

# The Use of Slang and Jargon in the TV Show Brooklyn Nine-Nine

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Dvopredmetni sveučilišni studij engleskoga jezika i književnosti i hrvatskoga  
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Završni rad

Mentor izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak

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## **Abstract**

The TV series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is rich in many examples of slang and police jargon due to its plot. Slang, as a type of informal speech, defines the personality traits of the characters, creates references that make the series widely recognized, contributes to its realism, and most significantly, creates humor. The humor of this series is based on three constituents: word play, characterization of characters, and publicly known references. Jargon, a type of formal speech used by specific professions, appears in the series in its police and detective forms. This type of language helps with the accuracy of the portrayal of the police station, and the setting helps embody the police station as a professional environment with its own vocabulary and norms. If the language of this series is evaluated, it can be separated into substandard and professional variants.

This research paper aims to demonstrate the purpose of using slang and jargon, how they affect the series' characters and plot, and to compare slang and jargon with the sociolinguistic division of formal and informal languages.

**Key words:** *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, jargon, slang, sociolinguistics

## 1. Introduction

Spoken language is perceived as an integral part of people's daily lives and everyday existence. Language is produced only when there is a certain purpose or need to do so, which occurs regularly in daily life. For example, it is used to articulate and express inner thoughts, desires, and ideas while also enabling us to communicate effectively with others (Widdowson, 2007).

An example of everyday communication is slang, which is considered an informal type of speech, whereas jargon stands for the language of professions and officialdom.

*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is an American comedy series about a police station that uses both types of language. Based on the comparison of slang and jargon in the series, a sociolinguistic division is reached.

This paper thus deals with the analysis of language division in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, assessing the use of slang and jargon in the examples from the show and simultaneously classifying them into one of the sociolinguistic divisions.

The significance of these types of languages is evident in their use where particular groups need to create new words. Many of the terms had just been in use for a few years; many have been dropped from the language, and many new ones will have been created (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013).



## **2. *Brooklyn Nine-Nine***

*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is a single-camera sitcom that premiered on Fox in 2013. It broadcast 153 episodes and eight seasons between September 17, 2013, and September 16, 2021.

The plot centers around New York City Police Department detectives who operate under the leadership of the new Captain Holt. Employees of the 99<sup>th</sup> precinct make up the crew, whose experiences are followed in the series, consisting of chief detective Jake Peralta, his competitive partner Amy Santiago and best friend Charles Boyle, the intimidating and secretive detective Rosa Diaz, two useless and lazy detectives Michael Hitchcock and Norm Scully, their superior's detective sergeant Terry Jeffords and Captain Holt, and lastly his sarcastic and narcissistic secretary.

*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is widely known for its humor and wit, which are illustrated in speech by the use of slang and its realistic representation of the precinct by the use of police and detective jargon. Many awards were bestowed upon the series, including the Golden Globe Award for best television series, the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor, and the GLAAD Media Award for their portrayal of LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>1</sup>

## **3. Slang**

Slang, defined in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014) as "very informal, sometimes offensive, language that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or criminals," is an ever-changing and highly expressive style of language.

As a type of language used in a casual, informal manner, the term slang has traditionally been associated with a negative connotation, often being perceived as a low and vulgar mode of communication, unacceptable in formal language context (Akmajian et al., 2001).

Slang's inception might be understood as a reaction to a kind of need. As existing words become overused and lose their effectiveness, new and exciting terminology is invented to replace them (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2467372/>

This type of language refers to words, both newly created and already existing, that gain new meanings that are informal and oftentimes seen as vulgar and obscene. These words are mostly used in spoken language as alternatives to standard vocabulary, with their main purpose being to convey additional information. This information can be psychological, social, or rhetorical in character.

The psychological or behavioral aspect involves components such as emotions, humor, familiarity, and secrecy. From a sociological standpoint, slang promotes unity, group identification, alienation, distancing, and rebellion against established societal norms. Additionally, slang embraces informality, purposeful ambiguity, conciseness, and forcefulness in speech through its rhetorical nature (Widawski, 2003).

As already mentioned, slang is widespread in informal communication, and as such, it can take the form of a single word, a combination of words, or even an entire sentence. Its frequent use in colloquial speech can be noticed both in the coining of new vocabulary and in the expansion of meanings linked to established terminology (Chen Linhua, 2006).

Furthermore, slang refers to a specific type of speech or language variety. This language variety, encompassing different forms of speech utilized by individual speakers or groups of speakers, includes a range of distinguishable speech patterns. Linguistic characteristics that identify a speech variety may be seen in the language's lexical, phonological, morphological, or syntactical dimensions (Dai & He, 2010).

Determining the distinction between slang and standard words can often be challenging. This ambiguity has persisted throughout history, as what may be considered slang by one generation can eventually become part of the standard vocabulary of the next. Moreover, the use of slang varies by region, resulting in differences between the slang used in New York and Los Angeles, for instance (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013).

The development of slang and its origins include a number of various characteristics that contribute to its vibrant nature. These include raw coinages, rhyming compounds, alliterative compounds, front clippings, reinterpretations, back clippings, initialisms, acronyms, elaborations, suffixations, spelling disguises, numerals and letters as words, borrowings from a foreign word, phonetic alphabets, borrowings from Standard English, blends, and lastly extensions and exaggerations. In terms of meaning and purpose, slang comprises a wide range of qualities. It is frequently seen as pleasurable to hear and use, giving a playful quality to language. Many slang expressions are euphemisms, especially when tackling sexual or

scatological topics, in which milder language is employed instead of more direct and explicit ones. This kind of language (slang, informal sexual terminology, and scatological language) all follow the same norms and are generally avoided in polite and official settings. On the other hand, some slang expressions are dysphemisms; they substitute neutral and positive vocabulary with more negative alternatives. In addition, some slang can be used as a linguistic weapon to criticize or ridicule others. Even though slang is informal language and sometimes considered to be for those less educated, some slang phrases require intelligent interpretations based on context and innate wisdom (Spears, 2005).

Finally, Yule (2010:260) comes to the conclusion that the variation in slang usage among groups of older and younger speakers demonstrates that age is a significant element involved in social variation. Even within the younger social groups, the use of slang differs, especially concerning the inclusion of obscenities or taboo terminology. Taboo vocabulary consists of expressions people usually avoid for religious, etiquette, or prohibitory reasons. They are frequently swearing words or phrases and are 'bleeped' on public broadcasting. To support his statement, Yule describes Eckert's study from 2000, in which he examined linguistic discrepancies between both males and females of 'Jocks' of higher social status and 'Burnouts' of lower social status. The findings revealed that taboo words were commonly used by both sexes within the lower status group. Differing from these findings, in the higher status group, males used taboo words only in interactions with same-sex people, while females seemed to refrain from using them altogether. It was concluded that social class divisions, particularly in terms of slang usage, are already firmly established during adolescence .

### **3.1 Slang in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine***

Slang is often described as something universally recognizable yet challenging to define. Speakers demonstrate significant creativity in their use of slang because it is one of the most imaginative aspects of language use. Additionally, slang frequently serves as a great source of humor (Akmajian et al., 2001).

The series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is set in Brooklyn, New York, and thus, the New York dialect is prevalent. The key phonological characteristics of this dialect include the absence of the /r/ sound unless before vowels, a split short-a system, the front upgliding vowels /ey/ and /iy/, and the back upgliding vowels /ow/ and /uw/. Furthermore, the stereotypical *Brooklynese* accent is considered to be a reference to working-class New York speech (Labov et al., 2006). In addition, Labov (2006) conducted research that provided insight on the relationship between language and socioeconomic classes in New York. His findings confirmed that speakers from

lower classes tended to use a more vernacular form of English, mostly distinctive by non-rhotic pronunciation, while speakers of higher status conformed to the standard form of the English language.

Slang, as previously stated, is often seen as informal, casual language commonly used in everyday interactions by regular individuals. Similarly to colloquial expressions and idioms, it is used in casual discussions and written works. Not only does slang represent the connection between the speaker and the listener, but it also displays the speaker's knowledge and familiarity with a particular language (Wang, 2020).

Roza Diaz uses slang in her everyday speech, thus emphasizing the friendly relations in the station despite her domineering and intimidating personality, also in her speech, it is recognized that she is street-smart and assertive in her environment. She often addresses her colleagues using the term *'homies.'* This informal term indicates their friendship and the closeness of their relationship. Furthermore, she also uses words that mark something good, exciting, or enjoyable, and the expressions she uses are *'lit,' 'hella,'* and *'turnt.'* The use of these expressions is given in the following sentences in order to better understand their meaning. In the 11<sup>th</sup> sentence, she addresses her friends as *'homies'* and indicates a desire to go somewhere else. The 12<sup>th</sup> sentence showcases the use of slang like *'lit'* and *'turnt.'* Rosa is expressing her excitement and wants to enjoy herself at a party. The third sentence exemplifies the slang *'hella,'* which means extremely and is used to intensify the annoyingness of the situation.

1. *"What's up, homies? Let's bounce!"*
2. *"This party is lit! Time to get turnt!"*
3. *"I can't even with this nonsense. It's hella annoying."*

Ginna Linetti's character uses unconventional language imbued with wordplay. The following sentences demonstrate Gina's use of modern modifications to already existing words in her everyday conversation. Words like *'totes,' 'cray-cray,'* and *'amazeballs'* are examples of her slang. Instead of using conventional, well-known versions of these words, Gina modifies them to indicate her uniqueness and modernity. In the first example, she abbreviates the word *'totally,'* giving it greater rhythmicity but keeping the same meaning—to convey agreement. The second example is a shortened version of the word *'crazy.'* She uses this version to describe something extremely wild or bizarre. The last example is a combination of two words:

'*amazing*' and '*balls*.' She uses this exaggerated expression to describe something truly impressive and astounding.

4. "*Totes! I'm always up for a wild ride.*"
5. "*It was totally cray-cray!*"
6. "*This cake is amazeballs! It's like heaven in my mouth!*"

The given examples show how the usage of slang depicts the subculture within the police department, emphasizing the unique dynamics among the characters. In this way, slang helps establish a sense of authenticity and connection with the audience since used vocabulary is known to the vast majority.

### 3.1.1. Humor

*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*'s main feature is humor. The show is the epitome of witty satire, achieved primarily through wordplay. Understanding these humorous expressions requires context and familiarity with the series and its characters. This series' humor is divided into three categories: playful expressions and reactions, character-based humor, and inside jokes and references.

#### a) Playful Expressions and Reactions

American slang is regarded as 'comedy' because of its amusing effect, which primarily stems from its phonetic qualities. A large number of slangs use euphony to achieve the goal of being comprehensible and memorable, as well as being readable and lively (Zhou, Fan, 2013). Euphony is defined as a "harmonious succession of words having a pleasant sound." Linguists further explain it as a tendency for the usage of easily uttered words in order to be more fluid.<sup>2</sup>

Phonetic humor can be found in the phrases '*noice*' and '*toit*,' which are formed through phonetic play of their standard equivalents '*nice*' and '*tight*.' Both of these words have a similar meaning; they denote something impressive, great, and exciting, and by utilizing them, Jake Peralta emphasizes his character's laid-back and casual approach. Additionally, euphony is present in the examples '*cool cool cool cool cool cool cool*,' '*bingpot*,' and '*hot damn*.' The repetition of words and sounds creates rhythm and satisfaction in pronunciation.

Jake Peralta's most famous phrase, '*cool cool cool cool cool cool*,' is an exaggeration of saying 'cool' while staying composed and nonchalant. He tries to downplay a situation to appear more casual. This phrase can be used in a sarcastic way as well, when Jake tries to downplay his

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<sup>2</sup> euphony <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/euphony>

disappointment, such as in a situation when he is forced to do something tedious. As shown in the example sentence, a sarcastic tone can be noticed.

7. *"Great, just what I wanted to do. Cool cool cool cool cool cool cool. My day couldn't get any better."*

The terms *'bingpot'* and *'hot damn'* have similar meanings. *'Hot damn'* is an expression of enthusiasm and surprise, and *'bingpot'* is an exclamation used when something positive and exciting happens. This phrase is a catchphrase of Charles Boyle, and its meaning can be realized from the example sentence.

8. *"Guess what, everyone? We just found the missing evidence in the case! Bingpot!"*

#### b) Character-based Humor

Character-based humor refers to a word play that gives the characters traits that are unique and distinctive to their personalities. The humorous side of these expressions can only be recognized if the person is familiar with the characters and their personalities. In *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, every character possesses a unique manner of speaking, which often leads to funny situations and misunderstandings.

The first character-based expression is *'Full Boyle,'* a term used to describe an intense level of enthusiasm, especially when romance is involved. This term is a reflection of Boyle's character and his bubbly and over-the-top approach to love and friendships.

The second phrase, *'Terry loves yogurt,'* is a recurring remark used by Terry himself. The humorous side of this expression lies in his exaggerated love and passion for yogurt, which is surprising given that he is a muscular and tough detective.

The last expression, *'Cheddar,'* refers to Captain Holt's loving pet corgi named Cheddar. This term is not humorously associated with the dog himself, but with its owner. As in the preceding example, Holt's choice of this specific name is out of character. He is shown as an extremely passive, stoic, and serious person, which is why this term highlights the quirky dynamic between a man and his dog.

#### c) Inside Jokes and References

Using inside jokes and references to produce humor is one of the distinctive features of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. The series is full of references to prior episodes and running jokes about Jake Peralta's favorite movie, *Die Hard*.

Charles Boyle is known for his unusual and sometimes weird interests and language. The term 'Boyle Bingo' refers to a game that resembles true bingo, in which the detectives guess strange things Boyle does or says and cross them off. The humorous side can be detected in the example sentence, in which it is noted that Boyle owns socks with pictures of his pet turtles, which the rest of the station finds bizarre and strange.

9. *"Charles just showed up at work wearing matching socks with pictures of his pet turtles. That's another box checked off on Boyle Bingo!"*

Similarly, the term, 'The Jimmy Jab Games,' is also a type of game invented by employees of the precinct. These games are a recurring event and an annual tradition within the precinct. In this game the detectives compete in a series of bizarre and unusual challenges. The humor of this game is present in the amusing nature of the challenges they must complete. For instance, some challenges include eating as much month-old food as they can, finishing the obstacle course and running through the finish line, wearing a bomb suit and racing to the elevator, etc. In the example sentence, the expression is used in the form of an announcement. Each event is accompanied by a hilarious reporter who comments on the happenings, attendees, and outcome of the event.

10. *"Join hands, one and all, for we have reached the final event of the Jimmy Jabs—the obstacle course."*

In the same sense, the third term, 'HalloVeen Heist,' is used. This term refers to an annual game in which the goal is to steal and protect selected objects using various tactics and plans. The winner is awarded the title of "Ultimate Detective/Genius." Episodes of this type elicit humor in the form of characters unusual tactics, complicated schemes, and unexpected plot twists. In addition to the physical hurdles that make these episodes humorous, characters engage in witty dialogue, throwing playful, lighthearted insults at each other, creating a lively and competitive environment. The example sentence showcases the importance of the preparation and planning needed to win this game.

11. *"No, the only thing that kept me sane was planning for the Halloween heist those many years doing hard time. - It was eight weeks."*

The last term is a distorted reference to the movie *Die Hard*. Charles Boyle uses it to impress his best friend, whose favorite movie is *Die Hard*. In an attempt to make a reference, he butchers the expression by saying ‘*Yippee kayak, other buckets!*’ instead of swearing like in the original phrase ("yippee ki-yay, motherf\*\*\*er!"), creating in this way a humorous effect.

### 3.1.2. Characterization

The slang used by different characters helps to develop their personalities and relationships. Each character uses slang that reflects their own origins and personality traits. These expressions add depth to their realism, making them more relatable to the audience.

Two expressions related to Captain Holt are ‘*Pineapple Slut*’ and ‘*Captain Toit*.’ The first expression does not characterize him as a character but rather uses humor to soften his serious demeanor. Holt, appearing in a t-shirt with a pineapple wearing pink tongs and with the inscription "slut" underneath, defies the image of a passive and boring character who does not have a sense of humor. An exemplified conversation with Jake confirms his humorous side.

12. "Jake: *Yeah, and your new shirt is very aggressive and confusing. Is the pineapple the slut, or is it calling someone else a slut?* – Holt: *Clearly, the pineapple is the slut.*"

‘*Captain toit*’ is a word play by Jake used to express Holt’s strict demeanor that follows all the rules. Jake lightheartedly jokes by using the verb ‘toit’ meaning to move slowly, as from old age<sup>3</sup>.

Another nickname used in the series is ‘*The Vulture*.’ This nickname belongs to the character of Detective Pembroke, whose character is portrayed as a self-centered, eccentric, and opportunistic detective who frequently takes credit for other people’s work.

‘*Terry Kitties*’ is an expression used to characterize Sergeant Terry Jeffords. As already mentioned, he is a large, muscular man who appears to be intimidating. However, this term exposes his true nature; he is an extremely sensitive person with a weakness for adorable things and an endearing compassion for animals.

This category's final expression is ‘*Gina Linetti, the human form of the 100 emoji*.’ Gina is the show's most confident character; she is loud, outspoken, and a little narcissistic. In this example,

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<sup>3</sup> toit <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/toit>



characterization is present in the fact that she referred to herself in this manner, emphasizing her uniqueness and excellence.

### 3.1.3. Setting

The specialized cop slang helps to create a sense of authenticity and convey the realism of the world to the audience. It creates a distinct mood and makes the precinct and characters feel more genuine.

The first slang expression used to create a sense of a real-life police department is '*Tactical Village*.' This is an annual event during which officers participate in tactical training and try out new weapons.

The second slang expression is '*the bullpen*,' which refers to the main working area in which all detectives are located in the precinct.

Another slang expression in the show is '*the Vulture's nest*,' which is the workplace of Detective Pembroke. This term is used to show his territorial and competitive nature within the precinct and his detective duties.

### 3.1.4. Catchphrases

Catchphrases give people a sense of continuity and allow fans to engage with the show on a much deeper level. These lines are the most memorable ones, and are frequently turned into popular quotes.

The most famous catchphrase of the *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is the phrase '99' which is an abbreviated term relating to the 99<sup>th</sup> precinct in Brooklyn, where the main characters work and which is the setting of the show. This phrase symbolizes unity, pride, and a sense of identity for the employees of the precinct.

Jake Peralta's most famous catchphrase is '*Title of Your Sex Tape*.' It is a comedic response to innuendos, which he turns into mock titles for pornographic movies. The next three sentences are just some examples of his usage of this phrase, which is one of the most common sayings in the series.

13. "*Kind, Sober, and Fully Dressed*". *Good news, everyone! We found the name of Santiago's sex tape.*

14. "*It's Not Your Fault, I Was Terrible*" *is also one of your sex tapes.*

15. "*I'm So Confused, I Don't Know What's Happening Right Now*" — *Title of your sex tape.*

Lastly, the catchphrase ‘*Cool motive, still murder*’ is a sarcastic response by Jake Peralta in response to a criminal attempting to justify his actions by saying that he killed for love. It highlights Jake’s smart sense of humor, frequently delivered in a deadpan tone.

16. J: *Now I'm telling my friend about how you killed that guy.*

x: *It was for love!*

J: *Cool motive, still murder.*

#### **4. Jargon**

The term ‘jargon’ is derived from an old 14th-century word meaning ‘twittering of birds.’ The main idea behind this meaning is the impossibility of understanding such language due to insufficient knowledge of terminology.

Depending on which dictionary is consulted, the term ‘jargon’ can have up to five different definitions. Some define it as jibberish, a vague language, while others define it as a unique dialect of a language, but the most common definition defines it as a specialized language and vocabulary used by specific groups such as tradespeople, professionals, or other communities. (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013)

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English supports this statement by defining jargon as “words and expressions used in a particular profession or by a particular group of people, which are difficult for other people to understand.”<sup>4</sup>

Jargonists, people who are researching jargon, believe that this kind of language evolved solely to facilitate communication within a specific group, with no deception intended.

Nearly every field of study, profession, trade, and job has its own unique vocabulary, which can be categorized as either slang or technical terminology depending on the social standing of those who use these specialized phrases. Those phrases are commonly referred to as ‘jargon.’ (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013)

In this sense, whether used by professionals or members of the general public, jargon implies a close-knit and recognizable occupational or social community, or occasionally both. It is a method of strengthening group cohesion and togetherness, as well as a defense against people

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<sup>4</sup> jargon <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/jargon>

from other groups. Each profession must have its own specialized language and vocabulary that are essential for effective communication between its members (Hudson, 1978).

Problems in communication develop when people of different nationalities and fields of employment interact. Effective communication via jargon can only be achieved by having a clear knowledge of the definitions and parameters used. In this way, jargon, as a reduced form of language, plays an important function in communities with the same interests by removing redundant information. At the same time, it creates a barrier for individuals unfamiliar with the specialized terminology, creating a sense of outsidership. Certain jargon has the potential to become incorporated into mainstream English over time, as shown with terms like 'e-mail' and 'Internet' that originated as jargon before being widely embraced (Slavik, 2004).

Jargon is an important part of developing a distinct register of a specialized technical language that is peculiar to a certain field or area of interest. Socially, jargon has the function of building ties among groups of 'insiders', while simultaneously excluding those considered 'outsiders.' (Yule, 2010)

Hudson (1978: 1) further emphasizes the importance of jargon, stating that "if one wished to kill a profession, to remove its cohesion and its strength, the most effective way would be to forbid the use of its characteristic language."

Taking all these potential factors into consideration, Hudson (ibid.) lists four important elements of jargon in the second half of the twentieth century:

1. It represents a specific profession or occupation.
2. It tends to be ostentatious, with only a sliver of meaning beneath it.
3. It is mostly used by intellectually inferior people who want to prove their worth to the general public.
4. It is, either intentionally or unintentionally, mystifying

#### **4.1 Jargon in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine***

The police force is well known for having its own specialized jargon that is frequently difficult for individuals outside of law enforcement to comprehend. Understanding police jargon requires basic knowledge of how they communicate. This jargon encompasses all aspects of

police work because of its relationship to the legal profession. During their operation, they would often use their jargon to confuse the general public. Its main purpose is to confuse and obfuscate outsiders so that their conversations will be secret. Even though some terms are used universally, many are unique to specific divisions within the police force (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013). Given that *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is a TV series about detectives from the 99th precinct, the show frequently employs police and detective jargon. When analyzing the language of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, it can be concluded that jargon corresponds to a professional variety of language. Jargon is a type of language thought to be more concise, which saves time and helps in finding suitable interlocutors. It also raises morale and provides support by allowing professionals to immediately identify one another. Additionally, jargon serves as an important means of maintaining a respectful distance from the public, suggesting more relationships (Hudson, 1978).

In the *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* series, three characters are notorious for their formal and professional manners: Captain Raymond Holt, Sergeant Terry Jeffords, and Detective Amy Santiago. They tend to avoid and reduce the usage of slang in their everyday speech, thus giving the impression of professionalism. Their roles as authority figures are represented through their precise, specialized terminology and formal language.

Raymond Holt uses unusual and not-so-familiar phrases in his discourse, such as '*perp walk*' and '*get ducks in a row*.' The first expression is mostly unknown to the general public because of police lingo; with this expression, he refers to the practice of parading a suspect in front of the public to send a message to the public about the effectiveness of their force. The meaning can be recognized from the first example sentence. The second expression has the idiomatic meaning of being well-prepared and organized, which can be recognized in the second sentence.

17. "We need to conduct a *perp walk* to make a strong visual statement."

18. "We need to *get our ducks in a row* before the press conference."

Throughout the series, Amy Santiago uses her vocabulary to emphasize her professionalism, believing that in this way she will be promoted because of her intelligence. She uses phrases such as '*run the numbers*' and '*walk-through*.' Those terms are primarily used in the police profession and are not necessarily known to the public. The phrase '*run the numbers*' suggests Amy's analytical approach to work, meaning they need to analyze data and statistics to find correlations between suspects, as seen in the first sentence. In the second sentence, the meaning

of the phrase '*walk-through*' can be seen, defining this term as a thorough examination of a crime scene.

19. *"Let's run the numbers and see if there's a correlation between the suspects' ages and the frequency of the crimes."*

20. *"We should do a walk-through of the crime scene to gather any potential clues."*

Terry Jeffords, as a sergeant, tries to maintain order and authority in the station with his language. In the following sentence, there are two professional terms: 'to gear up' and '*high-risk takedown*.' Both of these terms emphasize the need for preparation. The first term means to gather necessary equipment, and the second term refers to a situation requiring quick reaction to capture a dangerous suspect.

21. *"We need to gear up and be ready for a high-risk takedown."*

Examples taken from these three characters demonstrate the use of effective professional vocabulary in their professions. By using such terminology, these characters are displaying their dedication and commitment to working in this specialized field.

#### **4.1.1. Authenticity**

Authenticity is achieved in this series by using law enforcement jargon, specifically police and detective jargon. By using the proper terminology, the authenticity and realism of the characters and situations are increased, and the series feels more accurate to reality. All of the jargon words can be classified in this category since each of them contributes to the representation of reality.

The following jargon is used to describe incident response and operations in the show: *Officer-involved shooting, Code 10-34, Code 5, Signal 56*. The first code refers to an officer in need of assistance; the second code indicates a stakeout; and the signal is used to request additional forces at the site.

Criminal investigation has its own terms that describe it. The term *APB* stands for *All Points Bulletin*, and it is used to notify officers to be on the lookout. *B&E* is an abbreviation for *breaking and entering*, indicating forcibly entering a building to commit burglary. *CSI*, which stands for *Crime Scene Investigation*, denotes that forensics are gathering evidence at the crime scene.

Law enforcement actions need specialized terminology as well. *High-speed pursuit, wiretaps, interrogations, and surveillance* are a few examples.

Specific crimes and threats have their own terminology, such as *burglary, homicide, hostage negotiation, active shooter, bomb threat*, etc. Moreover, specialized units and teams also have specialized vocabulary. For example, *a SWAT team, a tactical team, riot gear, a K-9 Unit, a bomb squad, and a task force* are some of them.

#### **4.1.2. Setting**

The usage of police jargon helps to portray the police station as a professional environment with its own jargon, procedures, and protocols. In this way, the setting gains more dimension and improves the overall story.

Operational terms are mostly used to immerse the public in the story and make it more realistic. The listed terminology of police jargon in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is only a small part of what depicts the real picture of the police force.

*perp* – short for perpetrator, individual who has committed a crime

*collar* – the act of arresting a suspect

*perimeter* – an area set up by police to secure and control a specific location during an operation

*stakeout* – the act of surveilling a location for some period

Other terms include organizational terms and specialized equipment used in carrying out the law: *police academy, police union, tactical medic, SWAT sniper, APD (Arrest Processing Division), body cam, internal affair investigation*.

#### **4.1.3. Characterization**

Jargon has the ability to reveal information and provide insights into the characters' skills, roles, and experiences within the police department. The use of appropriate jargon contributes to the image of professionalism and further characterizes the character as hardworking and competent at his profession. Captain Holt, Terry Jeffords, and Amy Santiago are prime examples of characterization via jargon. They use specialized language in everyday speech, thus giving the impression of a true professional.

The words that describe members of a particular police division and characterize them in this way are: *confidential informant, forensic accountant, tactical medic, UC (undercover), M.O. (Modus Operandi), internal affairs, etc.*

#### 4.1.4. Communication

Jargon can help clear the communication between characters since using specialized terms allows them to express information more effectively and accurately, ensuring that everyone understands the urgency of the situation.

In this context, mostly abbreviations are used to guarantee the secrecy of the message. Examples of such jargon are: *Code 10-34*, *Signal 56*, *Code 5*, *AR-15*, *APD*, etc. *AR-15* stands for a type of rifle, and the abbreviation *APD* is short for *another person dead*.

The use of real police language not only adds legitimacy to the series, but it also teaches viewers new communication skills and terminology.

### 5. Sociolinguistic Division

Paltridge (2006) asserts that the manner in which spoken language is employed in casual conversation is reliant on the speakers' relationship, the frequency of their mutual contact, their level of intimacy, and their sense of bonding with each other.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. This is a broad field of study that arose from linguistics' interaction with a variety of other academic fields. Through the study of language and culture, it has great ties to anthropology and, due to the exploration of the function language has in the structure of social groups and institutions, to sociology. Additionally, sociolinguistics may be closely related to social psychology, namely in examining how attitudes, perceptions, and in- and out-group dynamics are expressed via language. When analyzing a language from a social point of view, all these interconnected Some English speakers, mostly those considered educated, frequently mix formal and standard language. In contrast, the informal style is considered a form of careless slang, especially in public school language classes. However, a closer examination of informal language concluded that it is far from being a sloppy form since it is regulated by rules as precise, rational, and rigorous as the ones regulating formal language (Akmajian et al., 2001).

Slang refers to words, phrases, and sentences utilized in everyday colloquial conversations within a specific community or region that keep on posing challenges for non-native speakers to comprehend. This type of language is considered informal because of its occurrence in casual social settings in which the speaker's speech is spontaneous, fast, and lacks censorship. The

mentioned casual settings include conversing with close friends or family members (Akmajian et al., 2011). Linguists find the definition of slang impractical. It has been labeled ‘poetry of the poor’ and ‘poetry of everyday life,’ implying that it is a colloquial speech of the uneducated. Ivanciucova (2016) clarifies that slang is far from a simple subject of inquiry but rather an extremely interesting sociolinguistic phenomenon that is constantly changing.

Slang is more than just a means of communication; it is a fundamental aspect of human nature that shapes both our social relationships and personal identity. As social beings, humans need to be intertwined in various groups, and this is where slang's reliance on social context becomes apparent (Adams 2009). Moore (2012) further explains that slang helps to shape and establish one's identity within a group, both as a collective member and as an individual perceived by the group. Besides, slang is frequently linked with certain social groups; therefore, it can be classified into different categories such as youth slang, underworld or criminal slang, drug culture slang, etc. In this sense, slang can be perceived as a type of jargon whose usage acts as a sign of membership and unity within a certain social group (Akmajian et al., 2001). Consequently, this term refers to specialized vocabularies, such as *cant*, jargon, or patter, prevalent among drug users, criminals, youth, gamers, journalists, medical professionals, military personnel, street people, and many more. Some terms employed by these groups spread beyond the group into what is known as general or popular slang (Spears, 2005).

Not only is slang a part of certain social group, but also a part of certain regions. Thus Babayev (2022) explains that slang can occasionally be mistaken for dialectal words or even argots. The main difference is that dialectal words cover a larger geographical area, yet slangs are used in smaller places and understood by a smaller number of people. Slangs are also spoken in specific fields such as prison slang, army slang, office slang.

Nevertheless, even though some linguists do not distinguish between slang and jargon, Thorne (1991) contemplates that the distinction between them is unquestionable. Although slang may incorporate some elements of jargon, slang extends past the casualness of everyday speech and enters the area where words are deemed provocative, unconventional, or inappropriate to be used in conversations with strangers.

On the other hand, the term ‘jargon’ is occasionally broadened to encompass all forms of language that are restricted to specific social contexts. Jargon is specialized vocabulary used by individuals within established social groups of professional standing, such as legal or medical jargon. Slang, on the contrary, is more commonly employed by ‘outsiders’ of those higher-



status organizations (Yule, 2010). Instances of jargon as a type of formal speech are most evident in the settings in which it occurs. Those settings are serious, formal, and mostly official in nature. Speakers must be aware of their linguistic choices and should consider the manner in which they express themselves. Some settings that correspond to this idea of formality are job interviews, meetings with important people, appearances in court, etc. (Akmajian et al., 20001) He further interprets that, despite being tied to a certain profession, jargon is not meant to be secret. However, for practical reasons, certain jargons are entirely incomprehensible to anyone outside the specific profession. The shared utilization of jargon frequently creates a sense of cohesion and solidarity within a group, while at the same time creating a feeling of exclusion for those who do not use the jargon (302).

It should, however, be noted that over time, numerous jargon terms have become integrated into the standard language. Similarly to slang, jargon gradually extends beyond its narrow group, becoming adopted and understood by a larger portion of the population. In reality, because of their acceptance into the standard language, the distinction between slang and jargon is not always straightforward (Ong Hai Liaw, 2013).

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, the series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is characterized by numerous examples of slang and jargon that have similar functions in the context of creating a story. Slang, as an informal language, is most evident in the characters of Jake Peralta, Rosa Diaz, and Gina Linetti. This kind of language is primarily used to achieve humor by using playful expressions and reactions, humor based on the personality traits of specific characters, and lastly, internal jokes and references. Another function of slang is to create a setting, a realistic environment, and characters that the audience can identify with. Lastly, slang is present in catchphrases that make the series stand out from other shows and are considered an essential component of its identity. Jargon, defined as the language of specialized professions, is widely used in the series due to its detective premise. This type of language is responsible for enhancing authenticity and immersing viewers in the police setting by using real police terminology. Furthermore, the characters are characterized with regard to their use of jargon. Amy Santiago, Captain Holt, and Terry Jeffords stand out from the others due to their frequent use of jargon, which gives them a more professional impression.

As a result of combining slang and jargon, sociolinguistic division is visible in the series. A substandard variety is an informal element of a language used by a broader group of individuals who are regionally or socially interconnected. Professional variation, on the other hand, occurs in smaller groups that are linked by common interests and professions. In the series' instances, Jake, Rosa, and Gina form a substandard variety by employing slang in everyday conversations and emphasizing their connection and relationships with the people they communicate with. In contrast, Amy, Holt, and Terry are representatives of the professional variety. In this way, they emphasize their professionalism and commitment to work and keep a respectful distance from the public.

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