



Analysis of American slang words in *Whiplash* movie

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Abstract

This paper examines the linguistic and functional characteristics of American slang within the film script of *Whiplash* (2014), written by Damien Chazelle. It categorizes slang based on linguistic features and discusses their roles in portraying character relationship, emotional intensity, and group-based identity in a high-pressure music academy setting. The study finds that slang in *Whiplash* functions not just as informal language, but as a purposeful communicative strategy. It facilitates peer interaction, expresses strong emotion, and strengthen group identity, while also serving as a tool for social division, pressure, and control. These expressions reflect a range of linguistic features – such as ellipsis, rhythm, creativity, vulgarity, and ephemerality – that mirror the demanding environment of competitive jazz. Ultimately, the film demonstrates how slang can function as both a bonding mechanism and a form of domination, highlighting the powerful relationship between language, power, and identity.

Keywords

American slang, linguistic features, identity, vulgarity, verbal aggression

Introduction

The study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a hearer is known as pragmatics. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, examines how meaning is constructed and interpreted in specific contexts, considering not only the literal content of utterances but also the speaker's intention, the listener's interpretation, and the situational factors that shape communication (Yule, 1996). Pragmatics deal with how language functions in real interactions, where expressions can carry emotional, social, and cultural weight beyond their dictionary definitions (Levinson, 1983). Among the many forms of context-dependent language, slang occupies a particularly dynamic space, serving as both creative linguistic expressions and a social signal.

Slang is not merely informal vocabulary; it is a pragmatic tool used to convey identity, negotiate relationship, and manage social positioning. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (Hornby, Cowie, Gimson, & Hornby, 1974), slang refers to "very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by particular groups of people," such as children, criminals, or soldiers. Slang words are often either newly created terms or existing words that have been repurposed with a new meaning or context (Adams, 2012). Its meanings often depend on the immediate social setting, shared knowledge, and the relationship between speakers. In many cases, slang operates as an insider language, strengthening group cohesion while distinguishing members from outsiders. (C. Eble, 1996) Since slang can be ephemeral, subcultural, and context-specific, its interpretation demands an understanding of both linguistic form and social function (Coleman, 2012).

People use slang to express individuality, enrich language, enjoy wordplay, signal group affiliation, or maintain secrecy. Slang is usually used with intention and awareness. It allows speakers to show who they are, add creativity to their language, play with words, connect with a specific group, or keep their messages hidden from outsiders (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990). By using slang specific to their social or professional group, individuals align themselves with that community. As Roberts (Chapman, 1986) suggests, the repeated use of slang reflects an individual's desire to be seen as part of a particular social group. Drawing on Labov (Labov, 1972) and Eckert (Eckert, 2000), slang was analysed in relation to the speaker's identity, age, status, and power. Grounded in Halliday's (Halliday, 1978) functional grammar, each term was reviewed for its expressive, phatic, conative, referential, or metalinguistic function. Slang was verified using sources like Partridge (Eric, 2004) and Spears (Spears, 1991), confirming their broader relevance.

Several recent studies have examined slang in films, often focusing on its types and functions. Munthe, Arifin, and Setyowati analysed the slang in *IT* movie. The findings were the slang used and the function of slang in *IT* movie (Munthe, Arifin, & Setyowati, 2023). Another present study, titled "A Morphological Analysis of Slang Words Used by Characters in *Ralph Breaks the Internet*," focused on examining the morphological processes involved in forming slang words, as well as exploring the meanings of the slang expressions used by the characters in the movie (Tubagus, Suharsih, & Hakim, 2021). This next research explored the types of slang and identify the functions of slang expressions used in the *Deadpool* movie by Manurung et.al. (Manurung, Heriansyah, &

Achmad, 2020). It is a descriptive qualitative approach with a document analysis method was applied. The study used Allan and Burrridge's (Allan & Burrridge, 2006) framework to categorize the slang types and analyse their functions (Allan & Burrridge, 2006). Another research is the types of use slang language style in Charlie's Angels movie by Herman (Situmorang & Herman, 2021) which discussed the types and functions of slang language. These studies demonstrates that film provides a rich site for analysing slang, particularly in terms of classification and functional rules. However, they also share certain limitations; most focus on identifying types of morphological patterns rather than exploring the pragmatic functions of slang within the dramatic and relational dynamics of the narrative. Moreover, much of the existing work analyses comedies or action movies, leaving a gap in the study of dramatic, high-pressure contexts where slang may function differently – such as in *Whiplash*.

Differing from previous study, this research addresses that gap by examining slang expressions in the 2014 American film *Whiplash*, a Sundance Film Festival Winner, a psychologically intense drama set in the competitive world of music conservatory. It follows the journey of Andrew Neiman, a determined jazz drummer, who enrolls in the Shaffer Conservatory and is mentored by the demanding Terence Fletcher. The film's dialogue contains a rich variety of slang expressions – from mocking nicknames like *Mini-Me* to taboo insults such as faggot-lipped and metaphorical phrases like wind-up monkey. These expressions are not random; they are strategically used to humiliate, demonstrate power and dominance, build friendship, or increase tension, depending on the interaction. The analysis focuses on the pragmatic functions of these expressions – how they shape relationships, express emotion, and maintain authority within the story's high-pressure environment.

By applying a pragmatic lens to dramatic, non-comedic movie, this research offers a novel perspective on slang as a communicative tool in contexts where the pressure is high and the emotional impact is intense. Specifically, it asks: *How does slang in Whiplash reflect its pragmatic functions, and what does this reveal about the characters and their social dynamics?* This research extends existing work by showing that slang expressive and social functions are equally significant in dramatic storytelling, where language serves as a tool not only for communication but also for psychological control.

Method

Research Design

In this research, the writer uses qualitative research, with the data taken from the movie script *Whiplash*. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2003), in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human issue. The categorization of slang features used in this study – such as Informality, Creativity, Group Identity, Ephemerality, and others – is primarily adapted from the theoretical frameworks established by Eble (C. C. Eble, 1973) and Coleman (Coleman, 2012), who emphasize the social, stylistic, and cultural dimensions of slang in American English.

Research Data

The data in this study consists of the utterances used by the characters in *Whiplash* movie that includes slang expressions. Andrew Neiman, the main character, is an ambitious student and aspiring jazz drummer. He was pushed to the limit by Terence Fletcher, his abusive instructor at Shaffer Conservatory – a fictional, prestigious music school – in New York City. The interactions between Andrew and Fletcher, as well as his conversations with peers like Carl and Ryan, involves the use of slang in their spoken language. The movie duration is 1 hour 47 minutes. The data – referring to the utterances that contain slang in the *Whiplash* (2014) script – comes from a complete film script that is approximately 88 pages long. In addition, the writer examined the feature and the function of slang found in *Whiplash* movie.

Data Collection Technique

To collect the data for this research, several steps were carried out. First, the writer watched the film to develop a clear understanding of the content. Second, the movie script was downloaded and read carefully and in detail. Third, the writer identified and recorded words or sentences that contain slang expressions. Finally, the collected data were categorized according to the features and functions of slang.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the researcher analysed it following the three stages of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first stage is data reduction, which involves selecting, focusing, simplifying and organising the data found in the movie transcript. The second stage is data display, which refers to presenting the information in a clear and summarized form that supports interpretation and decision-making. The final stage is conclusion drawing, where the writer interprets the finding and formulates conclusion based on the analysis.

Results

The results of this study identified and categorized a variety of slang expressions in the film *Whiplash*, using the framework adapted from Eble (C. Eble, 1996), Coleman (Coleman, 2012), and Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013). Slang in the script was found to reflect seven major linguistic features: Informality, Creativity, Group Identity, Ephemerality, Taboo/Vulgarity, Ellipsis, and Rhythm and Sound Patterns. Each category of slang was examined through context-specific dialogue excerpts from the film, followed by interpretation of their social and pragmatic functions. The findings revealed that slang in *Whiplash* is more than just expressive language – it plays an important role in shaping character relationships, showing identity, and reflecting power relationships within the elite, high-pressure jazz environment.

Informality was the most frequently observed feature. Slang such as “bro” and “dude” appeared in conversations between peers, e.g., Andrew, Carl, and Ryan, and served the

social purpose of keeping friendly interaction and connection. This shows how informal slang helps build friendship and familiarity, especially among young male characters.

Creativity and Playfulness appeared through metaphorical and over-the-top insults, often delivered by Fletcher, such as “wind-up drummer monkey” and “Mini-Me.” These expressions showed strong emotions and mental pressure, helping to shape the characters and add to the tension.

Group Identity was shown through special terms like “double-time swing” and “on the kit.” This reflected insider knowledge specific to the world of jazz music. Such language supported the idea of the school as a private, high-achievement-focused environment.

Ephemerality was seen in slang taken from pop culture, like “Mini-Me” and “Fudd.” These words are tied to a certain time and may not stay popular for long. They help show when the story takes place and what kind of world the characters live in. This shows how slang often changes over time with trends in society.

Taboo and Vulgarity were often used by Fletcher to express anger and control. Words like “fuck,” “faggot-lipped,” and “retard” were used not just to shock but also to show his power and push students to their limits. These harsh words show strong emotions and are meant to make others feel afraid or weak.

Ellipsis and shortening appeared in cut-down names or words like “Ry” for Ryan and “Neeman” as a teasing form of Neiman. These short forms match how people often talk in casual or fast situations. They made the characters’ conversations feel more natural and real.

Rhythm and Sound Patterns were seen in slang with sharp or punchy sounds, like “dipshits” and “squeaker.” These words matched the fast pace and strong energy of the jazz music in the film. The way these words sound adds to the feeling of tension and rhythm in the scenes.

These results show that slang in *Whiplash* works both in terms of language and social meaning – showing character behavior, social roles, and story meaning. It highlights how American slang, even in fictional media, reflects real-life ways of speaking and the impact of culture.

Table 1. Categorization of Slang Features

Feature	Examples	Purpose
Informality	Bro, dude, shit	Casual, peer communication
Creativity	Pig-fuck, Mini-Me, Wind-up monkey	Humor, insult, emotional expression
Group Identity	Kit, chart, double-time swing	Jazz culture insider language
Ephemerality	Mini-Me, Fudd	Tied to cultural/pop references
Taboo/Vulgarity	Fuck, Pig-fuck, faggot-lipped, moron	Shock/intimidation, raw/strong emotion
Ellipsis/Shortening	Ry, Neeman, bro	Faster, informal, real speech
Rhythm/Sound	Dipshit, squeaker	Musicality, punchiness in delivery

Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, highlighting examples of American slang used in the film *Whiplash*, and interpreting their linguistic and social functions within the context of the narrative.

Data 1

RYAN: *You have a good weekend, **bro**?*

ANDREW: *Yeah. Definitely. Really good.*

RYAN: *Don't worry about Greg. He's a dick.*

This dialogue occurs in the Nassau Band Room during a band rehearsal. The conversation is between Ryan and Andrew, both are peers in the band.

The slang word *bro* reflects the feature of Informality, and plays a social role in showing politeness through casual bonding, as described by Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013). According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, *bro* is an informal term meaning "a brother or a close male friend." In this case, the word is used by Ryan when greeting Andrew. The choice of *bro* shows a relaxed and friendly relationship between the two characters. It creates a warm, familiar tone and helps keep a friendly atmosphere, matching the phatic function of slang, and it is used to support social connection and ongoing communication. The use of *bro* also suggests a sense of closeness and shared familiarity, which is common in the way male friends talk to each other.

Data 2

CARL: ***Dude**, I didn't know they let vampires into Lincoln Center.*

ANDREW: *I guess I'm lucky they let morons on stage.*

CARL: *Damn. You practicing your insults, too?*

This exchange takes place in studio Band Room during a band rehearsal where Andrew has just joined as an alternate drummer. The conversation is between Ryan and Andrew, both are peers in the band.

The slang word *dude* shows the feature of informality and functions as a means of expressing casual social interaction, in line with the observations of Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013). According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, (Hornby et al., 1974) *dude* is an informal word used to refer to a man, often in a friendly or humorous way. In the *Whiplash* script, the word is used by Carl in the sentence, "*Dude, I didn't know they let vampires into Lincoln Center,*" directed at Andrew. The use of *dude* here sets a playful and teasing tone, characteristic of peer-to-peer chat. This usage reflects the phatic function of slang, which is intended to build or maintain social relationships rather than express serious information. It also reflects a level of comfort and informality between the characters, typical of casual male interaction. Through this slang, Carl tries to connect with Andrew using humor and sarcasm, highlighting how *dude* serves both relational and expressive purposes in informal conversation.

Data 3

FLETCHER: *Well, if it isn't **Mini-Me**. You know, I've been looking for a new drummer, and I just found the perfect guy... He's short, he's cute, and he can't play a lick.*

FLETCHER: *So, Neiman, you are now the core drummer. Congratulations.*

ANDREW: *Thank you, sir.*

This conversation takes place in studio the rehearsal room where Fletcher replaces the previous core drummer – Carl – with Andrew. Fletcher talked to Carl and mention *Mini-Me*, then replace Carl with Andrew.

The slang expression *Mini-Me* reflects the feature of creativity, as it draws from a popular cultural reference to convey a sharp and sarcastic comparison. Originating from the *Austin Powers* film series, *Mini-Me* refers to a miniature version of the villain – small, subordinate, and powerless. In the *Whiplash* script, Fletcher uses this term to ridicule another band member (Carl), implicitly suggesting that the person is an inferior imitation, both in appearance and ability. This creative use of slang demonstrates how speakers use pop culture references to express complex meanings with minimal words.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang can serve expressive and phatic functions, allowing speakers to communicate emotion while also influencing social relationship. Fletcher's use of *Mini-Me* not only shows humor but also expresses his dominance and confrontational communication style. The term is strategically used to humiliate and belittle, emphasizing the intense and competitive atmosphere within the band. In this context, *Mini-Me* functions as a tool of control, framed through creative language that blends pop culture with personal insult – highlighting the emotional intensity and social hierarchy embedded in Fletcher's teaching methods.

Data 4

FLETCHER: *There are no two words in the English language more harmful than "good job."*

FLETCHER (to Andrew): *You're like a **wind-up monkey**—just keep playing what I tell you.*

ANDREW: *I was just trying to do what you wanted.*

This exchange occurs during the final confrontation between Fletcher and Andrew at the jazz competition performance.

The slang phrase *wind-up monkey* clearly demonstrates the creative feature of slang, as it uses metaphorical language to criticize and undermine the listeners' sense of autonomy. By comparing Andrew to a "wind-up monkey," Fletcher portrays him to a mechanical toy that performs mindlessly on command. This metaphor represents Andrew as obedient but lacking of independent thought or artistic expressions, emphasizing Fletcher's controlling and manipulative teaching style.

This creative use of language corresponds with the expressive function of slang, allowing the speaker to deliver a strong emotional message while also belittling the listener. As Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013) note, slang often carries expressive and social functions that reflect the speaker's attitude and hierarchical relations in communication. Here, Fletcher uses *wind-up monkey* to show his authority and ridicule Andrew's lack of

independence. The phrase also reflects the phatic function, as it influences the relationship between teacher and student – not through connection, but through humiliation and dominance.

In this context, slang becomes a rhetorical tool. *Wind-up monkey* is not a typical insult, but a powerful and culturally meaningful metaphor that intensifies the impact of Fletcher's critics. It shows how slang can be creatively adapted to particular social settings, fulfilling both expressive and manipulative roles in communication.

Data 5

FLETCHER: *If you deliberately sabotage my band, I will fuck you like a pig.*

FLETCHER: *Now, are you a rusher, or are you a dragger, or are you going to be on my fucking time?!*

FLETCHER: *I'll cue you in at measure 101. Prepare to play in **double-time swing**.*

These are Fletcher's utterances when he was mad at Andrew. He used verbal abuse, accusing Andrew of not keeping the right tempo when he is playing the drum.

The term *double-time swing*, while originating in musical terminology, functions here with slang-like characteristics within a specific subcultural setting. It reflects the feature of group identity, as it is used among jazz musicians to indicate a more complex and faster rhythmic style – an indicator of musical mastery and familiarity with jazz culture. In this scene, Fletcher uses *double-time swing* not only as an instruction but as a challenge to Andrew, emphasizing the elite standards and intense expectations of the jazz band.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang can function to strengthen bonds within a particular social group while also marking the boundary between insiders and outsiders. Here, *double-time swing* acts as a linguistic marker that identifies those who are musically competent and accepted within the professional jazz circle. It is a term that might confuse an outsider but carries a clear and intimidating message within this high-pressure setting.

Fletcher's use of the term also asserts his authority and his expectation that Andrew must meet the elite performance standard of the group. As such, *double-time swing* demonstrates how specialized jargon or slang can reflect group identity, strengthening inclusion for those who understand and signalling exclusion for those who do not. It also illustrates the hierarchical nature of the band, where mastering the language of jazz is part of proving one's worth.

Data 6

FLETCHER: *Start practicing harder, Neiman. I can't have another **Fudd** on my hands.*

ANDREW: *Yes, sir.*

FLETCHER: *I want clean, crisp 16th notes. Not... mush.*

This exchange occurs between Fletcher and Andrew at the rehearsal when Fletcher tests Andrew's timing and psychological endurance.

The slang term *Fudd* in this context illustrates the ephemeral nature of slang, where meanings are often temporary, context-dependent, and not widely recognized outside of specific groups. Though the term may recall *Elmer Fudd*, the cartoon character known for clumsy behavior, Fletcher uses it here to label a musician as weak or lacking competent. Its precise meaning may not be formally defined, but within this context, it's clear that *Fudd* is shorthand for someone who fails to meet professional expectations – particularly in precision and performance.

This corresponds with Zhou and Fan's (Zhou & Fan, 2013) observation that slang often emerges spontaneously within subcultures and fulfills brief communicative roles before falling out of use or changing meaning. *Fudd*, as used by Fletcher, may not exist as standardized slang outside this immediate interaction, making it a clear illustration of ephemerality – a word created or adapted for a particular moment or social circle.

In this exchange, Fletcher's use of *Fudd* reflects his habit of using informal, harsh terms to pressure and intimidate his students. The term loses its effect once removed from the context and speaker, but holds significance in the moment. This illustrates how slang can carry strong emotional and social impact, even if its meaning is unstable or short-lived. Its fleeting nature highlights the evolving, creative, and situational character of slang in intense environments like the competitive music school setting portrayed in *Whiplash*.

Data 7

FLETCHER: *That is not your boyfriend's dick. Don't come early. You're not one of the **faggot-lipped people** who can't keep time.*

FLETCHER: *You're on my time. Got it?*

ANDREW: *Yes, sir.*

This offensive exchange occurs during one of the early rehearsals. The moment happens shortly after Andrew begins playing the drum and Fletcher stops the band to address timing issue. Fletcher is testing Andrew's emotional resilience and musical performance. Fletcher's teaching method relies on fear and humiliation to push his students beyond their limit, and this moment mark the beginning of Andrew's exposure to extreme pressure.

The slang insult *faggot-lipped* shows the feature of taboo or vulgarity, using a very offensive and insulting term meant to shock, insult, and control. In this scene, Fletcher uses the phrase to embarrass and intimidate Andrew by attacking his masculinity and skill as a drummer. This use of slang does not aim to build connection between instructor and his student, but to show power and put Andrew down, highlighting how aggressive and abusive Fletcher's teaching style is.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang can include vulgar and taboo expressions that function to increase emotional impact or purposely break social rules. Here, Fletcher's choice of words is intentionally shocking and offensive, showing how slang can reflect strong personal attitudes, including misogyny and homophobia, even when used for non-literal way. The phrase also acts as a verbal weapon to isolate and pressure the student while pretending it is a part of coaching.

This type of language, though uncommon and tied to specific situations, adds to the emotionally harsh atmosphere shown in *Whiplash*. It shows the extreme use of slang – where casual and shocking words are not used to build connection, but to dominate and belittle. The taboo nature of *faggot-lipped* increases its impact and help shape Fletcher's fear-driven control over his students.

Data 8

FLETCHER: *Were you rushing or were you dragging?*

ANDREW: *I don't know—*

FLETCHER: *Start counting!*

ANDREW: *One, two, three, four—*

FLETCHER (slaps him): *Say it! Say it!*

ANDREW: *Rushing! I was rushing!*

FLETCHER: *So you do know the difference! If you deliberately sabotage my band, I will **fuck** you like a pig.*

This intense exchange takes place in Studio Band practice. Fletcher is testing and breaking down Andrew in front of the whole band. Fletcher demands Andrew to identify whether he was 'rushing' or 'dragging' using intimidation and humiliation tactics to push him towards perfection.

The phrase "*I will fuck you like a pig*" shows the taboo/vulgarity feature of slang through its harsh, aggressive, and degrading language. Spoken by Fletcher during an intense outburst, it is not intended to be humorous or light-hearted, instead, it functions as deliberate form of verbal aggression to intimidate, humiliate, and assert control. It demonstrates how slang can be a powerful tool for expressing authority and inflicting psychological pressure.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang can fulfil expressive and social functions, including the breaking of typical speech rules to create emotional impact. Fletcher's use of this vulgar threat goes beyond harsh language and become psychological abuse, using sexualized imagery and animalistic comparison to degrade Andrew. The taboo nature of the phrase intensifies its emotional harm - functioning less as communication and more as a tool of control.

This example illustrates how *Whiplash's* portrays toxic authority, using slang and vulgarity as tools to impose discipline and create fear. Fletcher's language intensifies an environment of intimidation disguised as guidance, demonstrating how taboo slang does not only shape the tone – it strengthens power imbalances and escalates emotional intensity.

Data 9

CARL: *Dude, I didn't know they let vampires into Lincoln Center.*

ANDREW: *I guess I'm lucky they let **morons** on stage.*

CARL: *Damn. You practicing your insults, too?*

This exchange happens during a casual, somewhat tense interaction between Andrew and Carl in the hallway of Shaffer Conservatory. This exchange reflects the shifting dynamic between students as Andrew becomes more competitive and less tolerant of friendly teasing, in line with the films' themes of pressure and transformation.

The word *moron* reflects the use of slang as a tool of verbal insult and superiority, fitting into the taboo/vulgarity category, though in a more widely accepted and softer form. In this interaction, Andrew uses *moron* to strike back to Carl's sarcastic comment. Though not extremely offensive, *moron* is a strong term with a history of negative meaning, often used to criticize someone's intelligence in a blunt and disrespectful way.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang can include terms that challenge or stretch the boundaries of politeness, serving expressive and social functions – especially in intense or high-stress situations. In this conversation, the word *moron* gives Andrew a way to defend himself with humor and sarcasm, yet the insult still stings, reflecting the tension beneath their casual exchange.

The choice of *moron* illustrates how even relatively mild slang can function offensively, helping to shape relationships and roles within a peer group. In this case, Andrew's word choice briefly alters the balance of authority, enabling him to assert himself through clever verbal pushback, showing how language can serve as a defensive tool in informal, high-pressure environment like the music academy.

Data 10

ANDREW: *Ry, I didn't know you were playing with us today.*

RYAN: *Yeah, I just got the call.*

ANDREW: *That's awesome, man. You're gonna crush it.*

This conversation happens when Ryan joins the core jazz band unexpectedly, likely replacing another player for a performance or rehearsal. It takes place in a casual backstage or rehearsal setting where band members interact informally before a high-pressure session led by Fletcher.

The use of *Ry* in place of *Ryan* demonstrates the linguistic feature of ellipsis or shortening, a common aspect of casual speech and personal relationships. Elliptical slang involves cutting off parts of names or words to create a more informal, familiar tone. In this conversation, Andrew uses the shortened form *Ry* when greeting Ryan, which shows friendliness and social closeness.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang often reflects social connections, and forms like this demonstrate the phatic function – making communication smoother and strengthening group closeness. The abbreviation of Ryan's name to *Ry* marks the speaker's level of comfort and quietly shows shared experience or friendship. Such shortened forms are common in spoken language, especially among peers or within close-knit groups.

Furthermore, this form of slang shows how language efficiency and flow in language contribute to casual interactions. In high-pressure or fast-paced environments like the one shown in *Whiplash*, quick, informal address terms such as *Ry* not only save time but also shape the overall social atmosphere of the group. The ellipsis, in this case, reflects the informal bonding between the characters.

Data 11

FLETCHER: *We have a **squeaker**. You're not a **squeaker**, are you Neiman?*

ANDREW: *No, sir.*

FLETCHER: *Then don't squeak. One more and you're out.*

This interaction happens during a strict band rehearsal, where Fletcher is evaluating the musicians' performances with extreme scrutiny. Fletcher is asserting control and pressuring Andrew to avoid mistakes, using intimidation to demand perfection.

In this context, the slang word *squeaker* refers to an unwanted high-pitched sound – likely a mistake made by a musician, such as an off-key note or an uncontrolled shriek. Fletcher uses the term not only to describe the error but also to criticize and embarrass the player. The word *squeak* itself sounds sharp and unpleasant, which reflects the nature of the mistake, making *squeaker* an effective insult in the intense setting of a music rehearsal.

According to Zhou and Fan (Zhou & Fan, 2013), slang often carries expressive meaning. In this case, *squeaker* conveys Fletcher's strong criticism added with emotional weight. Its short, sharp sound matches his strict tone and increases the pressure on the student. The slang also plays a performative role – by labelling the mistake in a mocking way, Fletcher shows his dominance and authority, and pushes the demand for perfection.

Additionally, the term *squeaker* fits into the specialized or group-specific language used within elite music circles, where slang based on sound-related feedback (such as “flat,” “cracked,” or “offbeat”) holds both social and professional importance. In this context, *squeaker* acts as a quick and striking label for failure – its sharp, unpleasant sound reflecting the very error it represents.

Conclusion

The use of slang in *Whiplash* functions as a complex and purposeful linguistic device that transcends everyday conversation. It plays a central role in shaping character relationships, reflecting emotional intensity, and highlighting interpersonal tensions within a high-pressure artistic environment. Each expression, though informal in nature, reveals how language is used to convey identity, establish belonging, and assert dominance.

Across the film, slang expresses multiple linguistic features such as informality, creativity, group identity, ellipsis, rhythm, ephemerality, and vulgarity. These features interact with the characters' social roles and the cultural context of competitive jazz performance, giving slang both expressive and functional value. It becomes a way to bond, to exclude, to motivate, and often, to manipulate or demean. While some slang contributes to peer

connection and shared group culture, others function as aggressive tools to maintain hierarchy and control. The film's most extreme uses of language, particularly those filled with vulgarity, reveal how slang can change from casual expression to psychological confrontation. In these moments, language becomes a means of domination – verbal acts that shows authority through humiliation.

Ultimately, *Whiplash* demonstrates that slang is more than surface-level expression; it is a powerful social instrument. It captures the intense emotions of ambition, fear, and discipline, revealing the tensions and hierarchies within the pressured environments it portrays. Through its layered use of slang, the film highlights the deep relationship between language, power, and identity in such contexts.

Based on this study, future research could explore how slang differs across films genres, such as comparing its use in comedies, dramas, and action films, as well as in different setting or background. Researchers might also examine how slang evolves in movies/films over time, reflecting shifting cultural values and generational language trends. Additionally, analysing the audience's perception of slang in movies could offer insight into how informal language influences viewer understanding and engagement.

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