

## A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF BASEBALL JARGON IN MILLER'S *MONEY BALL* THE MOVIE

Written by : Achmad Septian Nugrahanto  
First Supervisor : Drs. Suhaini M. Saleh, M.A  
Second Supervisor : Paulus Kurnianta, S.Pd., S.Fil., M.Hum

English Language and Literature Study Program  
Faculty of Languages and Arts  
Yogyakarta State University

[ian.nugrahanto@gmail.com](mailto:ian.nugrahanto@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This research studied the sociolinguistic phenomenon, especially in terms of jargon. This study was intended to analyze the word-formation processes of jargon which occur in Miller's *Money Ball* the movie. In this study, the functions of sport jargon which occur in Miller's *Money Ball* the movie were also analyzed. The functions are to serve as a technical/specialist language for precise and effective communication and to promote in-group solidarity and to exclude out-groupers, those who do not use the jargon. Descriptive qualitative method was applied in this study. The percentage and frequency of the data were used to strengthen the findings. Meanwhile, the discussion was presented in a descriptive way. The results of the research are presented as follows. First, there are six word formation processes which were found in the movie. They were compounding, clipping and ellipsis, multiple processes, derivation, acronym and abbreviation, and conversion. The other four processes were not found. They were coinage, blending, borrowing and backformation. Second, all of the functions of jargon were found in the movie.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, jargon, baseball, *Money Ball*

### INTRODUCTION

Language can never be separated from human life. There is no action and interaction without language. Language is an instrument of communication. Without using language, people cannot communicate to each other. That is why language plays an important part of communication. People use

language to convey their ideas, to grasp new facts, to answer question, and also to ask a question. A communication will be successfully delivered if the speakers and the listeners have knowledge about the things which are being talked about.

Sometimes, in a society, there are several styles of language which are performed by people to

communicate to each other. The styles are performed by a particular group of people. A particular group of people who use the same speech signal is called a speech community. Every membership of a community is signaled by sign. The membership can be identified by the language which is used. The words which are spoken by the members indicate the membership of one community. Therefore, people who do not belong to the group are difficult to understand. Some expressions are accessible only for the member of the group.

One can find a lot of language varieties in society especially sport. Sport is highly characterized by jargon to reach the efficiency of communication. In sport field, jargon is often used to deliver complicated information in a simple or brief way. *Money Ball* is a sport-theme film. The film is starred by several famous actors, such as Brad Pitt, Jonah Hill, and Philip Seymour. The film is chosen as the object of this research because it contains baseball jargons.

Unconsciously, jargon is used every day in every occasion including sport.

This research was conducted by using sociolinguistic perspective. There are two objectives of this research. The first is to analyze the word formation processes of sport jargon that occur in the *Money Ball*. The second is to describe the functions of sport jargon which occur in the *Money Ball*.

To analyze the word formation process of jargon, the researcher used Yule (2010: 53) explanations about word formation processes. He states that there are ten processes. They are coinage, compounding, borrowing, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym and abbreviation, derivation and multiple processes. In addition, the researcher also added ellipsis as one of the processes, since some of the data are in the form of phrase. The researcher used Morley (2000: 15) and Young and Fitzgerald (2006: 108) to explain ellipsis. Meanwhile, to analyze the functions of jargon, the researcher used Allan and Burridge (2006: 58) explanation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. The qualitative method served descriptive data. According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7), a qualitative research is used to produce narrative or textual description of the phenomena under the study. This method emphasizes on process and description which are not examined or measured in term of quantity. Sugiyono (2012: 24) says that qualitative method is used to understand the deep meaning which cannot be described in quantitative method. In this research, a qualitative design was used to describe the word formation processes of jargon and the functions of jargon in *Money Ball*.

In this research, the primary instrument was the researcher itself. Sugiyono (2012: 222) describes that in a qualitative research, the key instrument is the researcher itself. He also says that a researcher acts as the human instrument, which has the function to decide the focus of the research, the source of the data, the process of collecting the data, analyzing the data, interpreting the

data, and making the conclusion. The secondary instrument was a data sheet which was used to collect the data from the dialogues of *Money Ball*. The data of this research were in the form of words and phrases which were uttered by the characters in *Money Ball*. The source of the data was taken from the transcript of the film. According to Denscombe (2007: 289), the data of qualitative research can be taken from fieldwork notes, interview transcript, texts, photographs, etc.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are total 77 sport jargons which were taken from the movie. Meanwhile, in the word formation processes of jargon, not all the processes are found in the movie. Only six processes which are found. They are compounding (25 items), clipping and ellipsis (18 items), multiple processes (14 items), derivation (10 items), acronym and abbreviation (7 items), and conversion (3 items). The other four processes are not found. They are coinage, borrowing, blending and backformation. In term of functions of jargon, there are 70 items have

function as technical or specialist language for precise and economical communication. Whereas, 7 items of the data are used to promote in-group solidarity and to exclude out-groupers who do not use the jargon. Since baseball jargons are used as technical language, the first function becomes the most prominent function in this research. The movie's characters often use technical language to make an efficient communication, including the commentators and announcers. Sport commentators or announcers perform jargon rapidly to describe activities or moments that happen in the game. The data which are identified as second function show the closeness, relationship and sentiment of the characters. They use technical terms to show their solidarity rather than to exclude the out-groupers.

## **1. Word Formation Processes of Baseball Jargon**

### **a. Compounding**

Compounding becomes the most prominent process of creating jargon. The process of combining two or more separated words without

any reduction is commonly happen in sport. Baseball jargons in term of compounding are often used by the characters. The datum below is the example of compounding.

Billy : Can he hit?

Keough: He's got a beautiful swing. The ball explodes off his bat. He throws the club head at the ball, and when he connects, he drives it, it pops off the bat. You can hear it all over the **ballpark**.  
(JM16/F1/Com)

The word “ballpark” is another term of “stadium”. The word actually consists of two words. They are “ball” and “park”. Both have their own meaning. Separately, they have different meaning from the word “ballpark”. According to Oxford Dictionary, ball is a round object which is used for throwing, hitting or kicking in games and sports. Ball is also classified as a round object or a thing that has been formed into a round shape. Meanwhile, park is an area of public land in a town or a city where people go to walk, play and relax.

### **b. Clipping and Ellipsis**

Clipping and ellipsis become the second most prominent process in this research. Clipping is process of word's reduction. There is also a name's clipping that usually exist in British countrie. It is called *hypocorism*. Whereas, ellipsis is a process of omitting a part or some parts of clause or phrase that too long to be mentioned. The dialogue below contains an example of ellipsis.

Announcer 1:  
Bases loaded. The Yankees have the tying run at **second**, down 2-nothing!  
(JM11/F1/CI-EI)

The announcers or sport commentators usually use ellipsis word to make an economical communication. They may use the first part or sometimes the second part of a technical term. Word "second" does not have any clear meaning. It is sometimes used as adjective or works as informant for the second word. According to Oxford Dictionary, the word "second" is used as determiner and ordinal number. Yet, if it is preceded by preposition, such as "at", the word "second" can be accepted meaningful. In the dialogue above, it refers to "second inning". The example of

hypocorism is explained in the dialogue below.

Man : There you go **Scotty** H.  
That's what I talking  
about. Picking machine!  
(JM47/F2/CI-EI)

In a training session, somebody give some spirit to Hatteberg. He supports Hatteberg to train harder and makes sure that playing as first baseman is easy. The man who shouts is one of the club staffs. To show the closeness and solidarity between them, the man use hypocorism in addressing Hatteberg's name. The word *Scotty* refers to Scott Hatteberg.

### c. Multiple Processes

It is a possibility of combining process of word formation processes. In its creation, a word can be combined with other elements, such as affixes and othe words. The processes can cause alteration in type and meaning of word. The dialogue below contains the multiple processes.

Man 3 : The guy is an athlete. Big,  
fast, talented. Top of my list.  
Pote : Clean-cut, good face. Yeah,  
good jaw. Five-tools guy.  
Good looking **ballplayer**.  
(JM14/F1/MP)

The bold word in the dialogue above is indicated as multiple processes.

The word is formed through two processes. The first process is derivation. Separately, the word “ball” refers to a round object which is used for throwing, hitting or kicking in sport. Whereas, the word “player” refers to the person who plays or takes part in a game or sport. The root of the word “player” is “play”. The suffix *-er* in the end of the word changes the type of word. The word “play” is classified as verb. However, if the suffix is added, the type changes into “noun”. The suffix *-er* is commonly added in the end of a verb in order to make a term which is associated as its subject.

#### d. Derivation

Derivation is the most common word-formation in English. Derivation is a process when the meaning of word changes if a number of small “*bits*” are added in the beginning or in the end of that word. The bits are also called affixes. There are three kinds of affixes. They are *prefixes*, *suffixes*, and *infixes*. In this research, suffixes are the only affixes which are found. Suffixes are affixes which are added in the end of word. Suffixes

commonly happen in English. The dialogue below shows an example of suffix.

Billy : If he's good, why doesn't he hit good?

Keough: He is a good **hitter**.

Pote : He'll be ready.

(JM17/F1/Der)

The word “hitter” in the dialogue above refers to the player who is responsible to hit the ball pitching by pitcher. In baseball, *hitter* is also called *batter*. Batter is a person who plays at bat. Bat itself is a kind of wooden stick which is used to hit the ball. To ease the mentioning, people who involve in baseball and softball use term “hitter” or “batter”.

The word “hitter” consists of two elements. The first is root word and the second is suffix. The root of word “hitter” is “hit”. The affix *-er* which is added in the end of that word is called suffix. Automatically the meaning and type of word change if they are joined. Separately, the word “hitter” is noun and “hit” is verb. Commonly in English, the formula of making noun word is by adding suffix in the end of a verb. Basically, the formula of adding

suffix *-er* in English is used if the name of its noun form is unidentified.

#### e. Acronym and Abbreviation

Acronym is formed from the initial letters of a set of words. They are pronounced as a new single word. However, acronym is not found in this movie. Abbreviation is almost similar to acronym, but they distinctively differ. Abbreviation is pronounced as its letters. The example of abbreviation is explained in the dialogue below.

Billy : That's my bar. My bar is here. My bar is to take this team to the championship.

Steve : Billy, we're a small-market team, and you're a small-market GM. I'm asking you to be okay not spending money that I don't have. And I'm asking you to take a deep breath, shake off the loss, get back in a room with your guys, and figure out how to find replacements for the guys we lost with the money that we do have.

**(JM12/F1/Acr-abr)**

The dialogue shows that Steve uses technical term when he speaks to Billy. He uses term “GM” to refer to “General Manager”. One of the reasons of its usage is to make an economical communication between

them. GM is pronounced as its letters, “G” and “M”. Abbreviation is one of terms which are very often used by people. It is often used for shortening long phrases of organization’s name, institute, agency, statistics and many more. The fact is that by using abbreviation or acronym, the long terms can be reduced and mentioned easily.

#### f. Conversion

The sixth process is conversion. Conversion happens when a word is not used as its function or its meaning without any reduction. There are only 3 out of 77 items which are identified as conversion.

Conversion is explained in the dialogue below.

Announcer 1: Damon has eight hits in 18 at bats, a double, a triple, a couple of stolen bases. He had four hits in the series opener.

**(JM01-02/F1/Con)**

In the dialogue above, the words “double” and “triple” are used as noun. Actually, the word “double” and “triple” are classified as adjective. Yet, for some reasons, they

can be used as noun. The article in the beginning of the words determines the word's type. The words "double" and "triple" are preceded by article "a". In baseball, they are used as noun, rather than adjective. The word "double" is also known as Two Base Hit. It happens when a hitter successfully hits the ball and runs to second base. The word "triple" is also the same as the word "double". It happens when a hitter successfully hits the ball and runs to the third base.

## 2. Functions of Jargon

In this research, there are two functions of jargon. The first is to serve as a technical or specialist language for precise and economical communication. The second is to promote in-group solidarity and to exclude out-groupers who do not use the jargon. The first function is used to state the commands, instructions and activities which are shown in sport. In other words, the sport jargons are used to ease communication among people who involve in the sport. In the creating economical communication, people use some terms which represent their

purpose. The data below contain the function of jargon.

Announcer 1 : Damon has eight hits in 18 at bats, **a double, a triple**, a couple of stolen bases. He had four hits in the series opener.  
(JM01-02/F1/Con)

In the dialogue above, the announcer 1 is reporting the match. He uses some ambiguous words or phrases which cannot be understood easily by outsiders or out-groupers. The announcer tries to tell the listeners and spectators that Damon has played 18 times as a batter or hitter and he has successfully hit 8 times. Damon also has *a double* or two bases hit, *a triple* or three bases hit and also a couple of *stolen bases*. A runner at first or second base is allowed to run to the next bases (second or third base) when the pitcher is preparing to throw the ball and his leg is not yet step on the pitch plate. This runner's action is called *stealing the base* or *stolen base*.

The second function of jargon is to promote in-group solidarity and to exclude out-groupers who do not

use the jargon. People show their identities as the member of particular organization, nationality, race and occasion in the appearance, language or the way they speak. They also sometimes show their feeling, sentiment, closeness and solidarity among the members by using jargon. The way people speak including language, accent and dialect can show their identities. People who do not use the same language, accent and dialect can be identified as the out-groupers. The in-groupers speak and act in their way in order to exclude the out-groupers.

In this research, the second function of jargon is relatively aimed to identify the closeness among characters in the movie. It does not deal with excluding people who do not use jargon. Some characters show their closeness and sentiment by using jargon.

Billy : It's not that hard,  
Scott. Tell him,  
**Wash**

Washington : It's incredibly hard.  
Hey, anything worth  
doing is.  
And we're gonna  
teach you.  
(JM41/F1/CI-EI)

Billy and Washington are visiting to Scott's house. Billy is looking for a player who can play as first baseman to replace Jason Giambi. Billy wants him to play at first base. Meanwhile, Scott Hatteberg basically is a catcher. Then, Billy asks Washington to teach Scott how to play as first baseman. Billy shows his closeness by addressing Washington by "Wash". "Wash" is the clipping form of Washington. He is the member of club's staff manager. In some British-English countries, to show the closeness and relationship, people often clip somebody's name, such as Pete for Peter (Peter Brand). They also add *-ie* or *-y* in the end of the name, such as Scotty or Hattie for Scott Hatteberg. It is called hypocorism. The datum below shows the closeness between Billy and Sabian.

In some occasions, the second function can be used for excluding the out-grouper. Military jargons, for instance, are used by the military member in particular occasion. In a war, they use some special technical terms which are not understood by enemy (out-grouper).

The in-groupers use the jargons for building tactic, deciding the coordinate and position, describing the kind of weapon and giving commands or military instructions.

### CONCLUSION

This research can be concluded that in term of word formation processes of jargon, there are six processes which can be found in *Money Ball* movie. Compounding becomes the most prominent process. The process simply gives an effectiveness creating new terms in sport. The process of combining two or more separated words without any reduction is commonly happen in sport. Compounding is the simply way of creating new word. The process of clipping and ellipsis are also found in the movie. The commentators often speak some terms in ellipsis. They omit some parts of phrase and clause in order to ease their conversation. Some characters also show their closeness and solidarity by using clipping. They clip somebody's name into the shorter form. The possibility of combining some processes of

creating jargon commonly happens in the movie.

Combination between derivation and compounding is often found in sport. The jargons, such as *outfielder*, *midfielder* and *ballplayer* are the common examples of baseball jargon. Derivation is commonly happen in English. Suffix *-er* and *-ing* are the most derivation process that is easily found in the movie. The use of acronym and abbreviation is easily found in some organizations' name, including sport. The change of a word's function or conversion is also found in the movie. The words "double" and "triple" are actually classified as adjective. Yet, they can be noun if articles, such as "a" and "the", are added in the beginning of the words.

In term of functions, the data cover all of the functions of jargon. The functions of the data are divided into two. The first function covers up to 70 items. Meanwhile, there are only 7 items which are functioned as well as the second function. Moreover, all of them are used to

promote in-group solidarity rather than to exclude the out-groupers.

## REFERENCES

- Allan, Keith and Burridge, Kate. 2006. *Forbidden Word: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. New York: University Press.
- Denscombe, Martyn. 2007. *The Good Research Guide: for small-scale social research projects* (Third Edition). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Morley, G. David. 2000. *Syntax in Functional Grammar: An Introduction to Lexicogrammar in Systemic Linguistics*. London: Continuum Wellington House.
- Sugiyono. 2002. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Bandung Alfabeta.
- Vanderstoep W. Scott and Johnston D. Deirdre. 2009. *Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Young, Lynne and Fitzgerald, Brigid. 2006. *The Power of Language: How Discourse Influences Society*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.
- Yule, George. 2010. *The Study of Language* (Fourth Edition). Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press.