

WORD FORMATION ANALYSIS FOUND IN ENGLISH SLANGS USED BY CARDI B ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the word formation processes found in English slang used in the Instagram captions posted by Cardi B. A qualitative descriptive method was employed to explore the linguistic features of slang expressions in Cardi B's captions. The analysis is grounded in Yule's theory of word formation processes. Data were collected using documentation techniques, involving close observation and careful transcription of texts containing slang elements. The slang words identified were then classified according to their word formation types and analyzed based on the relevant theoretical framework. The findings reveal that eight out of ten types of word formation processes proposed by Yule are present in Cardi B's Instagram captions. These include: (1) Clipping, (2) Derivation, (3) Coinage, (4) Blending, (5) Acronym, (6) Conversion, (7) Compounding, and (8) Borrowing. The most frequently occurring type was clipping, which appeared in 26 instances (52%). This suggests that Cardi B tends to favor concise word forms to create a casual, rapid, and easily understood linguistic style. Such a tendency reflects the informal nature of urban language, typical of social media discourse and popular culture.

Keywords: English Slang, Word formation, Instagram

1. Introduction

Language serves as a means of communication that enables individuals to convey messages, whether through spoken or written forms. As Spolsky (1998) suggests, language functions not only to express meaning but also to maintain social relationships. In line with this, Kaye and Downes (2000) emphasize that language also reflects the identity of its speakers. When using English, people tend to adjust their language style according to the context one of which includes informal speech.

Slang is a variety of informal language commonly used in casual conversations. Analysis et al. (2018) note that slang is typically adopted by teenagers within specific social groups who share common interests. Tinggi and Asing (2017) further explain that slang is prevalent in subcultures such as musicians, drug users, and skateboarders. This form of language often features newly invented words or expressions that did not exist previously. The creation of slang involves particular word formation processes. For instance, the term "woulda," a contraction of "would have," is formed through blending a process in which parts of two words are combined into one. There are ten widely recognized methods of word formation: coinage, clipping, blending, compounding, borrowing, acronyms, backformation, conversion, derivation, and multiple processes.

The widespread use of social media has greatly accelerated the spread of slang. One of the most widely used platforms is Instagram, which, according to Statista (2021), had approximately one billion monthly active users as of June 2018. On Instagram, users frequently add captions to their posts, many of which contain English slang expressions.

A number of studies have investigated the use of slang in various media such as films, song lyrics, and social networks. Zhou and Fan (2013) mention that slang is often employed to express intense emotions or humor. Wulandari (2012) conducted a study using a descriptive approach to identify types of slang in song lyrics. Her findings revealed four dominant word formation processes used in slang: clipping (e.g., uni, exam), acronyms (e.g., U.S.), blending (e.g., wanna, kinda), and backformation. She identified 50 slang expressions, most of which retained their original meanings and were mainly used to maintain rhythm and rhyme in the lyrics.

Similarly, Tinggi and Asing (2017) analyzed slang expressions in Meghan Trainor's songs using a qualitative descriptive method. They found that clipping, blending, and coinage were the most frequently used word formation processes, primarily serving to enhance the lyrical appeal.

In another study, Hafiza and Rosa (2020) examined the use of English slang in the film *Straight Outta Compton* using Yule's (2006) framework. They identified 65 slang terms, with blending (29.24%) being the most dominant, followed by coinage (26.16%), clipping (24.66%), compounding (13.84%), and acronyms and multiple processes (each at 3.07%). The frequent use of vulgar or coarse slang in the film was linked to the characters' backgrounds often portrayed as uneducated or marginalized which suggests that factors such as education, social class, and community play a significant role in language use.

Harared (2018) explored the emergence of slang on the Indonesian humor website 1cak.com using a sociolinguistic approach. The study found six prevalent word formation types: acronyms, blending, borrowing, clipping, derivation, and initials. Most slang expressions on the platform were humorous and specific to the "memer" community individuals who actively engage in meme culture. This supports Allan and Burridge's (2006) argument that slang often arises within specific communities for unique purposes.

Social media has become a dynamic space for public communication, including the use of informal expressions such as slang. Slang frequently appears in captions, comments, and posts by celebrities. One linguistic approach to understanding slang usage is by examining the word formation processes behind these expressions.

A study by Febi Gilang Pratama (2021) analyzed word formation in Justin Bieber's Instagram captions using Yule's (2006) theory. The study concluded that clipping was the most dominant word formation process found.

However, few studies have specifically examined word formation processes in Instagram captions written by female celebrities. Thus, the present study aims to analyze how Cardi B a globally recognized artist employs English slang in her Instagram captions, using Yule's (2006) theoretical framework.

Understanding the influence of celebrities on language use is particularly important for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as social media content can significantly shape how learners apply English in their everyday communication (Tinggi & Asing, 2017). Based on this background, the study seeks to answer the following research question: “What word-formation processes are found in the English slang used by Cardi B in her Instagram captions?”

Slang and Word Formation Processes

Fromkin et al. (2003) argue that while the term “slang” is widely known, it is challenging to define precisely. Yule (2006) outlines several processes involved in the creation of slang expressions:

- a. Coinage – the invention of entirely new terms, often from brand names that gain wider usage.
- b. Clipping – shortening longer words into more concise forms.
- c. Compounding – combining two full words to form a new one.
- d. Blending – merging parts of two different words into a single term.
- e. Borrowing – adopting words from other languages.
- f. Backformation – removing a perceived affix to create a new word.
- g. Conversion – changing the grammatical category of a word without altering its form.
- h. Acronyms – forming words from the initial letters of a phrase.
- i. Derivation – adding affixes (prefixes, suffixes, infixes) to base forms to generate new words.
- j. Multiple Processes – combining two or more of the aforementioned methods to form a single slang term.

2. Methods

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The researcher aimed to identify and explain the various slang terms used by Cardi B, referring to Yule’s (2006) framework on word-formation processes. The data were gathered through an observation technique as suggested by Harared (2018), conducted over the span of one year. Specifically, the data consisted of Instagram captions shared by Cardi B between June 2023 and June 2024. Once the data were collected, the analysis followed three main steps: reducing the data, presenting the findings, and drawing or verifying conclusions, following the analytical model introduced by Aldridge (2002).

3. Finding and Discussion

This section aims to describe the findings related to the various types of word-formation processes behind the slang words Cardi B uses in her Instagram captions, as presented in Table 1.

Based on an analysis of Cardi B's Instagram captions posted during a year (June 2023–June 2024), fifty (50) instances of slang were collected for this study. From these data points, it can

be concluded that the most frequently used word-formation process is Clipping, accounting for 26 words 52 %. That is followed by Derivation, Coinage, and Blending, each with 6 words 12%. Next come Conversion and Acronym, each with 2 words 4 %. Finally, Compounding and Borrowing each appear once 2 %.

Table 1 The Frequency of Word Formation Process on Cardi B's Caption Posted.

No	Types of Word Formation	Frequency	
		Number	Percentage
1	Clipping	26	52%
2	Derivation	6	12%
3	Coinage	6	12%
4	Blending	6	12%
5	Acronym	2	4%
6	Conversion	2	4%
7	Compounding	1	2%
8	Borrowing	1	2%
Total		50	100%

a. Clipping

Clipping is a word-formation process in English slang that shortens a longer word, typically by removing one or more syllables. From the data, several instances of clipping appear in Cardi B's captions. Examples include:

free the bros

Slang: "bros"

Here, "bros" is a slang shortening of "brother." The original word "brother" loses the "-thers" ending, leaving "bro," and then adds an "-s" to mark the plural, resulting in "bros."

b. Derivation

Derivation forms slang by attaching prefixes or suffixes (e.g., un-, mis-, -ish, -ism, etc.) to existing words. For example:

Don't pay attention to the negativity...

Slang: "negativity"

"Negativity" is derived from "negative" by adding the suffix "-ity," which transforms the adjective into a noun meaning "the quality of being negative."

c. Coinage

Coinage refers to inventing a completely new term often derived from a brand name, product, or original creation that then enters general usage. For example:

BONGOS this Friday

Slang: "BONGOS"

In this context, "BONGOS" is the title of a Cardi B song. It functions as a brand-new label or catchphrase within her social-media presence, coined for unique identification.

d. Blending

Blending occurs when two separate words combine to form a new, shorter term. For instance:

Gotta big announcement...

Slang: "Gotta"

"Gotta" blends "got" and "to" into one compact form. This sort of fusion is common in informal, spoken English.

e. Conversion

Conversion creates a slang term by shifting a word from one grammatical category to another without altering its form. For example:

I got cake I'm lit it's my birthday...

Slang: "lit"

Originally, "lit" is the past-tense form of the verb "light." Here, however, it functions as an adjective meaning "exciting" or "awesome."

f. Acronym

According to Yule (2006), acronyms form new slang by using the initial letters of a longer phrase. Cardi B's captions include acronyms such as:

A lil bts...

Slang: "bts"

"bts" stands for "behind the scenes," offering a quick snapshot of what's happening offstage or off-camera.

g. Compounding

Compounding creates a new term by combining two (or more) standalone words into a single conceptual unit. For example:

on the line up...

Slang: "line up"

The phrase "line up" fuses "line" and "up" to mean a roster of performers or an event schedule.

h. Borrowing

Borrowing occurs when a term is taken directly from another language. Cardi B's captions feature borrowed words such as:

Custom couture

Slang: "couture"

"Couture" is borrowed from French, meaning "sewing" or "fashion design." In its original French context, it refers specifically to high-end, handmade fashion.

Based on the findings, five types of word formation processes were identified in the slang used by Cardi B on her Instagram captions: clipping, blending, acronym, coinage, and derivation, referring to Yule's (2006) word formation theory. The most frequently used type is clipping, with 10 occurrences, which accounts for 52.63% of the total 19 slang data collected in this study.

The second most frequent type is derivation, appearing 3 times, followed by blending, acronym, and coinage, each with 2 occurrences. This indicates that Cardi B heavily utilizes clipping, a process where words are shortened for casual, quick communication, examples include *playin*, *lil*, and *btch*. This tendency reflects an informal, urban linguistic style suited to her audience on social media.

In addition, the appearance of derivational forms such as *thankful* and *negativity* shows her use of morphological modifications to express meaning. Acronyms like *WAP* and *bts* suggest influence from digital communication styles that prioritize brevity and impact. Overall, the use of slang in Cardi B's captions demonstrates a distinctive linguistic identity and a communicative strategy that is expressive, assertive, and well-aligned with the language of pop culture.

This study is compared with several previous studies that used different subjects and data sources. Unlike earlier research (e.g., Analysis et al., 2018; Moreau, 2018; Wulandari, 2012; Tinggi & Asing, 2017), which primarily focused on song lyrics, this study uses Cardi B's Instagram captions as its data source. However, there are shared findings, such as the presence of clipping and blending in both contexts.

This research is also compared with a study by Hafiza and Rosa, who examined slang in film scripts. While they found blending to be the most dominant type, this study found clipping to be more frequent.

Another study by Harared (2018) also used data from social media, making it comparable in terms of context. Both studies applied Yule's (2006) theory, yet the data sources differ: this study analyzed Cardi B's Instagram captions, while Harared's data came from *1cak.com*, a meme-based humor site.

Furthermore, this study is compared to the research conducted by Febi Gilang Pratama et al. (2021), which analyzed slang in Justin Bieber's Instagram captions. That study identified 87 slang items, while this study found 50 slang words used by Cardi B. Both studies revealed that clipping was the most dominant type of slang: 54% in Justin Bieber's captions and 52% in Cardi B's. However, differences appear in the ranking of the next most frequent types. Justin Bieber tended to use blending more often, whereas Cardi B relied more on derivation. In addition, Justin Bieber used slang types such as borrowing and multiple processes, which were not found in Cardi B's data. This indicates that although both public figures use the same platform (Instagram), the linguistic style reflected in their captions is strongly shaped by their personal identities, cultural backgrounds, and individual communication styles.

4. Conclusions

This study identified a total of 50 slang words. Among them, clipping was the most dominant process, followed by derivation. This indicates that Cardi B prefers shorter and more efficient word forms in her captions to ensure her messages are easily accessible to her social media audience.

The researcher hopes that this study can serve as a reference for understanding slang word formation and encourage further research using different approaches, objects, or theoretical frameworks to gain a broader and deeper understanding of slang dynamics in the digital age.

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