

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

It's common knowledge that language is the most crucial communication tool for information sharing. Language is extremely important in human social life, not just for communication, but also for aspects of culture and society evolution. Language facilitates social interactions, allowing people to make connections, form relationships, and work with others. It serves as the basis for both spoken and nonverbal communication. Language is a crucial factor in shaping both individual and collective identities in terms of culture and society. The language used by a person is a reflection of their cultural background, and variations in language are influenced by the social context, which can divide people into different groups based on societal norms, cultural values, and behaviour.

According to Wardhaugh (2014), languages are classified by their level of formality, ranging from frozen, formal, and consultative to intimate and casual forms. Language diversity, which refers to the type of language used by speakers, is distinguished by this formality scale, from the most formal and official frozen language variant to the most relaxed casual style. Casual language, defined as used in informal contexts, includes slang, which Wardhaugh describes as a unique and secretive social variety. Despite its exclusion from official English dictionaries, slang is widely used in informal conversations, originally associated with youth but now used by adults and the elderly alike.

According to Coleman (2004: 2), slang words often pertain to a specific age group or adhere to a particular trend, defining group identity through short-lived expressions. These words emerge from a societal need for novel, creative, humorous terms, enabling individuals to express themselves uniquely, provocatively, and amicably. Furthermore, slang words are pervasive and can manifest as new meanings for existing words, entirely new words, or

abbreviations. Another source defines slang as an informal, nonstandard vocabulary composed of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant or facetious figures of speech. This vocabulary reflects the attitudes and identities of social groups and often becomes a marker of group identity through the use of short-lived expressions (Clausius Press, 2023). Mattiello (2008) highlights that slang words follow a distinct word-formation system known as morphology. This system involves various methods, such as affixation, conversion, compounding, clipping, reduplication, abbreviation, and variation, to create new words with unique meanings.

According to Partridge (2015), slang primarily prioritizes practicality over strict adherence to scientific laws, grammar rules, or philosophical ideas. It functions as a coded language exclusive to certain groups, intentionally designed to be somewhat enigmatic to outsiders. The main goal of slang is to enhance the user's sense of friendship and excitement. Niceforo (as cited in Partridge, 2015) proposed that slang serves various purposes. It entertains spirited youth, allowing them to distinguish themselves, avoid clichés, and introduce fresh elements into their speech. Furthermore, slang abbreviates words, adds sophistication to language, navigates challenging situations with humour, enriches linguistic diversity, and signals group affiliation, whether within a specific school, profession, or social class.

With the advancement of technology, slang word has become prevalent across various media platforms, including social media channels like chat messages, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, as well as in literary works such as novels, songs, and films. This research aims to scrutinize and analyze the use of slang words in the Netflix Series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*.

Never Have I Ever is a coming-of-age comedy-drama television series created by Mindy Kaling and Lang Fisher. It premiered on Netflix in April 2020 and quickly gained popularity for its witty humour, diverse representation, and relatable storytelling. The show

centers on the life of teenage Indian-American Devi Vishwakumar, who resides in Southern California. Devi, played by rookie Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, is adjusting to her father's recent passing while juggling the demands of high school. With the support of her friends and family, Devi sets out on a voyage of self-discovery to elevate her social standing and find a partner. Ramakrishnan delivers standout performances as Devi, Poorna Jagannathan as Devi's mother Nalini, and Richa Moorjani as Devi's cousin Kamala. The series also has a varied ensemble cast, including Darren Barnet, Jaren Lewison, Lee Rodriguez, and Ramona Young.

One of the most notable aspects of *Never Have I Ever* is its realistic portrayal of the immigrant experience and the complications of combining cultural identification with the desire for acceptance. The show delves into topics of sorrow, friendship, romance, and identity in memorably and amusingly. *Never Have I Ever* was praised by both critics and audiences for its incisive writing, compelling characters, and sensitive depiction of adolescence. It has been praised for its portrayal of South Asian culture in mainstream media as well as its ability to connect with people from various backgrounds. The first season consists of ten episodes, each lasting roughly 25-30 minutes. Netflix renewed the series for a second season in July 2020, which will begin airing in July 2021, continuing to follow Devi's journey and her connections with friends, family, and love interests.

Never Have I Ever has been praised for its contemporary and nuanced portrayal of characters, particularly in terms of addressing identity, friendship, and love. In terms of its resonance with Generation Z, the movie is considered quite relevant and reflective of the experiences and concerns of this generation. *Never Have I Ever* incorporates various informal and colloquial expressions. While not heavily laden with traditional slang, the dialogue in the series reflects the modern speech patterns of its characters.

Here are a few examples:

1. Devi Vishwakumar:

- "Lit": Devi might use this term to describe something exciting or fun.
- "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out): Devi could express feeling FOMO if she's worried about missing a social event or activity.
- "Thirsty": Devi might use this to describe someone who is overly eager for attention or validation.

2. Fabiola Torres:

- "Squad": Fabiola could refer to her group of friends as her squad.
- "Dope": Fabiola might use this term to describe something she thinks is excellent or impressive.

3. Kamala:

- "Flex": Kamala might use this term if she wants to boast about an achievement or something she's proud of.

The usage of slang in *Never Have I Ever Season 1*, serves various purposes, including adding to the authenticity of the characters and the general mood of the series. The way each character uses slang reflects their personality, background, and social circle. Slang is frequently employed in comical or light-hearted circumstances throughout the series, which contributes to the show's comedy tone. Witty banter and light-hearted exchanges between characters regularly make use of slang, which adds to the dialogue's humorous timing and entertainment value.

The incorporation of slang terms within the narrative of the Netflix Series *Never Have I Ever* may puzzle those outside the younger demographic, who might perceive these expressions as a mishmash of unfamiliar vocabulary lacking discernible meaning. This curious linguistic phenomenon serves as a catalyst for the writer's interest in conducting a more thorough

examination, blending scholarly rigor with accessible inquiry. Such an exploration entails tracing the evolution of slang, identifying the social and linguistic dynamics driving its ongoing evolution, and exploring the creative processes that contribute to the development of fresh terminology. The main purpose of this work is to uncover the underlying significance and contextual value of slang in the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*.

1.2 Research Question

Based on background above, the writer formulated research question as follow:

1. What are the word formation processes of the slang words that are used by the characters on Netflix Series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*?
2. What are the social functions of slang words used by characters in the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*?

1.3 Purpose of The Research

Based on the research questions above, there are two purposes of this research:

1. To describe the word formation process of slang words used in the Netflix Series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*.
2. To identify and to analyze the social functions of slang words used by the characters in the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever Season 1*.

1.4 Limitation of The Research

Analyzing the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever Season 1* involves exploring various literary aspects such as themes, characters, narrative structure, and cinematic techniques like plot and setting. Language and communication are fundamental aspects of linguistic analysis, exploring how characters utilize language, including slang, to express their identities and cultivate relationships. The research also examines how the series addresses socioeconomic and cultural issues, particularly emphasizing cultural diversity and representation. Additionally, it identifies

and analyzes symbolic motifs and metaphors within the film, discussing their significance and the impact of visual and narrative symbols on the story's overall meaning.

This study specifically focuses on slang within the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever* Season 1. It delves into how slang is used by characters, emphasizing its forms, types, and meanings throughout the series. The series and its subtitles serve as the primary objects of analysis and data collection. This research specifically concentrates on slang words used in dialogue by main characters such as Devi, Paxton, Ben, Fabiola, Eleanor, Kamala, and Nalini.

1.5 Significance of The Research

The writer approaches this study with measured optimism, aiming to make significant yet incremental contributions to the expansive field of language research. Situated within linguistics, encompassing sociolinguistics and morphology, this study promises nuanced insights into the intricate interplay of language, society, and culture. Central to this research is the exploration of slang language dynamics as portrayed in the Netflix series *Never Have I Ever*. By unravelling the layers of colloquial expressions woven into the series' narrative fabric, the study seeks to uncover the underlying sociocultural forces and linguistic mechanisms shaping slang's evolution and dissemination. Through this lens, the writer aims not only to elucidate contemporary linguistic phenomena but also to deepen readers' understanding of language variation and change in modern society.

Furthermore, the writer envisions personal and intellectual growth through rigorous scholarly engagement. Delving into theoretical frameworks and empirical data promises to enhance understanding of linguistic theory and methodology, fostering academic development and maturity. Beyond its scholarly implications, the research is expected to offer practical insights into slang language usage in popular media, contributing to broader discussions on language and communication in contemporary society.

The comprehensive analysis aims to establish a foundational reference for future research endeavors exploring slang's role in shaping linguistic discourse in the digital age. In essence, the writer's anticipation reflects an appreciation for scholarly inquiry's potential to enrich academic discourse and societal understanding. Through a meticulous examination of slang language in *Never Have I Ever*, the study aims to illuminate the complexities of language variation and change, while also fostering personal growth and paving the way for future research in this evolving field.

