

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. American Popular Culture

American popular culture is one of the major areas of study within American Studies. While American Studies examines American society and culture from interdisciplinary perspectives, the study of American popular culture focuses on how cultural products such as films, television series, music, social media, and digital entertainment are produced, circulated, and consumed both within and beyond the United States. As Campbell and Kean (2016) argue, American culture should not be understood solely within the geographical boundaries of the United States because its cultural influence extends globally through various forms of cultural production, including media, entertainment, language, and daily communication.

Storey (2021) defines popular culture as cultural practices, texts, and meanings that are widely produced, distributed, and consumed by society. Rather than viewing popular culture merely as entertainment, Storey explains that it is a space where meanings are continuously produced, negotiated, and shared. Popular culture is closely connected to mass media because media enables cultural products to reach large audiences. As a result, films, television series, music, online content, and social media have become important channels through which popular culture circulates across national boundaries. Storey (2021) also notes that popular culture is commonly

understood as mass-produced commercial culture that is widely consumed by the public, making it one of the most influential forms of contemporary culture.

In this context, American popular culture refers to popular cultural products originating from the United States that are consumed by audiences around the world. Through continuous exposure to American popular culture such as Hollywood films, television series, music, streaming platforms, social media, and other forms of digital entertainment, international audiences are introduced not only to American lifestyles, values, and identities but also to the language used in these cultural products. As a result, language becomes one of the cultural products that circulates together with American popular culture.

This study views American English expressions as one of the linguistic products disseminated through American popular culture. Many expressions that frequently appear in American films, television series, online videos, memes, and social media content become familiar to audiences outside the United States through repeated exposure. Over time, these expressions may be recognized, understood, and incorporated into everyday communication, particularly among young people who actively engage with digital media.

In this study, American popular culture is not viewed merely as a cultural phenomenon or a collection of entertainment products. Instead, it functions as a conceptual framework through which the circulation, recognition, acquisition, and use of American English expressions can be understood. This concept enables the

researcher to explain how exposure to American media and digital platforms contributes to participants' familiarity with American English expressions.

2.2. American English Expressions

Language is one of the most visible elements of culture because it reflects the values, identities, and social practices of a particular society. As American popular culture circulates globally through films, television series, music, social media, and digital platforms, various linguistic expressions commonly used in the United States are increasingly recognized by audiences around the world. Many young people, especially female students, encounter American English expressions through digital media and gradually become familiar with them.

American English expressions refer to linguistic expressions that originate from or are commonly associated with American English in everyday communication. These expressions frequently appear in spoken interaction, digital communication, entertainment media, and popular culture. As American popular culture has become increasingly globalized, these expressions are now widely recognized by speakers outside the United States. Since this study examines expressions commonly encountered through social media, entertainment media, and everyday conversations, four categories are used to classify the data collected from the participants: **slang expressions, colloquial expressions, internet expressions, and abbreviations.**

2.2.1. Slang Expressions

Among the various forms of American English expressions, slang is one of the most frequently associated with informal communication. Slang consists of informal

words or phrases that are commonly used within particular social groups and are often influenced by changing social trends and cultural practices.

According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slang is a collection of informal expressions that functions as a marker of group identity and solidarity among speakers who share similar social experiences. Similarly, Partridge (2004) defines slang as unconventional vocabulary used primarily in informal situations and characterized by its dynamic and temporary nature. Yule (2010) also explains that slang is commonly used among younger speakers and members of particular social groups as an alternative to standard vocabulary.

In contemporary American English, many slang expressions have become internationally recognized through social media and digital entertainment. Expressions such as *slay*, *lowkey*, *ghosting*, *sus*, *cringe*, *red flag*, and *spill the tea* are examples of slang that frequently appear in online communication and youth interaction.

2.2.2. Colloquial Expressions

Besides slang, daily communication also contains colloquial expressions. Colloquial expressions refer to informal words or phrases that are commonly used in ordinary spoken language but are generally understood by a wide range of speakers. Unlike slang, colloquial expressions are usually more stable and are not restricted to particular social groups. According to Crystal (2008), colloquial language refers to informal language used in everyday conversation rather than formal written communication. These expressions emphasize natural spoken interaction and are widely accepted in casual situations.

Common examples of American colloquial expressions include *What's up?*, *No worries*, *For real*, *You got this*, *Hang out*, *My bad*, *Gonna*, *Wanna*, *Kinda*, and *Ain't*. These expressions frequently occur in American films, television series, podcasts, and everyday conversations.

2.2.3. Internet Expressions

The rapid development of digital communication has also introduced a new category of language known as internet expressions. These expressions originate and circulate primarily through online interaction, social networking platforms, online communities, and digital popular culture.

According to Crystal (2006), the Internet has created new linguistic practices in which users continuously develop innovative vocabulary and expressions suited to online communication. Internet expressions are characterized by their rapid circulation and widespread adoption through social media platforms. Examples include *It's giving*, *POV*, *Main character energy*, *Touch grass*, *Delulu*, *IJBOL*, and *Core memory*. Many of these expressions originated from internet communities before becoming widely recognized in everyday communication.

2.2.4. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are another common form of American English expressions, particularly in digital communication. They are created by shortening words or phrases to facilitate faster and more efficient communication. Crystal (2006) explains that abbreviations have become a distinctive feature of online communication because users often prioritize speed and convenience when interacting digitally (p.90). Examples

commonly found in American English include LOL (*Laugh Out Loud*), OMG (*Oh My God*), IDK (*I Don't Know*), TBH (*To Be Honest*), IMO (*In My Opinion*), BRB (*Be Right Back*), FOMO (*Fear of Missing Out*), IRL (*In Real Life*), and FYI (*For Your Information*). Many of these abbreviations are now widely used not only in online communication but also in spoken conversations among young people.

2.2.5 Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions are relatively fixed polylexical phraseological units whose meanings cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of their individual components. Because of their fixed nature, idiomatic expressions exist in speakers' minds as prefabricated linguistic units that are stored and recalled as complete expressions rather than being interpreted word by word (Tudor, 2022). Consequently, understanding idiomatic expressions requires familiarity with their figurative meanings rather than relying solely on the meanings of the individual words.

Idiomatic expressions are widely used in everyday communication because they enable speakers to express ideas, emotions, and situations more naturally and effectively. According to Glaser (1986) and Naciscione (2010), as cited in Khassanova (2024), idiomatic expressions include proverbs, sayings, catchphrases, and slogans that may be manipulated to achieve various communicative effects such as surprise, irony, novelty, or humor. Rather than functioning merely as fixed linguistic units, idiomatic expressions can also be creatively adapted depending on the communicative context and the speaker's intention.

In contemporary American English, idiomatic expressions frequently appear in spoken communication, films, television series, and social media content. Expressions such as *hit the road*, *give a hand*, *take it easy*, *on cloud nine*, *easy peasy*, and *back on your feet* are examples of idiomatic expressions because their meanings cannot be interpreted literally from the meanings of the individual words.

In this study, idiomatic expressions are included as one category of American English expressions because many expressions identified through the participants' checklist belong to this category. Their inclusion acknowledges that American English expressions consist not only of slang but also of other informal linguistic forms that have become widely recognized through everyday communication and exposure to American popular culture.

Although these four categories have different linguistic characteristics, they all represent informal forms of American English that frequently circulate through American popular culture and digital communication. In this study, these categories serve as the analytical framework for classifying the American English expressions identified through the participants' checklist and interview responses. This classification are intended to facilitate a systematic analysis of the types of expressions most recognized and used by female students at Diponegoro University.

2.3. Sociolinguistic Theory

This study employs sociolinguistic theory as one of the main theoretical foundations for analyzing the use of American English expressions among female students at Diponegoro University. Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that

examines the relationship between language and society, focusing on how language is used in social contexts and how social factors influence linguistic choices. Language is not merely a system of linguistic structures but is also closely connected to anthropology, sociology, and social psychology because it reflects cultural values, social organization, attitudes, and group identities. According to Yule (2010), language variation is often associated with social groups and social identities. He further notes that informal linguistic forms, including slang, are commonly used among particular social groups as a means of expressing identity and group affiliation.

Wardhaugh (2010) states that sociolinguistics focuses on the relationship between language and society to understand both the structure of language and its functions in communication. The use of language is influenced by various social factors such as age, gender, social class, social networks, and communicative contexts. As a result, speakers may adopt different linguistic forms depending on the situations in which communication takes place. From this perspective, language variation is not considered random but rather a systematic reflection of social and cultural influences.

Wardhaugh (2010) also discusses the contributions of William Labov to the development of sociolinguistics, particularly in relation to language variation. Labov's work demonstrates that linguistic variation is closely connected to social factors and communicative situations. Speakers often modify their language according to the audience, level of formality, and interactional context. This phenomenon, known as stylistic variation, suggests that individuals actively adjust their linguistic behavior to fit different social environments.

The sociolinguistic framework is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a means of understanding how social interaction, cultural exposure, and communication practices influence participants' language use. Rather than focusing solely on linguistic structure, this study applies sociolinguistic theory to examine how female students recognize, acquire, and use American English expressions in their daily conversations. The use of these expressions may reflect social identities, peer-group interaction, digital media exposure, and familiarity with American popular culture.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the adoption of American English expressions can be understood as a form of language variation influenced by social interaction and communication environments. Rather than being acquired through formal language learning, many expressions are learned through peer interaction and exposure to digital communication. Sociolinguistics provides an appropriate framework for examining how participants recognize and use American English expressions in different social situations.

2.4. Language Identity and Social Interaction

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a resource for constructing identity and maintaining social relationships. In sociolinguistic studies, linguistic choices often reflect an individual's social background, group membership, and communicative goals. People frequently adjust their language according to the social context in which interactions occur, making language an important marker of identity and social affiliation.

The relationship between language and identity can be observed by informal linguistic expressions. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), informal expressions such as slang may function as markers of group identity and solidarity. Certain linguistic forms are often shared among members of a particular community and may help distinguish insiders from outsiders. Similarly, Crystal (2006) observes that online communities frequently develop their own linguistic conventions, including slang, jargon, abbreviations, and other non-standard expressions, as mechanisms for affirming group identity. He notes that "all synchronous chatgroups rely heavily upon such processes, presumably as a mechanism of affirming group identity" (Crystal, 2006, p. 171). This suggests that the use of informal expressions in digital communication is not merely a linguistic habit but also a social practice through which users establish group membership and shared identity. Language is not only used to exchange information but also to create a sense of belonging and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

In addition, Yule (2010) explains that slang is commonly associated with particular social groups, especially younger speakers and communities that share common interests. The use of slang and other informal expressions may indicate social affiliation and participation within a specific social environment. Through these linguistic choices, speakers can express identity, establish familiarity, and create social connections with others.

The connection between language and social interaction is also reflected in the motivations behind the use of informal expressions. Partridge (2015) argues that individuals use slang for various social and communicative purposes. Although he

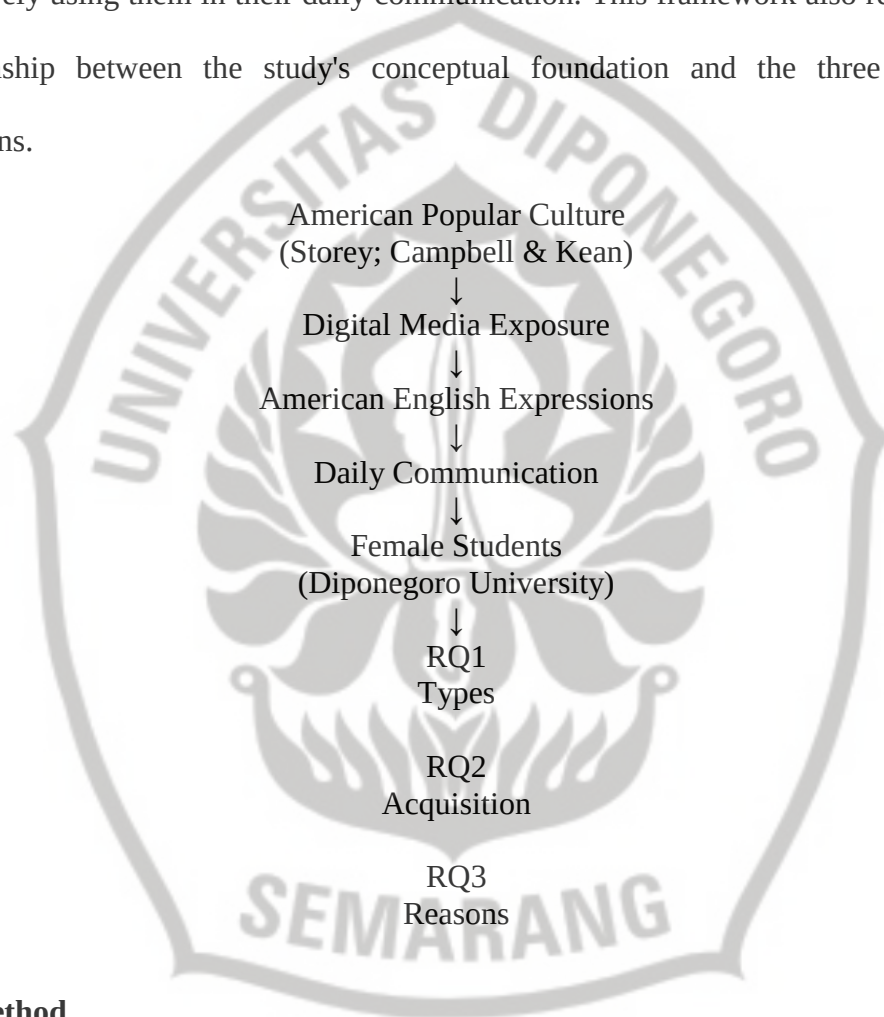
identifies fifteen possible motivations, several reasons are particularly relevant to contemporary communication. These include creating a relaxed atmosphere, expressing creativity, being different or fashionable, making communication more concise, establishing friendliness and intimacy, and demonstrating membership within a particular social group. In addition, slang may be used to attract attention, express emotions more effectively, and facilitate social interaction among peers.

These motivations suggest that language choices are often influenced by social considerations rather than purely linguistic needs. The use of informal expressions enables speakers to negotiate relationships, maintain group solidarity, and construct social identities. Within contemporary youth culture, linguistic expressions frequently become symbolic resources through which individuals position themselves within particular social networks and communities.

In the context of this study, the use of American English expressions among female students at Diponegoro University may reflect processes of identity construction and social interaction. Participants may recognize or use certain expressions not only because they understand their meanings, but also because such expressions help them express familiarity, build social connections, and participate in shared cultural experiences. Therefore, language, identity, and social interaction serve as an important framework for understanding the social motivations behind the recognition and use of American English expressions in everyday communication.

Based on the discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework, this study proposes a conceptual framework illustrating how American popular culture

contributes to participants' familiarity with American English expressions. The framework demonstrates that American popular culture, disseminated through digital media, exposes female students to various American English expressions. Through repeated exposure, participants recognize and acquire these expressions before selectively using them in their daily communication. This framework also reflects the relationship between the study's conceptual foundation and the three research questions.



2.5. Method

2.5.1. Type of Research

In qualitative studies, the focus is often directed toward a central phenomenon, which refers to the primary concept or experience explored in the research (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). In this study, the central phenomenon is the use of American English expressions in daily conversations among female students at Diponegoro University. By focusing on this phenomenon, the researcher aims to understand how participants recognize, acquire, and use American English expressions within their everyday communication practices.

According to Nkwi et al. (2001), qualitative research encompasses forms of inquiry that rely on non-numerical data to understand social phenomena. Thus, the hallmark of qualitative research is the interpretation of meanings, experiences, and observations rather than the measurement of numerical variables (Miles et al., 2020). Creswell and Poth (2018) further explain that qualitative research is typically conducted in natural settings where participants experience the phenomenon under investigation. In this approach, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

Qualitative data may be obtained from various sources, including texts, interviews, observations, audio recordings, and documents (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Creswell and Poth (2018) state that qualitative researchers commonly employ multiple methods of data collection to obtain rich and detailed accounts of participants' experiences and perspectives. The use of multiple data sources allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of social behavior and communication practices. Collecting responses through open-ended questions is also common in qualitative research, particularly when exploring attitudes, perceptions, and experiences within specific communities (Kelton et al., 2023).

These methods enable researchers to examine participants' experiences and linguistic practices in depth. In the present study, a qualitative approach is employed to investigate the use of American English expressions among female students at Diponegoro University. Through interviews and supporting data from an expression-recognition checklist, the researcher seeks to identify the forms of American English expressions recognized and used by participants, explore how these expressions are acquired through social interaction and exposure to American popular culture, and analyze the reasons behind their use in everyday communication. This approach allows the researcher to examine American English expressions not merely as linguistic forms, but also as social and cultural phenomena embedded within contemporary youth communication.

2.5.2. Location and Time

This study was conducted among female students at Diponegoro University, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The university was selected as the research setting because it accommodates students from diverse academic and sociocultural backgrounds and because its students actively engage with digital media and online communication. These characteristics make Diponegoro University an appropriate setting for investigating the recognition and use of American English expressions among university students.

Data collection was conducted over approximately three months during the first quarter of 2026. During this period, the researcher carried out in-depth interviews, distributed an American English Expression Recognition Checklist, and gathered

supplementary information regarding participants' social media exposure and communication practices. The collected data were used to examine participants' familiarity with American English expressions, their sources of exposure, and their patterns of use in everyday communication.

2.5.3. Informant

Participants were selected using criterion-based sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who meet specific criteria pertinent to the writer's conduct of the study. Creswell (2018) defines criterion sampling as selecting participants based on criteria that are important to the phenomenon being studied. Criterion sampling works best when each study participant is typical of those who have experienced the event (p. 157).

A variety of criteria related to the study's topic were taken into consideration when selecting participants. These criteria were established to ensure that participants had sufficient exposure to online communication and were used to using American English Expressions in informal talks. Informants in ethnographic research are usually people who can provide detailed accounts of their experiences and are actively involved in the social interaction relevant to the study. The following requirements must be fulfilled by chosen participants:

1. 8th semester undergraduate female students from Diponegoro University who are on their thesis preparation

2. Students with high intensity in social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, and are actively used it for their social interaction.
3. Students who frequently accessed English-language digital content, such as memes, influencers, and international entertainment.
4. Students who recognize, encounter, or occasionally use American English expressions in daily communication.

In order to capture the variety of academic backgrounds and social connections among students, participants were selected from multiple faculties. The variety of departments also serves as an example of how those expressions spread over different social networks in an academic setting.

2.5.4. Method of Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through three primary sources: semi-structured in-depth interviews, an American English Expression Recognition Checklist, and supplementary information regarding participants' social media exposure. These methods were employed to identify the forms of American English expressions recognized by participants, explore how such expressions were acquired, and examine the reasons behind their use in daily conversation.

2.5.4.1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews served as the study's main method of data collecting. Interviews in qualitative research give participants the chance to describe their experiences, opinions, and linguistic habits in their own words. According to Kelton et al. (2023), focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews are among the

most widely used methods in qualitative research, as they provide rich descriptive data on participants' attitudes, perceptions, and social behaviours. Meanwhile in this research, the writer used in-depth interviews to collect the data from participants. This study's interviews were done in second phases. The first phase concentrated on obtaining background data about the participants, such as their social surroundings, daily or monthly spending, daily communication patterns, and use of social media. The second phase focused on exploring participants' familiarity with American English expressions using the expression-recognition checklist, including types of American English expressions they were aware of or used, the situations in which they were used, and the motivations behind their usage. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and conversational manner to encourage participants to provide detailed responses. To enhance the data analysis, the interviews were recorded and then manually transcribed.

2.5.4.2. American English Expression Recognition Checklist (Questionnaire)

Participants were provided with a recognition checklist containing 150 American English expressions, including slang expressions, internet-based expressions, colloquial expressions, and other informal linguistic forms commonly encountered in American popular culture and digital communication. The purpose of this questionnaire was to identify the American English expressions forms that participants were familiar with and actively used in daily conversation with marking each of the words. Participants were asked to fill out the slange check whether they:

1. Had heard the slang expression before

2. Understood its meaning
3. Used it in daily communication

The checklist was used as a complement tool to support the interview data and find patterns in the participants' usage and recognition of American English Expressions.

2.5.4.3. Social Media Exposure Data

For supporting evidence, participants were asked to show how much time they spent on social media on a daily or weekly average through their phones. This data was only gathered for supplemental purposes and to determine the participants' exposure to online content, which is the main way that people learn slang in today's digital world. Use of screen time data as supplementary information to clarify how participants' exposure to American English Expressions may be impacted by their use of digital media. This information was particularly important because social media and digital platforms constitute major channels through which American popular culture and American English expressions circulate globally.

2.5.5. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to examine the study's data. This approach was used to characterize and analyze participant data while staying within the previously stated parameters of the study. The researcher can give thorough explanations of participants' linguistic practices using descriptive analysis, especially with relation to how American English Expressions is used in daily conversation. To make the data more authentic and relevant to the study, the analytical procedure started with a manual

transcription of recorded interviews. To comprehend the data and find pertinent statements pertaining to the study questions, the researcher attentively read the transcripts of the interview's multiple times. The researcher then categorized participants' responses according to the research questions and the forms of American English expressions identified in the data.

There were multiple phases to the analysis. Initially, the researcher found a variety of American English Expressions terms that the participants were aware of or utilised. Interview responses and a checklist of 150 American English terms were used to get this data. The slang terms that the participants often used or cited were then compiled by the researcher. Second, the researcher examined how the participants picked up American English Expressions phrases. This stage involved analyzing interview replies that detailed the sources, such as social networking sites, online entertainment, peer debates, or digital pop culture content where participants encountered American English expressions through digital media, social interaction, and exposure to American popular culture. Third, using the author's theoretical framework, the researcher examined the reasons why participants employed American English Expressions in everyday discussions. These answers were analysed considering the participants' linguistic preferences, social relationships, and communication situations. Additionally, the author examined the participants' social backgrounds, including their peer environment, social media usage, and communication styles, all of which could have an impact on their language preferences.

The researcher provided the results in the Results and Discussion chapter after classifying the data according to these categories. Relevant theoretical stances from sociolinguistics and popular culture studies were used to describe and interpret the data in relation to the study issues. This study attempts to give a detailed explanation of how female students at Diponegoro University recognize, learn, and use American English Expressions in their daily conversation by using a descriptive analytical approach.

