



## Types of Slang Terms Found in The Movie *Dope*

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the types of slang terms found in the movie *Dope* by classifying them based on their linguistic characteristics and communicative functions. Using Green's (2002) Slang Theory, the research identifies and categorizes slang into five types: innovative, group-identifying, evasive, reactive, and playful slang. A qualitative descriptive method was applied, with data collected through documentation and analyzed by examining how each slang type is formed and used in context. The findings reveal that innovative slang was the most frequently used, illustrating the dynamic and creative nature of youth language. By focusing on linguistic structure and function rather than cultural context, this study provides insights into how slang operates as a form of informal communication within media. The analysis demonstrates that slang in *Dope* serves various linguistic purposes such as expressing identity, humor, secrecy, and emotional response, contributing to a broader understanding of informal language use in modern youth discourse.

**Keywords:** Movie, Slang, Sociolinguistic

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language has evolved over centuries, shaped by contact with other languages, cultural shifts, technological innovations, and the needs of its speakers. According to Crystal (2003), the richness of English stems from its ability to integrate new words and expressions from diverse sources, reflecting the cultural shifts and innovations of its speakers. A key area of change and dynamism within the English language is found in informal speech, particularly in the form of slang. Slang provides insight into how language adapts quickly to reflect contemporary ideas, social norms, and popular expressions.

Slang is a highly creative linguistic phenomenon characterized by wordplay, semantic shifts, borrowings, abbreviations, and other manipulations of standard language. It is used to create in-group identity, express emotions vividly, and often to rebel against conventional norms. Linguists have studied slang to explore how language functions in informal settings and how meaning is constructed within social groups.

One particularly rich source for the study of slang is film, especially those that portray youth and urban subcultures. The movie *Dope* (2015), directed by Rick Famuyiwa, is a coming-of-age drama set in Inglewood, California. The film authentically portrays the speech patterns of African-American youth, including the frequent use of slang that reflects their daily interactions, aspirations, and social dynamics. *Dope* offers an ideal dataset for

linguistic analysis, particularly for examining the types of slang and how they function within dialogue. Rather than interpreting these slang terms through cultural or social frameworks, this study focuses on categorizing them linguistically, revealing the underlying structures and communicative purposes of informal language as used in the film.

Based on the background explained above, this study focuses on one main problem: what types of slang terms are used in the movie *Dope*, and how can they be classified based on their linguistic features and functions? How are those slang terms categorized based on their linguistic features and communicative functions?

The aim of this study is to provide an answer to the problem stated previously. Specifically, it aims to identify and classify the types of slang terms used in the movie *Dope* based on their linguistic characteristics and communicative functions. To classify how those slang terms function linguistically and communicatively.

## 2. THEORY

Slang theory deals with the study of informal, non-standard elements of language that typically emerge within specific social groups. These expressions often serve as tools for identity, bonding, rebellion, or coded communication. Slang is frequently used by younger or marginalized communities as a way to stand out, resist societal expectations, or foster in-group solidarity. Green (2002) offers a well-defined framework for analyzing slang not just as a cultural artifact, but as a linguistic system with recognizable patterns and social functions. His theory is particularly relevant to this research because it classifies slang based on its linguistic formation, use, and social purpose, providing a clear typology for analyzing the slang in *Dope*.

Green's theory distinguishes several types of slang, which this study uses as its analytical categories:

### **Innovative Slang**

Innovative slang refers to newly invented or cleverly repurposed terms used to express original thoughts or experiences. In *Dope*, characters frequently create or change vocabulary to reflect current cultural trends, particularly those influenced by music, technology, and fashion. These idioms not only demonstrate the linguistic ingenuity of teenage culture, but also the quick, organic dissemination of fresh slang within peer groups.

This growth is portrayed in the film as a reflection of the characters' awareness of and interaction with their changing surroundings.

### **Group-Identifying Slang**

Group-identifying slang signals affiliation with a specific community, reinforcing unity and mutual identity. This form of slang is employed in *Dope* to confirm the characters' cultural and social status, and it is frequently based on terms from African American Vernacular English (AAVE). These phrases serve as social indicators, conveying insider knowledge and shared experience while discreetly excluding individuals unfamiliar with the dialect. The use of such lingo promotes belonging and social cohesion.

### **Evasive Slang**

Evasive slang serves to conceal meaning and protect the speaker's intentions, particularly in environments where discretion is necessary. In *Dope*, characters employ this style of lingo to conceal important information, particularly in circumstances involving authority or danger. These expressions create a coded system that outsiders cannot read, allowing for secret communication within the group. This deliberate use of language emphasizes resistance to surveillance and reinforces intragroup borders.

### **Reactive Slang**

Reactive slang is a form of linguistic resistance that challenges established cultural standards and expresses disagreement. In *Dope*, characters use this style of language to express displeasure, assert individuality, and criticize social injustices. It frequently incorporates language that challenges or mocks society standards, serving as a subtle yet effective form of protest. By appropriating and reinventing terminology, the characters use slang to recover power and convey their concerns in a unique and compelling way.

### **Playful Slang**

Playful slang encompasses humorous, exaggerated, or lighthearted expressions used for entertainment and social bonding. In *Dope*, this type of slang brings levity to conversations and fosters camaraderie among characters. It includes humor, jokes, and emotive language, which all add to a dynamic and relatable conversation. Beyond entertainment, humorous slang shows the community's innovation and tenacity, demonstrating how humor can be a coping strategy and source of strength in difficult times.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach. A qualitative method is suitable for exploring the types of slang in natural contexts, focusing on meanings and usage rather than numerical data. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves gaining a deep understanding of human behavior and language through the analysis of textual or spoken communication. This method is especially appropriate for examining how slang in the film *Dope* reflects linguistic creativity, identity, and social context.

The data were collected from the dialogues of the main and supporting characters in the film *Dope*. The movie was watched attentively, and the relevant conversations containing slang were transcribed. These transcriptions were organized in Microsoft Word to facilitate the identification and classification process. Each slang expression was then categorized using Green's (2002) slang theory, which identifies five types of slang: innovative, group-identifying, evasive, reactive, and playful.

This approach enabled the researcher to document the real-world use of slang in its social context. The results were presented descriptively, supported by tables that list the slang terms found in the movie along with their corresponding types and brief explanations.

### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The slang terms identified in *Dope* were categorized into five types as per Green's (2002) classification: innovative slang, group-identifying slang, evasive slang, reactive slang, and playful slang.

#### **Innovative slang**

JIB: "Yo, that party was **trill**, man! We gotta hit up more spots like that."

DIGGY: "For real, that joint was **dope**!" (*Dope*, 2015)

Innovative slang refers to freshly invented words or existing terminology that have been redefined or creatively altered to meet new cultural settings. In *Dope*, expressions such as *trill* and *dope* exemplify this innovation. The term *trill*, a portmanteau of *true* and *real*, emerged in Southern hip-hop culture, especially in Texas, and conveys a sense of authenticity, credibility, and integrity. This term has gained traction as a means of high praise, signifying not just coolness but moral or social legitimacy within subcultural boundaries.

*Dope*, originally used to describe narcotics, has been reappropriated to mean something excellent, impressive, or admirable. This transformation of meaning reflects a linguistic shift wherein terms associated with danger or illegality are co-opted into positive slang, reflecting the subversion of dominant norms. These examples show how youth linguistically innovate to stay culturally current, set themselves apart from mainstream language users, and reclaim agency over terms historically used to criminalize or stereotype them.

Moreover, the use of such innovative slang also mirrors how slang functions as a living language—constantly adapting and evolving to express new ideas, attitudes, and social realities. By embedding such terms in dialogue, *Dope* illustrates how young people use language to craft new realities and assert cultural capital within their environments.

### **Group-identifying slang**

MALCOLM: "Man, our **squad** rollin' deep tonight!" (*Dope*, 2015)

Group-identifying slang serves as a linguistic tool to reinforce group cohesion and establish a shared identity among members of a specific community or social circle. In the data above, the word *squad* is used to denote a tightly knit group of friends who move together and support each other, both physically and socially. Within the context of urban youth culture, *squad* signals loyalty, solidarity, and mutual protection, which are critical values in environments where institutional support may be lacking or untrustworthy.

The use of such terms allows speakers to construct a sense of belonging and to distinguish themselves from those outside their social circles. In *Dope*, the use of *squad* is not merely descriptive—it is performative. It solidifies group membership and can even act as a shield against social isolation or marginalization. It also reflects how urban youth create micro-communities of trust and shared values amidst broader societal alienation.

Linguistically, this type of slang operates on the level of identity politics: who you align with, who you trust, and who you exclude. It fosters an “us versus them” framework that can be protective but also resistant to external authority, reinforcing internal hierarchies and codes of loyalty. This form of slang is often dynamic, with its terminology shifting based on trends, events, or cultural moments, but always retaining its core function as a symbol of communal affiliation.

### **Evasive slang**

DOM: "I got the **plug** for the goods, just say the word." (*Dope*, 2015)

Evasive slang is used strategically to obscure meaning, often to evade detection from figures of authority or outsiders. It serves as a covert linguistic code within specific communities, particularly those engaged in underground economies or activities that are criminalized or stigmatized. In the dialogue from *Dope*, the term **plug** is a euphemism for a supplier—usually of drugs or other illicit items. Its utility lies in its ambiguity: while its meaning is clear to insiders, it may go unnoticed or be misunderstood by outsiders.

This kind of slang illustrates how language becomes a form of resistance and survival. In marginalized communities, especially among racial minorities who experience over-policing, evasive slang acts as a protective mechanism. It enables participants to communicate sensitive or illegal topics without directly incriminating themselves or alerting unwanted attention. Thus, evasive slang not only reflects the socioeconomic realities of certain groups but also their ingenuity in using language as a tool for navigating structural constraints.

Furthermore, evasive slang like *plug* reflects the layered nature of language—how a single term can carry multiple meanings depending on context, tone, and audience. This polysemy enhances its usefulness as a code, allowing youth to maneuver through both informal social spheres and formal institutions while controlling access to meaning.

### **Reactive slang**

MALCOLM: "Man, I ain't no **snitch**. That ain't how I roll." (*Dope*, 2015)

Reactive slang emerges in opposition to dominant societal norms and often carries emotional weight, reflecting defiance, resistance, or criticism of power structures. The term **snitch**, used derogatorily to describe someone who informs on others to authorities, exemplifies this category. In urban slang, a *snitch* is someone who breaks the unwritten rule of silence within a community—particularly regarding interactions with law enforcement. Calling someone a snitch is a serious accusation and a powerful social sanction.

This term is reactive because it directly responds to systemic conditions of surveillance, mistrust, and criminalization experienced by certain communities. It

establishes an internal moral code that often runs counter to official legal systems. In *Dope*, Malcolm's rejection of the label emphasizes his loyalty and resistance to being co-opted by institutions that are often seen as oppressive or unjust.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, reactive slang like *snitch* encapsulates the tensions between formal authority and communal self-regulation. It reflects how language can encode not just attitudes but entire ethical systems. The emotional charge behind such terms reveals the deep-seated historical and cultural struggles that shape how certain groups relate to authority, justice, and each other.

### **Playful slang**

JIB: "Bruh, you straight **clownin'** today!" (*Dope*, 2015)

Playful slang includes terms that are humorous, creative, and often exaggerated for effect. It reflects the linguistic creativity of youth and serves social functions like bonding, teasing, and entertaining. In this instance, the word **clownin'** is used to describe someone who is joking around or acting silly in a fun and exaggerated way. This kind of slang fosters closeness and lightheartedness among friends.

Playful slang contributes to the cultural vibrancy of youth language. It often includes metaphor, exaggeration, and irony, showcasing the speaker's wit and linguistic agility. In *Dope*, playful slang like *clownin'* helps to humanize the characters, showing them not only as survivors of difficult social realities but also as vibrant, humorous, and emotionally rich individuals.

Additionally, playful slang serves as a linguistic release valve—allowing for self-expression and emotional ventilation in environments that can otherwise be stressful or dangerous. It demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of youth who use humor and wordplay as a means of coping and connecting.

From a linguistic perspective, playful slang also plays an important role in shaping contemporary colloquial English, often contributing new idioms and expressions that cross over into mainstream use. It exemplifies how youth culture often drives language change, with seemingly trivial slang expressions eventually becoming common parlance.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the slang terms used in the film *Dope*, as categorized through Green's 2002 framework which includes innovative slang, group-identifying slang, evasive slang, reactive slang, and playful slang, function as more than mere informal expressions. They serve as critical linguistic tools that reflect youth identity, social belonging, resistance to authority, cultural creativity, and emotional expression. Each category of slang identified in the film highlights how language is strategically employed by urban youth, particularly those from marginalized communities, to navigate their sociocultural environments. The study reveals that slang in *Dope* is a powerful form of coded communication that embodies cultural knowledge, internal values, and adaptive strategies for survival and self-assertion within contemporary urban life.

While these findings provide valuable insight into the sociolinguistic significance of slang in youth culture, they should be interpreted with caution due to the limited scope of the study which focuses solely on one film. As such, generalizations to broader linguistic trends should be made carefully. It is recommended that future research examine a wider range of media sources and real-life linguistic data to better understand the evolving nature of slang across different communities and contexts. Further studies could also explore how such slang influences or is influenced by mainstream language, and how its meanings shift in different social and cultural settings.

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