

Colour and Musicality of Slang

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Abstract

The article delves into the captivating realm of color and musicality within slang, elucidating its rich and expressive qualities as a cultural and linguistic entity. By exploring the interplay of color and musicality in slang, the article illuminates how these elements imbue language with vibrancy, emotional resonance, and a distinct rhythmic cadence. Through this investigation, readers gain insights into the emotive and evocative power of slang, as it offers a spectrum of connotations akin to a vibrant palette of emotional tones, while also carrying a unique rhythmic quality comparable to the flowing melody of music. This examination positions slang as a dynamic and impactful form of communication, enabling a profound connection between language, emotion, and cultural expression within diverse societal and communicative contexts.

Keywords: onomatopoeic colour, emotional associations, spectrum of connotations, melody of a song, musical effect, expressive quality to communication, colourful and cultural expression.

The color and musicality of slang contribute to its expressive and emotive power. In terms of color, slang can evoke vivid imagery and emotional associations through the use of vibrant and evocative language. Just as colors can range from bright and lively to soft and subtle, slang words carry a spectrum of connotations and emotional tones. This allows speakers to convey nuances not easily achieved through standard language. For example, «lit» and «chill» evoke different emotional colors and carry a distinct vibe in comparison to their standard counterparts [2, 372].

Musicality in slang refers to its rhythm, cadence, and phonetic appeal. Some slang words have an inherently rhythmic quality, similar to the flowing melody of a song, which can make them more memorable and engaging in conversation. Additionally, the inflection and emphasis placed on slang words can create a musical effect in speech, adding a dynamic and expressive quality to communication.

The interplay of color and musicality in slang enhances its impact, making it a powerful tool for conveying emotion, tone, and attitude in social interactions. This dynamic nature allows slang to resonate deeply with its users and offers a unique form of self-expression and social connection [13, 98].

Slang words often play with sounds or may display an onomatopoeic colour. Musicality may be obtained by way of reduplicative formations or rhyming phrases.

In the following conversation taken from *Grease*, Marty uses a copy reduplicative to express her disappointment:

Marty: Oh, double **doo doo**.

Betty: Please.

Jan: What was that?

Marty: One of my diamonds just fell in the macaroni!

The musicality of *doo-doo* ('faeces') is further reinforced by the alliterative adjective *double*. Other instances of exact reduplication are in the extracts from COLT reported below:

Samantha: a **boo boo**, got my voice, too big.

Dawn: You're telling me.

Joanne: <whine> <mimicking> pinky **boo boo**. Oh. Oh I mean, Lynn, you always...

Lynn: <unclear> cow's **poo poo** in which the words *boo-boo* ('a foolish mistake or blunder') and *poo-poo* ('faeces') exhibit only an internal echo.

Rhyme is another common source of musicality, as the excerpts below, respectively from *Grease*, *When Harry Met Sally* and *Notting Hill*, illustrate:

William: Oh. Well, great. Fantastic. That's er. Oh. **shittity brickitty**. It's my sister's birthday. Shit. We're meant to be having dinner.

Anna: Okay, that's fine.

The interjection *shittity brickitty*, from *shit a brick* ('expressing surprise or amazement'), make the hearer aware of slang echoic character, which mostly emerges when the speaker modulates (aggravating or mitigating) the force of his speech act [10, 65].

An additional source of musicality is onomatopoeia. Consider the dialogue below, drawn from *There's Something about Mary*:

Detective Stabler: First tell us why you did it.

Ted: Why I did it? Um, I don't know. Boredom? The guy turns out to be a **blabbermouth**. Just would not shut up. I mean with the, just. *Blabbermouth* used here is a colourful expression indicating 'one who blabs; a tell-tale', thus evoking the sound one produces when 'blabbing' via the /b/ consonant reiteration [14, 118].

The consonant cluster /m/ rather denotes someone or something unpleasant, as in examples below:

Josie: Karen! What are you going to be when you gro=

Karen! Oi! You ugly **schmuck**!

Indeed, *schmuck* ('idiot') belongs to a set of slang words of Yiddish origin which normally have bad connotations (e.g. *schmeck* 'heroin', *schmooze* 'a chat or gossip', *schmutz* 'filth, dirt', etc.).

The impertinence and aggressiveness of some slang words have offensiveness as an inevitable consequence. Insolent terms of address, or strong, even cruel slang expressions may be used to insult other people, in impolite conversations, or to show one's disapproval and condemnation of the hearer's behaviour, way of life, etc [11, 20].

People sometimes address their friends using impudent expressions. Below is a series of contextualized examples, some drawn from *The Full Monty*, and the others from COLT:

Dave: I try dieting. I do try. Seems I've spent most of my fuckin' life on a diet. The less I eat, the fatter I get.

Lomper: So stuff yourself and get thin.

Guy: Oh, shut up, **saggy tits**!

Gaz: Dave. Oi, you **deaf twat**!

Dave: Oh, what d'you want now? I've told you, I'm finished with it.

Ian: <unclear> You **lard arse**. He's got <unclear> ...

Grace: <laugh> ...

Ian: He's an **old cunt**.

Grace: <laugh> So <unclear> as you boy.

Terry: <mimicking cry> I d=, oh no. <whistle> See how much money you got. <shouting> You fool! You **dumb arse**!

Mother: <unclear>

Terry: <shouting> I don't care! **Bloody prick** <unclear>! <sigh>

These brief excerpts show that most slang uncouth expressions collocate with vulgar taboo words related to male or female genitals (*arse, arsehole, cunt, prick, tits, twat*).

Other aggressive nasty slang words are rather related to female promiscuity. Below are some instances from COLT:

Shelley: Shut up you old **tart**!

Josie: Ooh ooh! Language please!

Jay: Your Mum's a **slut**.

Craig: Ah! Your Mum's a **slut**.

Anthony: <mimicking> Now to=, for some fucking dirty swear! Woooooh! You fucking bitch! You Irish bastard! Aden and Mandy have it in bed! Wo oh! Bed squeaking! Ah ha, ah ha, ah ha, ah ah! Fucking **slag**! Dirty whore!

Still others are related to the animal kingdom:

Shelley: [<unclear>] ... <screaming> You rotten bastard!

Josie: <shouting> You ... Shelley ... are a sick fat **bitch**!

Leon: I really hate anybody who's being horrible to other people, it makes me feel bad.

Casey: Oh, stuff it **pig head**.

Notice, finally, how the slang word *dog* varies across different regional varieties and turns out to be offensive in British slang:

Samantha: You're dirty **dog**.

Romax: You're dirty **dog**. [Get lost.]

Conclusion. Our investigation highlights the profound emotional and expressive impact of slang as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon. Through this exploration, we have unveiled the vivid color and musical rhythm inherent in slang, showcasing its unique capacity to evoke imagery and emotion within communication. The color of slang words offers a spectrum of connotations, akin to a rich palette of emotional tones, while the musicality of slang imbues it with a rhythmic quality, akin to the flowing melody of a song. Collectively, these elements empower slang to resonate deeply with its users, fostering a distinctive form of self-expression and social connection. The exploration of color and musicality in slang has unveiled its vibrant, emotive, and engaging nature, positioning it as a powerful tool for conveying attitude, emotion, and cultural expression within the fabric of social interactions and language use.

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