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**Analyzing Positive and Negative Effects of Slang in Family Guy**



**Huma John**

MPhil applied Linguistics, Teacher of English,  
International Kindergarten of Lahore  
Email: humajilani.k1750@gmail.com

**Dr Tamsila Naeem**

Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics and Communications,  
School of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology,  
Lahore  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4894-6529>  
Email: tamsila.naeem@umt.edu.pk

**Abstract**

This qualitative research aims to explore positive and negative effects of the slang used in the series “Family Guy”. The focus of the study is to identify and categorize the slang into different types based on the function they perform in an utterance, and the effect they have on the listeners. The study also examines the origin of the slang and the connotation associated with it. The review of the literature delves into the other relevant researches in the area of slang, considering the input of contemporary use and effects of it. It offers an insight into the etymology and various word formations that evolved during years. For analysis, the data are triangulated through a theoretical framework of a theory of effects of slang by Swanson and Golden (2010). The qualitative approach is adopted as research design. The data are analyzed through the postulates of the applied framework. On the basis of the findings, it was concluded that the slang used in Family Guy show is mainly negative and associated with vulgar connotations.

**Keywords:** Slang, Swanson’s Theory, Negative Effects, Positive Effects, Family Guy

**Introduction**

This qualitative research aims to look at the positive and negative effects of slang terms of the animated cartoon characters in American animated sitcom, “Family Guy” through a hypothetical basis of a model of effects of slang presented by Swanson and Golden in 2015. According to Dalzell & Victor (2015), slang was first appeared in the sixteenth century. Slang frequently deviates from accepted standards of language and pronunciation. It was only used in specific groups such as thieves, criminals and beggars, etc. They all used the slang as a secret language, or sometimes it was used as a joke, henceforth it was not used as a sophisticated language but in an impolite manner. Slang had been developing and changing throughout the centuries. It started in the sixteenth century but gradually it spread out and becomes a part of everyone’s life. It was specifically spoken by criminals, thieves and beggars, but it rapidly grows, because of the shows, plays or dramas and then, after sometimes it was become popular among common people. It was not only about verbal communication anymore, it the words and phrases used in the written form as well. Furthermore, in the seventeenth century, slang was considered as a figurative language and it was related with the immoral actions. However, in the eighteenth century, slang was used mostly in the comedy plays or dramas. In that era, humor was something which the 21<sup>st</sup> century would not be able to understand. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, slang was spreading so fast, and everyone was trying to use it in everyone’s conversation (Coleman, 2012). In the twentieth century, slang was not a part of criminal group anymore; it became a part of ordinary people.

In the modern era, media not only fascinates the younger generation rather it has a significant effect on children’s physical, mental and emotional development (Buckingham & Willett, 2013). Our children learn new things on social media, which is a source of information and entertainment. Even watching cartoons can help them develop their vocabulary, communication skills and interpersonal skills. Nonetheless, it has been observed that kids utilize slang in their normal discourse. Whether the

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information is favorable or unfavorable, but it is easily accessible. If a kid is having a teenager brother or sister, they frequently communicate with them by using slang. It is the technology and the media as well as gadgets for instance smart phones or iPads that all the kids use it around the clock (Swamy, 2020). The children from the age group of 2 to 12 use these gadgets, and also there is no denying that both video games and cartoons continue to attract kids today as well. All of the individuals had been watching cartoons since they were young, but there was additional entertainment, less violence, and more educational content. But still there are kids who are learning slang language through the medium of cartoons or social media. There is no filter or censor for the unrefined language for the kids.

According to Merriam Webster (1997), "A condensed version of written words or phrases is used in place of the full version". Slang terms are often used in abbreviated forms to conserve space and time. To avoid using lengthy words and phrases rapidly, they prefer using slang words in abbreviated form. The use of informal or formal communication is something that cannot be differentiated in daily life. Slang is however; an informal language in form of the phrases and words, which are used in a different style and identify the community or a group, the users belong to. According to Maudy, et al. (2023), slang is indeed not a standard language used within informal settings. Slang terms have swiftly taken over children's minds and have dominated the young people's language today. Some of the slang words or phrases changed frequently, while others are updated less frequently. Slang terms, phrases and words slowly and mostly spread through word of mouth before the advent of the mass media (Toan, 2022).

According to Allan and Burridge (2006), addressing others abruptly, embarrassing others, starting a casual discussion, fostering intimacy, conveying an impression, abusing individuals, and expressing intimacy, are some common features of slang. Additionally, by Kulkarni & Wang (2018), slang classified into five categories: original and creative, flippant, imitational, acronymic, and clipping. However, speaking slang in a group, some of the people use slang purposefully and carelessly. Moreover, it is specially used by the people born after 1996 are referred to as Generation Z or Gen Z. According to Parker & Igielnik (2020), this generation was born into the digital age. They were born in a time when technology was rapidly developing and the economy was stable. Due to the ease with which Generation Z can now communicate via social media, because slang has gradually developed. Furthermore, the words they use to communicate are phrases, acronyms or words for instance, Boujee, Basic, no cap, cancel culture, Bussin, Cheugy, salty, deadass, Clap back, sus, caught is 4k, you're a simp, Take several seats, caught these hands, lies rent free in my head, G.O.A.T, HMU, IMO, LTNS, PFP, CEO. (Rezeki et al., 2019).

Crystal (2001), stated that the manner language is being used digitally typically differs from the way it is used in everyday language as well as in academic settings. This "online" language breaks the lines that often separate between spoken written language, since it is based on qualities found in both written and spoken language (Lundell, et al., 2014). Although there are restrictions when interacting in different professions, such as offices, schools, universities, and the medical field, languages play a crucial part in communication. People use informal and formal language in accordance with the context in which they are speaking. Additionally, when people are around their friends, they converse with one another informally. Language is evolving daily, getting more sophisticated while, on the other hand, casual language is

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becoming ever simpler as a result of social media's influence on how people communicate. It has also evolved into a symbol of status for the youth of today, particularly for kids who now use slang both verbally and in writing. Previously, slang was only used among a small number of people, but thanks to the internet, these words, phrases, and acronyms are now more widely used as people try to establish their social standing with in group or even on social media.

## **Literature Review**

(Hussain, et al., 2025) worked on children who, watch cartoons tend to affect their language as well as linguistic and cognitive development. The focus was on the new generation and their connection with social media. The author first explained about the linguistic analysis which meant that language linked with semantic, morphologic and syntactical structure. Then, they talked about the technology which is dominating from the last two decades and it was never going to be stopped. The gadgets which are used by this generation are iPads, smart phones empowered by internet which is always available for the children and they can use it whenever they want to, there are no restrictions for the kids of this new generation from the age group of 2 to 12 they all have easy and unlimited access to all kinds of media. Although, technology is helpful for the children in sense betterment, understanding and for learning new things from the cartoons and have some entertainment.

Moreover, everyone grew while watching the cartoons in their time and era, but at that time the cartoons had more moral and ethnic themes as compared to the contemporary content, nowadays cartoons propagate intensive violence and have bad influence on kid's cognitive moral and social development and also impact their language learning. There is no sense of compassion and empathy left in children. Obviously, whatever they watch in the cartoons serve as a prototypical model for shaping their behavior and they are going to mimic it with a confidence. There are both positive and negative effects on a child's moral compass and how one adopts certain habits. There can be some measures which can be taken against the violence and adultery shown in the cartoons (Kasler, 2014). The parents should keep an eye on their children and make sure that the content they are watching is age appropriate and also monitor the screen time. Parents can offer relevant help to the kids to grow into intellectual, moderate and cooperative self being instead of putting themselves on the negative side and learn unethical things from it. The problem which was stated in this article was to determine that whether the cartoons are playing the negative or positive role in the children life.

The main focus of this research was to observe the kids of Government and Private school. However, there are so many cartoons which can teach the kids a lesson, naturally kids get attracted to the negative things quickly, but it is the parents' duty to control their kids, nowadays kids have their own gadgets and parents have provided them these things and they are allowed to use it, but parents should check and keep an eye on the kids, and guide them that what is right thing to watch were they can learn good manners, good deeds and of course the life lesson. There are superhero cartoons for kids as well as princess cartoons, where they can admire the characters (Dinella, et al., 2017). The superhero characters always shown as the kind hearted character, and saves the world the negative character is there and it is misguiding then the children will get confused and try to be like that.

Zhou and Fan (2013), stated that American slang is spreading more rapidly in the

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world, because of the movies, songs, TV, magazines and the newspaper. Although, there are certain people who strangely dislike slang language and thinks it is a least acceptable language for the society. However, there are majority of the people who are using slang. The American slang has so many ways and spreading differently in different groups, one of them is in the subculture group. As they are developing so the slang is also developing with it along with the context. The terms of slangs are being adopted in the subculture group by their common people and it has become the part of their vocabulary and commutation. On the other hand, the young generation is more found of slang language, and they make their own slang words or phrases. They use the language to show the society that they are different and their way of thinking is also very different. The American slang has become the product because people are creating and producing new slang words in the society (Roth-Gordon, 2020). It is a part of linguistics variety which cannot be parted from its social surroundings and background. The exact thing which can differentiated in standard vocabulary from slang, because some of the old words are being used but with the new meaning, there are certain features of American slang which are described, that is humor but in that the humor is also categorized into phonetic humor, rhyme and lexicon. They all work differently and used in different situations.

Slang can affect in different manner, because it is not used properly and can ruin the relationship or the friendships (Adams, 2012). There should be a certain atmosphere to communicate in slang language. It is not only that slang ruins the friendship but it also makes the friendship strong, there should be always a specific place where the person can communicate with each other comfortably. For this there is another function applies that is phatic. It has a positive impact on the people. There is a form of language in it which includes the farewells, clothing, greeting or comments on the weather. Although there is a politeness in it, it also includes the slangy greetings and expressions for instance, “Whazzup?” And farewell expression can be “Catch you later.” It feels that the friendship has a strong bond between each other. It only depends that there should be a proper use of slang according to the place. The researcher wanted to know that why do students use slang so much as compared to the Standard Language. They wanted to develop a more casual and efficient speech variety which is only understandable between their own age group. Moreover, there are majority of kids who uses slang words when they are angry, that is how they express their anger towards a specific situation and some of the kids have their own group specific words that they only speak with particular people and the person outside of the group will get confused and will be unable to identify the words and their meaning until or unless they become a part of that group. The kids nowadays want to have laugh and make fun of things, they can also change the formal word into slang for the purpose of efficiency and pleasure (Coleman, 2012).

### **The Effect of using Slang Swanson and Golden (2010)**

Positive: The slang words can be largely divided into two major effects that they have on the addressee. It will either produce a positive effect or a negative one. Slangs are often used to describe a certain kind of hyped emotion, for instance by saying that “She was bloody excited” the term bloody refers to the level of excitement one might have for a certain thing. “He was dying to meet you”, the slang dying here refers to the level of urge on have to meet someone, (Swanson and Golden, 2010)

Negative: The angry user will always speak the slangs that describe the emotional

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state of the person and entail a negative effect. For instance, the words uttered in anger e.g. damn, and shit entails the effect of something upsetting and wrong. Others are racist slangs such as “nigger” refers to the black people in a derogatory way. Gypsies are often called “gyp”. a female usually surrounded by male collages are labeled as “slut” or “tramp”. Sex workers are often referred to as “Ho or Hookers”. Therefore, all such labels produce a sense of disgust and negativity within social strata. (Swanson and Golden, 2010)

## Research Method

Family Guy is selected for the slang analysis of this qualitative research through a theoretical framework of a theory of effects of slang by Swanson and Golden (2010). It is an American animated sitcom which was conceived by Seth Macfarlane. It is broadcasted on Fox network. The family guy has 21 seasons. The show is based on the adventures of Griffin Family. They live in a fictional city of Quahog. Peter and Lois are the parents of three children Meg, Chris and Stewie. They also have a talking dog named Brian. The plot differs in each episode; the family often gets in troubles but end up helping each other. There are several issues addressed throughout the series such as bullying, fat shaming, racism rape and other stereotypes. Highly relevant content is selected through purposive sampling approach.

## Data Analysis

The selected contents are analyzed through the postulates of the applied framework about slang language by Swanson and Golden (2010).

## Positive Effects

Positive conversation comprises of attributions. For instance, the exchange of words of praises and confirmation between speakers and generates positivity. It defies the conflicts and tries to achieve conversational harmony. The (Table 4.1) will explore the highlighted slang category.

Table 4.1

1	Stewie: Mother, this hot dog has been on my plate for a full minute...and it hasn't yet cut itself. <b>Lois: Honey, I'll be right there.</b>
2	Guy: I dropped my watch. Would you be a <b>sport</b> and fetch it for me
3	Peter: any bars on that street? Lois: 24 happy hours a day. Peter: <b>Oh, boy.</b>
4	Can I see that pamphlet, sir? “My God, this house is <b>freakin' sweet</b> I make brunch, Clive cooks lunch each and every day Chocolate cake a la Blake hundred bucks, Blake is gay. We'll do the best we can with Meg.
5	Lighten up, <b>toots</b> , It's a party
6	A: We leave you with a look back at some of those we've lost this millennium B: Kevin asked me to Quagmire's millennium party. I am so <b>psyched</b>
7	Some other time, <b>pal.</b>
8	Peter: Things have worked out fine so far.

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	Lois: Peter, no offense, but that's because we all <b>pitched in</b> .
9	How dare you! Hey, Stewie I see your <b>bum</b>
10	Peter: sweet dreams, <b>kiddo</b> .
11	It's <b>cool</b> dad
12	Hey there, little <b>fella</b>
13	Easy, <b>fella</b> , that's my kid.
14	I don't swing that way, <b>pal</b> .

## Negative Effects

This kind of slang expresses the emotional state of the speaker, through abusive and swear words. Usually, these words and phrases are used to express and initiate conflict. Sometimes new words are invented for name calling, fat shaming and slut shaming. The (Table 4.2) represents the highlighted slang category.

**Table 4.2**

1	Peter: a week! No. Please, God, Kill me now, <b>damn, crap, damn it to hell, son of a....</b> Lois: Peter..
2	Peter: Do you swear to tell the whole truth... and nothing but the truth, so help you God? Lois: I do. You <b>bastard</b> .
3	These <b>bluebeards</b> still treat me like a <b>scum</b> 'cause I'm <b>not loaded</b> .
4	Lois: Oh, my God! She's dead! Peter: <b>Whoa!</b> Be careful what you wish for, <b>Huh</b> , Lois?
5	We only live to <b>kiss your ass</b>
6	Stewie: Prepare to <b>suck that golden teat</b> . Now that you're stinking rich we'll <b>gladly be your bitch</b> . My God, this house is freakin' sweet.
7	Lois: Peter, that rat gets bigger every time you tell this story Peter: I got a million of them. Like the time my buddy's sister's boss was drinking with a <b>hooker</b> in a Vegas bar. Bam! Woke up without his kidney.
8	Friend: face it, Peter. You have a <b>knack</b> for saying the wrong thing. Peter: <b>This sucks</b>
9	Peter: Cut my milk! Waiter: I can't Sir. It's liquid. Peter: <b>Imbecile!</b> Freeze it, then Cut it!
10	Lois: Meg, You're gona love Newport High. It has a beautiful campus. Filled with beautiful people and I'm gona <b>bag me</b> a rich one.
11	Cherrywood was America's first presidential <b>whore</b> house.
12	So you see, <b>chubby</b> franklin live across the street
13	Lois: That's right; because all that's important Is that I love you. Peter: No, because your ancestors were nothing but a bunch of <b>pimps and whores</b>
14	Peter: He's not coming back, Lois. He just walked out on us. Lois: <b>Oh, boy</b> , did we have some good times.
15	Lois: Maybe Stewie could get on that show.

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	Stewie: You must be <b>shrooming</b> .
16	Stewie: Dad's feet smell Peter: <b>Jackasses</b>
17	Last night I had sex with a <b>black chick</b>
18	I know, but your boyfriend looks like one of your typical <b>angry black guys</b>
19	Can someone <b>fluff</b> Paul? He's got a windsock thing goin' on.
20	It's like <b>bang</b> the drum slowly, except the drum's a chick.
21	Sorry, I thought the name of the show was Kids Say the <b>Darndest Things</b> , not <b>Old Black Comedians Never Shut the Hell Up</b> .
22	Enough of your <b>blether</b> . Good evening, world. From this moment on, I will be yours...
23	Good news. What? More people I love think I'm a <b>jerk</b> ?
24	Peter: Lois The Drunken Clam's being taken over by lousy limy <b>tea-suckin'</b> British <b>bastards</b>
25	At her party I shall pass that <b>guttersnipe</b> of as a lady. What are the stacks of this wager?
26	A= Hey, Margaret Tha... what the hell..? I thought you English guys never move. B: No, that's just our women. A: <b>Bloody hell!</b> My lunch was in that hat! Egg and chips with jam <b>butties</b>
27	Ha! Take that, you lousy <b>brits!</b>
28	We are not missing a once-in-a-lifetime event because of some <b>wacko</b> doomsday theory.
29	Lois: Thank goodness Peter bought a huge supply of dehydrated meals before the blast. Peter, <b>whaddaya doin'?</b> you just ate a year's worth of food.
30	A=: What the devil are you talking about? B: I'm repugnant. I'm a <b>radio-bloody-active freak</b> .
31	A= <b>Oh, nuts</b> , young lady. What's the little <b>guy's</b> name?
32	A: Being a single mother is hard B: The real challenge I shaving a baby that's addicted to <b>crack</b> .
33	A bunch of <b>card-carrying-Commies</b> if you ask me!
34	Write this down you <b>toad-faced</b> frump
35	Because he's got a lump on his <b>booby</b> . Chris, that's a terrible word, " <b>booby</b> ".
36	I know you can do it if you put your mind to it. You're right. Man was meant to create. That's why God invented <b>Shrinky Binks</b>
37	I can't imagine how <b>screwed</b> up your kids must be
38	Tonight, Kate Couric guests stars as a very perky <b>crack whore</b> .
39	Those fanatics are building a golden idol of you on our lawn .I look like a <b>freakin'</b> Emmy
40	His campaign literature must be posted today to get you into office... and out of my life, you festering <b>strumpet!</b>
41	As soon as the polls close, we can put all this ugliness behind us. Lois Griffin is a <b>slut</b> , What?
42	But the kid in me is suicidal over what a <b>fat bastard</b> I'll become.
43	Then I'll use him to live out all my frustrated hopes and dreams, because that's



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	good parenting right, BingCrosby? Right, Peter. And if your kids <b>give you any lip</b> , you can <b>beat' em</b> with a sack of sweet Valencia oranges.
44	<b>Ass-ahoy</b> (refferring to Chris from Brain)
45	Meg, <b>honey</b> , can you pass the fired-my-ass-for-negligence?
46	Blast you, women! Awake from your <b>damnable</b> reverie!
47	No, you <b>imbecile!</b> that's not talc! That's paprika!
48	It's okay, Stewie. Where the <b>hell</b> is Peter?
49	Son of the <b>bitch</b> . I'm on my way Some poor <b>bastard</b> got his head blown off down at the place called hooper's.
50	Peter: don't forget how badly we were humiliated last year by Pawtucket Joke and Novelties. Look at those <b>morons</b> and their stupid glasses <b>Oh! Man</b> I hate those guys
51	I don't think you should use the word " <b>freak</b> "
52	<b>Holy Crap!</b> Oh, my God! You blew off all your fingers!
53	<b>Ah, yeah, ah, yeah.</b> I knew that would get you. <b>Ah, ah</b> , come here period you little <b>son of bitch</b> , Come here!
54	Meg, What happened? <b>Fat ass</b> and his drunk friends left me at the roller rink.
55	What kind of <b>jerk</b> would drive on one of those? Dude, this car <b>kicks ass</b> .
56	Joe, my God, what happened? You just <b>ran over me, you bastard</b> .
57	You know what, just get the <b>hell</b> out of here Fine. <b>Weirdo</b>
58	What sort of over blown contract has that <b>dreadful bitch</b> landed now?
59	The only stuff I could get on such short notice was a cake and that <b>big-ass</b> Piñata
60	<b>I S-U-C-K-E-D! sucked!</b>

## Discussion

The research aimed at finding out the slang words used by each member of the "Family Guy", and its impact on the audience. Initially, the slang is used according to the first function pursuit of self-identity that shows the relationship between the speaker and the listener. The first utterance labeled in (Table 4.1) is that there is a person who has dropped the watch and asked the other person who was passing by to be his sport and pick up his watch. It shows a very kind way of communication between a speaker and a listener, in this utterance sport means to help him out, for picking up his watch from the ground. In the second utterance Peter was a little disappointed and talking to Brian that these bluebeards treat him like a scum, in this statement the bluebeards was defined by Merriam-Webster as the criminals who get married to various woman and kill them one by one, so he thinks the people are like criminals and they think he is a worthless person and can pressurize him because he is not that powerful and not ready for a serious commitment. So, he thought of himself as a scum. In utterance three Peter's wife told him mother left something in her will, and he in happens refers to her as a "sweet little broad" in the utterance broad is identities as someone being fat as well as having a good sense of humor. And Holy

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Crap was used to project sense of excitement. In the utterance 4 some individual was giving the pamphlet and Lois likes the house on the pamphlet and uses the word for it "Freakin' sweet. Freakin' is an expression which depicts joy or excitement to a person. And the guy was telling her the details that what they make and its charges.

## **Recommendations**

The study puts forward the following recommendations:

The language of any community is the core part of its existence and identity. Since the beginning of time language has evolved rapidly, the slang has established a strong form in speech community globally and it needs to be recognized and explored.

Media is one of the biggest platforms of exploration. It must be researched that how slang is produced and utilized through this medium and what are the hidden agendas being fulfilled behind it.

The topic can be further elaborated by researching the use of slang and its impact through the social and electronic media.

A comparative analysis can be conducted to examine the damage slang has done to standardized language variety.

The positive effect of colloquial language can also be determined through a quantitative analysis among the younger population.

## **Conclusion**

This shows that the Family Guy an animated series had given a bad message to the audience, because there is abusive language, dirty jokes, pornography jokes, and even the visual representation is not appreciate for the kids to watch, if they cannot understand the swear words but they can see the visuals and can do such things, there is racism as well, this show has more negative point then the positive ones, the animated cartoons are one of those things which all type of audience watch, the kids to the adults, and around to their age group they grasps or adopt things from here. The swear words are spoken by the kids these days, and no one can control it, so these kind of shows either should not be aired or they should use appropriate language to entrain the audience.

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