text messaging, email, and online platforms has popularized acronyms such as OMG, FYI, and TMI. Androutsopoulos (2014) also highlights that digital media amplify the spread of acronym slang, making it a common feature of youth communication. Acronym slang demonstrates how technology shapes linguistic practices and how written abbreviations migrate into spoken language. Sociolinguistically, acronym slang reflects modernity, technological familiarity, and group belonging in digitally influenced communities.

The fifth category, clipping slang, consists of shortened forms created by omitting parts of longer words, such as fridge (from refrigerator), mag (from magazine), and phone (from telephone). Trudgill (2000) explains that clipping is a natural linguistic process driven by efficiency and ease of articulation. Clipping slang reflects casual word formation and indicates an informal conversational setting. Such forms are common in everyday interaction because speakers prefer faster and simpler vocabulary when communicating informally.

Research conducted by Putri and Pratiwi (2023) examined the use of slang in Senior Year by applying the theory of Allan & Burridge (2006) and considering social factors according to Holmes (2013). Their findings revealed that there were 22 examples of slang that could be divided into five categories, with the fresh and creative type standing out as the most common. This study also shows that the use of slang greatly depends on the participants, environment, purpose, and topic of conversation. These results are relevant to current research because they show that analyzing slang in the context of films requires an understanding of the combination of slang types and social factors, which can be used as a basis for comparison to analyze slang in *13 Going on 30*, which also reflects social dynamics and identity through the choice of language used.

The study conducted by Pranata and Nasrullah (2023) explores the use of slang in the movie *Spiderman: Homecoming* with a sociolinguistic approach, taking the same theory from Allan & Burridge (2006). This study identifies four types of slang, namely fresh and creative, flippant, imitative, and clipping, with imitative and fresh and creative being the most frequently found categories. In addition, the reasons behind the use of slang focus on social functions such as showing closeness, expressing anger, starting casual conversations, and insulting others. The results of this study confirm that slang acts as a sign of teenage identity, solidarity within groups, and a reflection of popular culture. This study supports recent studies that similarly investigate how informal language in films can reflect identity and social interaction.

Research conducted by Butar Butar et al. (2024) explored 129 examples of slang usage in the films *Deadpool* and *Wolverine* by applying the theory proposed by Allan & Burridge (2006). The findings of this study reveal that the most commonly used type of slang is flippant, which reflects elements of humor, sarcasm, and informal interactions between characters. This study also emphasizes that slang has a significant contribution to character development, relationships between characters, and the emotional nuances in conversations. The results of this study are important for current research because they show that each film has a unique way of using slang, depending on the social context and characters, providing a valuable comparison to observe how *13 Going on 30* uses slang as an element of representing youth identity and early 2000s culture.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these five categories demonstrate how slang expresses identity, attitudes, emotions, modernity, and a sense of belonging. Holmes (2013) argues that language variation always carries social meaning; therefore, slang acts as an identity marker that differentiates age groups, cultural groups, and social networks. In *13 Going on 30*, slang helps construct character personalities and relationships, particularly because the narrative involves transitions between teenage and adult worlds. Through its slang usage, the film illustrates how characters navigate social identity, express emotional reactions, and communicate cultural belonging in early 2000s American society.

With these theoretical foundations, analyzing the slang expressions in *13 Going on 30* becomes significant for understanding how informal language contributes to narrative authenticity, character portrayal, and cultural representation. By applying Allan and BurrIDGE's (2006) classification alongside core sociolinguistic concepts from Fishman (1972), Holmes (2013), Meyerhoff (2011), and others, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of slang as an essential linguistic and social phenomenon.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on the comprehension of how language communicates meaning within its actual social context. This approach allows readers to explore further how words and phrases show emotion, identity, and culture instead of just using numbers or statistics. Meyerhoff (2011) states that qualitative studies are especially effective at discovering the way people apply language to express their identities and establish connections with others. This study implemented an ideal approach, as slang is naturally filled with social significance, and its interpretation frequently depends on language usage, context, and the relationship between speakers. The main source of data was the movie *13 Going on 30* (2004). The researcher watched the movie repeatedly to record not only the exact words the characters said, but also the manner of speech, facial expressions, and situations that affected how each slang term was used. The researcher carefully wrote down, identified, and analysed every slang word in its context so we were capable of figuring out why and how it was used.

The study applied Allan and BurrIDGE's (2006) framework to classify slang into five primary types. There are Fresh and Creative Slang, Flippant Slang, Imitative Slang, Acronym Slang, and Clipping Slang. The researcher examines each expression from different points of view, including its literal meaning, the meaning it carried in the scene, the person who said it, and the social role it played. The analysis was guided by Holmes's (2013). Holmes (2013), argued that sociolinguistic principles that language constantly identifies attitudes, relationships, and social norms.

## Results

In this study, the analysis process consisted of three stages that were all connected: identification, classification, and interpretation. These stages came from looking at the data to finding out what it meant. In the beginning, the researcher frequently viewed "13 Going on 30," emphasizing dialogue, tone, and context to identify every slang expression spoken by the characters. Every word or phrase was carefully written down, checked against subtitles and scripts, and listed with the name of the person who said it, the scene, and the tone of the moment. This stage was not limited to writing down words; it was also about observing how slang emerged naturally in times of tension, humor, or excitement, revealing the emotional rhythm of communication.

Table 1. Distribution of

| No    | Types               | Frequency |
|-------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1     | Fresh and Creatives | 13        |
| 2     | Flippant            | 15        |
| 3     | Imitatives          | 9         |
| 4     | Acronyms            | 3         |
| 5     | Clipping            | 11        |
| Total | 5                   | 51        |

## Discussion

### Fresh and Creatives

#### 1. Scrum-didlee-umpcious

Dialogue : "You look just scrum-didlee-umpcious!"

According to Allan and Burridge (2006), this term represents the ludic function (play function) of language. Its formation involves blending and nonsense insertion into the standard word "scrumptious." The creativity here aims not for efficiency, but for sound aesthetics. The speaker extends the word with the syllables "didlee-ump" to create a hyperbolic and humorous effect. This demonstrates that slang is often whimsical, transforming a simple compliment into a verbal expression that is pleasurable to hear and colorful.

#### 2. Beave / Beave-head

Dialogue : "Sorry, Beave-head. Majority rules."

This term demonstrates morphological creativity through the processes of clipping and derivation. Allan and Burridge (2006) states that slang often utilizes productive suffixes. From the root word "Beaver," the speaker clips it to "Beave" and attaches the suffix "-head." (like -head in pothead or airhead) to form new nicknames. The creativity here lies in transforming a name into a unique character label. Instead of using a standard insult, the speaker creates a new lexical variant that feels exclusive to their social circle.

#### 3. Sparkle-cams

Dialogue : "It's like they've got Sparkle-cams hidden in all our walls."

This word is categorized as a neologism formed through compounding. Allan and Burridge (2006), combining two unrelated nouns (The magazine name "Sparkle" + the tool "cams") is used to condense complex information into a single new term. The creativity lies in the visual metaphor constructed, the speaker creates a fictional image of a workplace surveillance system. It is a clever and vivid way to describe paranoia and workplace pressure without needing a lengthy explanation.

#### 4. Wang Chung

Dialogue : "Everybody Wang Chung tonight, right?"

This expression play as an example of conversion or functional shift, a common feature in slang creativity. The speaker takes a proper noun (the band name "Wang Chung") and transforms it into a verb. Allan and Burridge(2006) highlight that how slang often leverages pop culture references (intertextuality) to convey meaning. By turning the band

name into an action ("Everybody Wang Chung tonight"), the speaker creatively evokes the mood, memory, and style of that era with a single word, which is far more expressive than standard verbs like "dance" or "party."

### 5. Razzles

Dialogue : "— What color is my tongue? — Razzle red."

This phrase is a form of inventive compounding that is ephemeral (temporary/momentary). Instead of using a standard color spectrum, the speaker creates an ad-hoc color name based on a specific object nearby (the "Razzles" candy). Allan and Burridge (2006) emphasizes that slang creativity often stems from contextual spontaneity. The speaker demonstrates verbal wit by linking the taste and brand of the candy into a visual description, creating a poetic term that is unique and relevant only to that specific moment of conversation.

### Flippant

#### 1. Sweet Bottom

Dialogue : "Hey, sweet bottom."

The use of a body part reference ("bottom") combined with the adjective "sweet" creates a euphemistic dysphemism, an insult or form of address that sounds soft, but its underlying purpose is to flirt disrespectfully or harass without appearing overly aggressive. Allan and Burridge (2006), this term is categorized as flippant because it violates norms of politeness in a manner that is perceived as "playful" yet demeaning. This demonstrates the speaker's attitude of taking the boundaries of another's privacy lightly.

#### 2. Biatch

Dialogue : "I'm a tough biatch."

This word is a classic example of slang that modifies sound for flippant purposes. Allan and Burridge (2006), the phonetic alteration from "Bitch" to "Biatch" serves to reduce the literal impact of the slur, making it sound "cooler" or more casual, yet it retains its dysphemistic (harsh/offensive) function. Its usage displays a nonchalant attitude toward language taboos while simultaneously asserting the speaker's dominant position in feeling free to label others without guilt.

#### 3. Freak

Dialogue : "Freak."

This expression playing as term functions as a dismissive social label. Allan and Burridge (2006), slang is often used to distinguish the "in-group" from the "out-group". Calling someone a "Freak" is a flippant way to reject the presence of someone deemed non-compliant with group norms. This word requires no lengthy explanation; it works instantly to ostracize the target and assert that the speaker holds a "normal" or superior social status.

#### 4. Robot

Dialogue : "Robot."

The use of expression "Robot" is a form of irreverent insult. In a flippant context, this word dehumanizes the subject, implying they lack feelings or personality. Allan and Burrige (2006) highlight that slang is often sharp and brief; the word "Robot" encapsulates a negative judgment of someone's stiff behavior instantly. The flippant nature here is evident in how the speaker "shuts down" another person's character with just a single, cold word of mockery.

5. Loser

Dialogue : "See you, loser."

This word is the most common form of social rejection in flippant slang. "Loser" is used to decisively place someone beneath the speaker's social hierarchy. Allan and Burrige (2006), the use of this word is not merely a factual description, but a verbal act to totally belittle the interlocutor. Its flippant quality lies in the ease and lightness with which the word is thrown out, as if the fate or feelings of the person labeled a "loser" are entirely insignificant to the speaker.

Imitatives

1. Oh / Oh my God

Dialogue: "Oh, my God. What is happening?"

The expression "Oh / Oh my God" functions as imitative slang because it arises from spontaneous vocal reaction rather than meaning-based vocabulary. Allan and Burrige (2006) explain that imitative slang is rooted in emotional exclamation, often mimicking natural sounds produced during shock, panic, or excitement. In the script, "Oh my God" signals immediate emotional response rather than literal invocation, fitting the category of sound-based exclamations that convey urgency and affect rather than propositional meaning.

2. Jeez

Dialogue: "Oh, jeez."

The term "jeez" is a classic imitative slang form, functioning as a softened, vowel-shift version of "Jesus" used as an exclamation of frustration or surprise. According to Allan and Burrige (2006), such imitative slang emerges through phonological modification of taboo or expressive words to create a socially acceptable emotional outburst. "Jeez" exemplifies this process by producing a sound that imitates exasperation while avoiding direct profanity, making it both expressive and informal.

3. Gross

Dialogue: "Oh, gross."

The slang term "gross" acts as an imitative expression because it directly vocalizes a natural reaction of disgust. Allan and Burrige (2006) note that imitative slang often imitates instinctive emotional sounds, and "gross" functions similarly: it represents an audible recoil, signaling revulsion. Its frequent use in youth speech reinforces the social and expressive quality of slang, highlighting subjective feeling more than descriptive accuracy.

4. Ew / Disgust expressions (“Oh, gross”)  
Dialogue: “Oh, gross.”

Even though “ew” does not appear literally, the function is performed by similar imitative phrases such as “Oh, gross,” which vocalize disgust in spontaneous sound patterns. Allan and Burrridge (2006) emphasize that imitative slang relies on non-lexical noise-like utterances, and “Oh, gross” fits this by conveying the same instinctive emotional sound as “ew,” marking it as an expressive, sound-based slang form typical in teenage dialogue.

5. Ugh-type reactions (“Oh, God. Not his thingy.”)  
Dialogue: “Oh, God. Not his thingy.”

While the exact word “ugh” is absent, the phrase serves as an imitative disgust reaction, with “Oh, God” functioning as a vocalized emotional noise. Allan and Burrridge (2006) explain that imitative slang does not require explicit onomatopoeia; it may appear through intonation-driven, reactive exclamations showing disgust or stress. This line demonstrates that same spontaneous vocalization, marking it as an imitative slang usage.

#### Acronym

1. F.O.B.  
Dialogue: “take apart our F.O.B., overhaul the B.O.B...”

The acronym F.O.B. (Front of Book) functions as acronym slang because it condenses a longer technical term into a brief, insider-only expression that is easily recognized within the magazine industry. According to Allan and Burrridge (2006), slang often operates as an ingroup marker, allowing certain communities to communicate more efficiently while simultaneously signaling membership and excluding outsiders who do not know the terminology. In the dialogue, the use of F.O.B. demonstrates exactly this function: the term is informal, efficient, and relies on shared professional knowledge, making it a form of slang that strengthens group identity within editorial staff (Allan & Burrridge, 2006).

2. B.O.B.  
Dialogue: “take apart our F.O.B., overhaul the B.O.B...”

The acronym B.O.B. (Back of Book) is also considered acronym slang because it follows the same linguistic pattern described by Allan and Burrridge (2006), where slang expressions compress longer phrases into short forms understood only by members of a specific group. By using B.O.B., the characters rely on insider terminology shared within magazine professionals, creating a sense of solidarity and efficiency in communication. As Allan and Burrridge (2006) note, this type of slang strengthens social bonding and distinguishes “insiders” from “outsiders,” because only those familiar with magazine structure would understand the meaning of the acronym.

3. OD

Dialogue: "It will OD. It will kill..."

The expression OD, used figuratively to mean "overdose," exemplifies slang through semantic shift, where a term from one domain (medical/drug-related) is transferred metaphorically into another context. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slang frequently relies on creative, exaggerated, or metaphorical language to intensify meaning and add emotional impact. In the dialogue, "It will OD" does not refer to a literal overdose but is used hyperbolically to describe an extreme or overwhelming magazine concept. This shift in meaning aligns with Allan and Burridge's description of slang as playful, vivid, and often dramatized in order to heighten expressiveness.

4. WWEN

Dialogue: "I do the weather for WWEN in Chicago."

The term WWEN is not slang, but rather a proper name or station code, since it does not rely on informality, metaphor, group identity, or semantic play—elements that Allan and Burridge (2006) identify as essential features of slang. While it appears in acronym form, this does not automatically make it slang; instead, it simply labels a television station and carries no informal or socially exclusive meaning. Therefore, based on Allan and Burridge's criteria, WWEN does not qualify as slang, because it lacks the social, stylistic, and figurative qualities that define true slang expressions.

Clipping

1. Dorkus from "dork"

Dialogue: "Move it, dorkus."

The term "dorkus" is a playful clipping and modification of dork, created by adding a humorous ending to form a more exaggerated, light-hearted insult. Allan and Burridge (2006) describe clipping slang as forms that reduce or reshape existing words to produce socially expressive, informal meanings, especially in youth speech. "Dorkus" fits this category because it takes the core insult (dork) but softens it through a comedic suffix, turning the term into a teasing rather than aggressively hostile insult, reflecting the creative and socially marked nature of slang.

2. Freak from "freaky / freakazoid"

Dialogue: "– Freak. – Robot."

The clipped form "freak" is slang because it condenses longer expressions like freaky or freakazoid into a short, emotionally loaded insult. Allan and Burridge (2006) explain that clipping often increases the punchiness and immediacy of slang, giving it a sharper social edge. "Freak" exemplifies this by delivering a quick, impactful insult that signals judgment while maintaining an informal, playful tone typical of adolescent interaction.

3. Robot from “robotic”  
Dialogue: “– Freak. – Robot.”

The term “robot” functions as a clipped slang form derived from robotic, metaphorically labeling someone as stiff, awkward, or expressionless. Allan and Burrige (2006) note that slang frequently condenses descriptive terms into short, vivid labels that rely on metaphorical associations. Here, “robot” works as slang because it creatively reduces a longer adjective into a compact insult, using metaphor to express social attitude in an informal, youthful way.

4. Dud from “dud/dudley”  
Dialogue: “A dud. A flop.”

The slang term “dud” is a clipped form historically linked to dudley, used to refer to something that fails or disappoints. According to Allan and Burrige (2006), clipping produces short, efficient slang forms that carry strong evaluative meaning. “Dud” exemplifies this because the shortened form intensifies the dismissiveness and informal judgment conveyed, functioning as quick, socially expressive slang used to label failure.

5. Flop from “floppy”  
Dialogue: “A dud. A flop.”

The term “flop”, though not always categorized strictly as clipping, originates as a shortened form of floppy, evolving into a slang term meaning failure. Allan and Burrige (2006) argue that slang frequently emerges through reduction processes that create concise, emphatic forms. “Flop” serves this function by offering a compact, highly evaluative word used informally to express negative judgment, fitting the social and expressive nature of slang.

## Conclusion

This research studied forty-three slang expressions from *13 Going on 30* (2004) applying Allan and Burrige's (2006) classification framework. The results demonstrate that the slang in the movie has important sociolinguistic roles, such as showing who you are, how you feel, humor, solidarity, informality, and digital influence. Fresh and relevant slang showed expressive evaluation and youthful excitement, while flippant slang let people disagree in a funny way and set emotional boundaries. Imitative slang was like how people naturally talk, Acronym slang was like how technology changed language, and Clipping slang was like how language is used efficiently. In other words, the movie's slang contributes to the story's realism, the characters' depth, and the way it shows American culture in the early 2000s. This research shows how important slang is for expressing who you are and what you believe through audiovisual media.

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